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November 12, 2004

Surface Transportation Board  
Case Control Unit  
Washington, D.C. 20423

RE: STB Docket No. FD 30186 (Sub-No 3)

Sir/Madam:

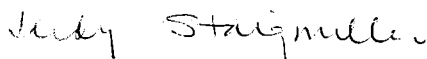
This is to express opposition to the Tongue River Railroad. The combination of the railroad plus coal bed methane drilling will virtually turn this fragile and beautiful area of Montana into an industrial zone, yet the railroad would not benefit Montana itself. It would benefit Midwestern utilities. It would also give the Gillette, Wyoming, coal area an economic advantage over Colstrip, Montana, by making the Colstrip-Midwest route longer than the Gillette-Midwest route. Don't wreck Montana for the benefit of the Midwest or Wyoming!

Furthermore, there has been no recent and comprehensive EIS that takes the impact of both activities – railroad and CMD – along the entire proposed route into account. Piecemeal studies from years past and from only parts of the route are not good enough. The impact of the proposed railroad on all pertinent land, on all wildlife and aquatic life, and on water and air quality needs to be thoroughly studied.

Having grown up on a Montana cattle ranch I can attest to the fact that the railroad would not only hurt the Montana coal industry economically, it would also hurt the all-important local agriculture by lowering property values and making it more difficult to graze and water livestock.

The Miles City-Decker railroad has had the go-ahead since 1996, but no real progress has been made. The Tongue River Railroad Company has done nothing but market their scheme and worry farmers and ranchers about their economic future and their way of life. This surely indicates that this railroad is not important and necessary after all, and that the existing railroads are serving the area adequately.

Sincerely,



Judy Staigmiller