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Organization:

State: Idaho

Agency: Surface Transportation Board

Initiative: Tongue River Railroad

Submission Text

I support the No Action alternative. We do not need this railroad to service a new, as yet unpermitted coal mine. The EIS seemingly ignores the move, especially in the US, away from coal to cleaner alternatives for energy generation. There is a very limited market for coal domestically. New coal plants aren't being built. Old plants are being retired. It is unrealistic to think that this railroad would do anything besides ship coal to the west coast for export. If it does ship coal to existing coal plants the new coal would supplant existing domestic coal supplies, threaten existing jobs and incur the severe environmental impacts and disruption of the new railroad and new mine. That is a bad deal all the way around. I believe the coal supplied by the proposed Tongue River Railroad is intended to be shipped to Asia. So, clever us, or U.S., we condemn private land to ship the dirtiest of fuels to Asia where it will be burned. The pollution generated by burning coal is increasingly unacceptable in the United States because of its negative impacts on global climate change and human health. This huge EIS, with all its charts and graphs, failed to adequately quantify the negative impacts. How could it miss or ignore the impacts of shipping coal on trains across the western US? Please go back and more accurately assess what the impacts will be along the line and in the area of the unpermitted mine. I don't believe you have identified all the irretrievable losses of cultural artifacts along the line, the health impacts of fugitive coal dust and diesel fumes, especially on vulnerable populations but also on rivers, the community disruption (noise, delay) and taxpayer costs associated with increased coal train traffic. The Tongue River Railroad has been a speculators' dream for many years. As time has gone by, the reasons it's a bad idea have intensified. We now understand climate change and the role coal burning power plants play in it. Open space, clean air, clean water, productive rural landscapes and successful rural communities are increasingly more rare and appreciated. The Tongue River valley is a special place that has all of these attributes. This railroad works against all of those things. It makes no sense at this time. Please go no further. Adopt the No Action alternative.