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Organization:

State: Montana

Agency: Surface Transportation Board

Initiative: Tongue River Railroad

Submission Text

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My name is Linda Smith. I live at 545B Missoula. When you think about making a list of who benefits and who bears the cost of coal development Montana, it's very clear that all Montanans will be negatively impacted ultimately. If coal development takes place, agriculture, Montana's number one economic generator, will be harmed short-term in the Tongue River Valley and surrounding area and long-term state-wide, as the effects of bringing the coal exported to Asia come back to Montana as air pollution, contributing to climate change that will cause more extreme weather events, prolonged drought, flooding and more wild fires.

The coal companies have said that they intend to export more coal to Asia from ports along the West Coast. People living in communities along the rail lines will be most directly affected through exposure to higher levels of diesel fumes, coal dust and noise of frequent trains, lack of access to emergency services which are all associated with developing long-term chronic health problems caused by having to breathe polluted air.

Children are the most vulnerable to having their lung development compromised by breathing polluted air. The state may receive some benefit from taxes paid by coal companies but the state is responsible for the health of the well-being of its citizens and will have to put money into caring for Montanans made ill from coal development.

Some jobs will be created if this rail line and ports are built and coal extracted, but they won't be long-term. Nor the kind and quality of good paying jobs needed to build healthy communities and stable families.

Our current congressional elected officials have knee jerk reactions to any projects that claims to create jobs no matter the kind or quality. By supporting coal development, they are supporting the private profit interest of the private sector, coal executives and investors at the expense of the interest of most Montanans who care deeply about the land, people, and wildlife of Montana having access to clean air and clean water as guaranteed in Montana's constitution.

I urge the Surface Transportation Board to adopt the no action alternative.