

September 20, 2015

Ken Blodgett
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20423
ATTN: Office of Environmental Analysis
Docket No. 30186

Dear Mr. Blodgett,

I do not support the Tongue River Railroad Company's proposal to build a new railway spur in Montana in order to transport coal from existing and proposed mines by way of private family farms, threatened environmental ecosystems, and communities. The proposed line and all of the alternatives would bisect family-operated grazing land and fragment farmland of statewide importance, constituting a significant taking from the property owners as well as Montanans in general. It would also, as the EIS clearly states, result in long-term (and often permanent) harm to soil productivity, wetland functions and watershed health, and the biological habitats of countless native animals and vegetation, including four endangered species. The EIS states that up to 4,000 acres of vegetation would be affected—a calculation that does not include the watersheds at risk should the coal train spill, dumping pollutants into one of the 62-189 proposed surface water crossings. The trains carrying coal would also contribute to air pollution and climate change with substantial emissions of greenhouse gasses. Preventing the irreversible environmental damage that would result from the proposed lines' construction far outweighs the need to "serve proposed new coal mines in the Ashland area."

In addition to causing permanent harm to the environment, TRRC's proposed line/alternatives would negatively impact many communities along its route and preexisting extensions. Montanans do not need more trains cutting through their towns, causing significant traffic delays, noise disturbances to nearby homes, and air pollution in their communities. I am a Missoula resident, and am concerned about air quality in the Missoula Valley as it is (we see 16-17 coal trains each day). If TRRC succeeds in providing coal to Asia as it stated in Section 1.3 of the EIS, more coal trains will transport coal westward through my town. Furthermore, the proposal supports the irresponsible practices of unsustainable coal mining and the transport and sale of our natural resources overseas.

I hope that the Board will recognize the serious risks associated with the construction of any of TRRC's proposed lines and choose the No-Action Alternative.

Sincerely,
Gillian Thornton