

A Citizens' Request for Public Hearings on the Proposed Tongue River Railroad



Submitted by 350-Missoula & the Blue Skies Campaign

Daniel R. Elliott III
STB Chair
Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street, SW
Suite 1220
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Mr. Elliott and Surface Transportation Board,

350-Missoula and the Blue Skies Campaign, grassroots citizens' organizations in Missoula, Montana, would like to present the enclosed photo-petition from residents of Missoula, requesting a public hearing in our community as part of the next comment period on the proposed Tongue River Railroad project. As a community that would be directly impacted by pollution from increased coal train traffic caused by the Tongue River Railroad, we feel Missoula deserves a well-publicized official hearing as part of the EIS process for this project.

By connecting the proposed Otter Creek Coal Mine to the existing Montana Rail Link-operated line that passes through Montana, the Tongue River Railroad would lead to increased coal train traffic through Missoula and many other Montana rail line communities. These communities are already suffering from the negative side effects of coal trains, which include diesel (coal trains are the heaviest on the line, needing six locomotives per coal train) and coal dust pollution (coal cars are open-top and surfactant is not a proven containment solution), congestion caused by grade-level crossing where railroad tracks intersect with heavily used residential streets (coal trains are about 1.5 miles long, longest on the line), and the increased risk of a train-related accident. As the site of a locomotive maintenance facility, refueling station, and train-coupling yard located in the middle of a highly populated residential district, the City of Missoula will feel significant impacts by any increase in coal train traffic. Montana Rail Link's rail yard in Missoula is already a significant source of noise and air pollution that are serious health concerns for residents in the community, and any large increase in train traffic will necessarily exacerbate these existing impacts.

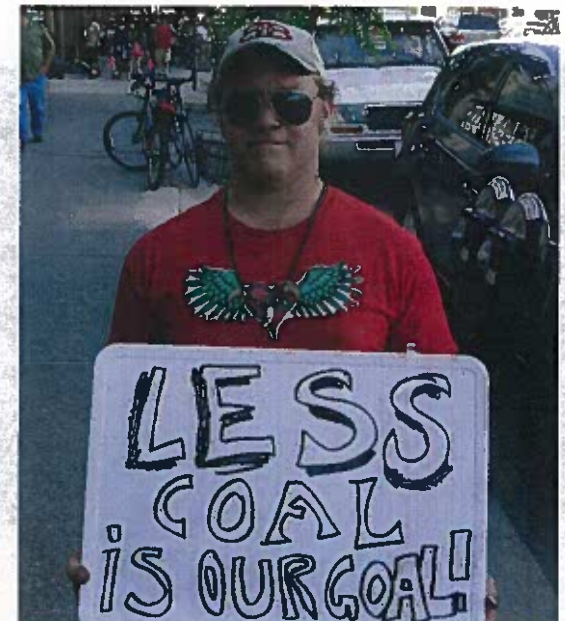
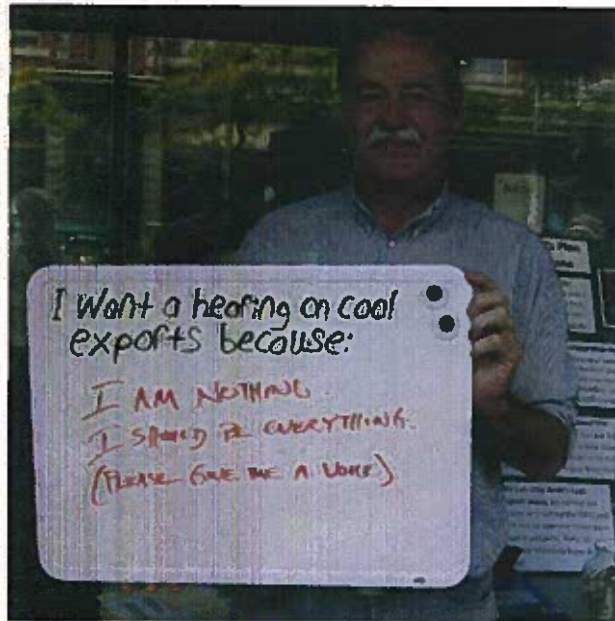
With this in mind, 350-Missoula and the Blue Skies Campaign respectfully requests that the Surface Transportation Board hold a public hearing in Missoula as part of the next comment period on the Tongue River Railroad. This would allow Missoulians to testify directly to STB staff about the impacts of coal train traffic on our community. It would also give residents of other rail line towns in Western Montana a chance to attend a hearing relatively close to them. Missoula is the largest rail line city in Western Montana, making it a logical place for a hearing.

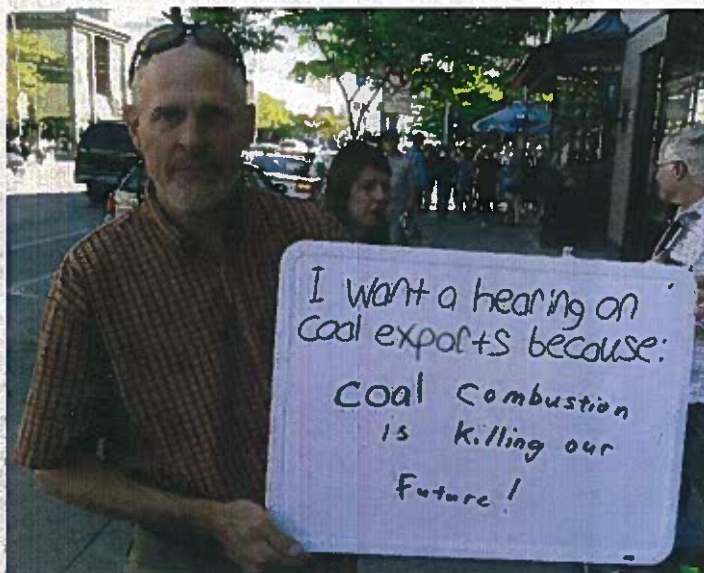
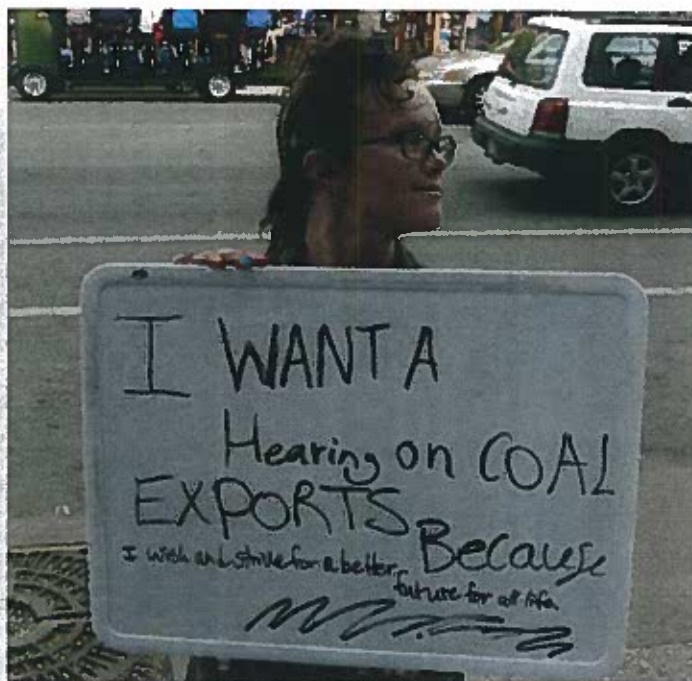
There is significant citizen interest in having a hearing on the Tongue River Railroad in Missoula, as demonstrated by the photos that follow. In the summer of 2014, 350-Missoula and Blue Skies Campaign volunteers set up a photo petition booth at several public events in our community, and invited people to tell decision makers why having a public hearing on coal exports is important to them. Our organizing committee hopes the STB will take all of these reasons into account, and decide to hold a hearing in Missoula as part of the Tongue River Railroad review process.

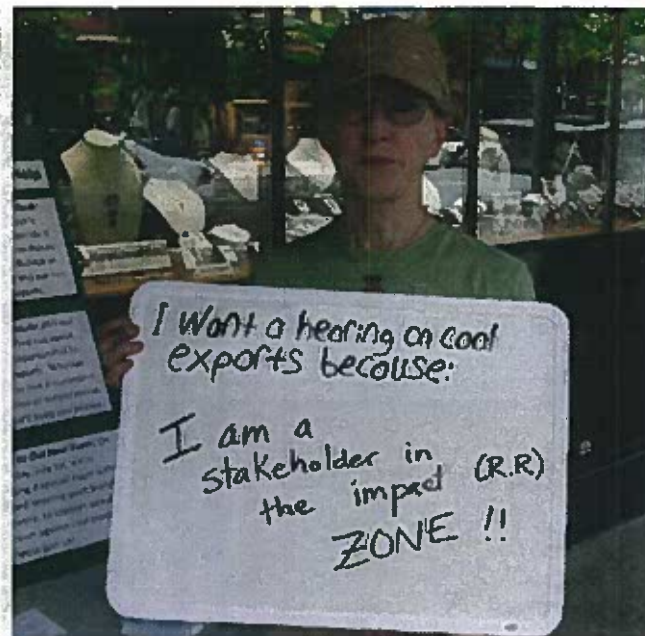
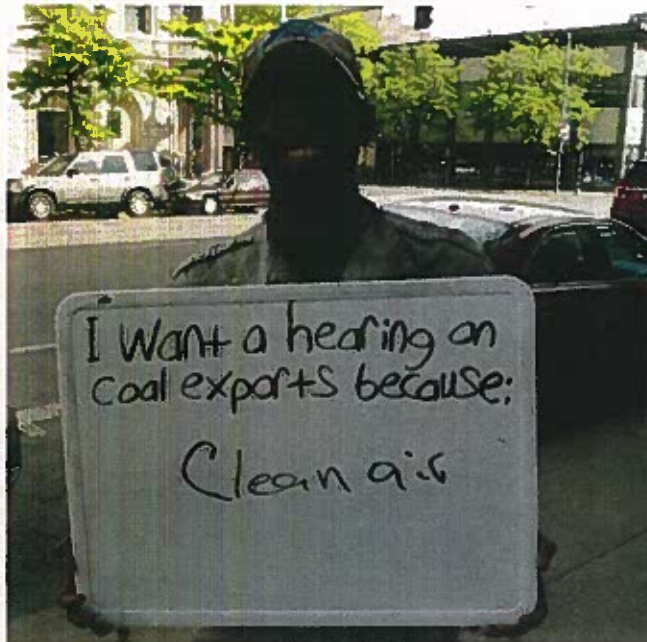
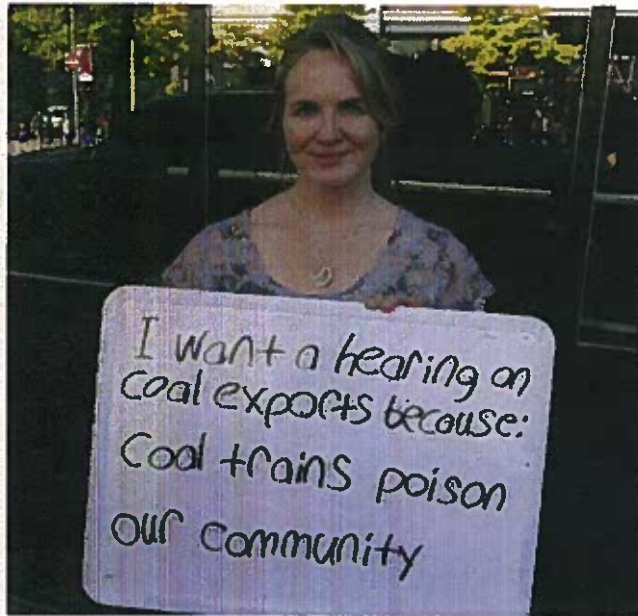
Sincerely,

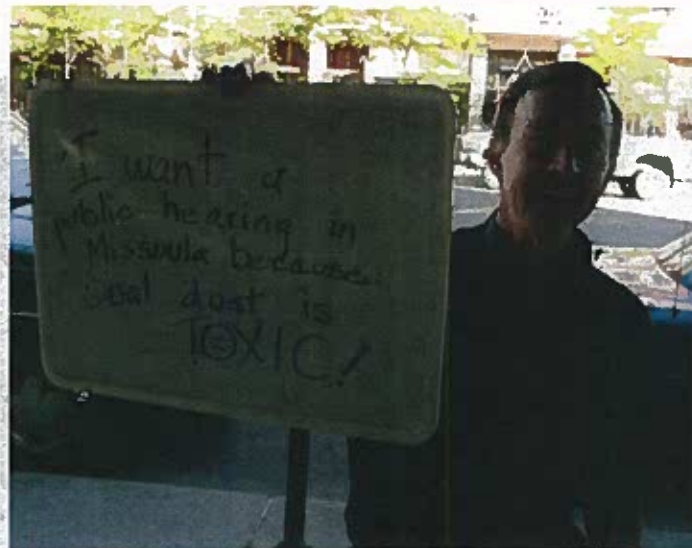
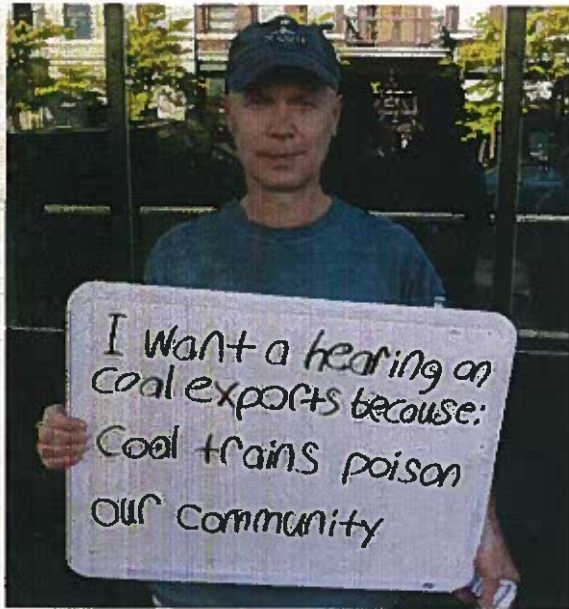
Nick Engelfried
350-Missoula Coal Committee Chair
info@350Missoula.org

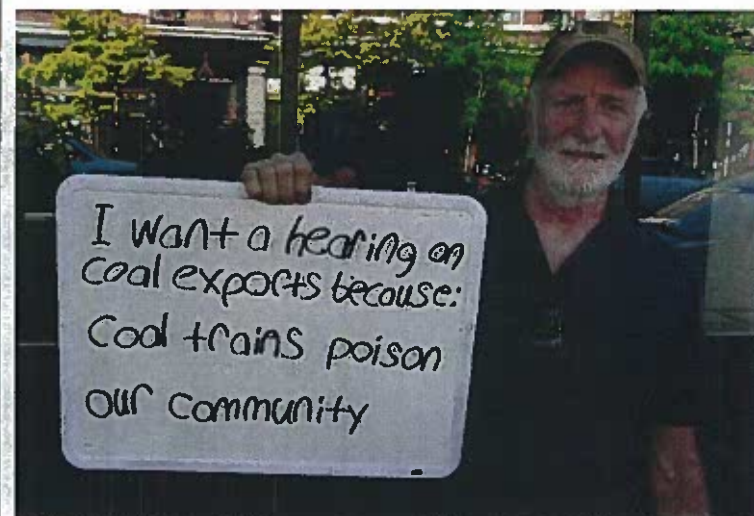
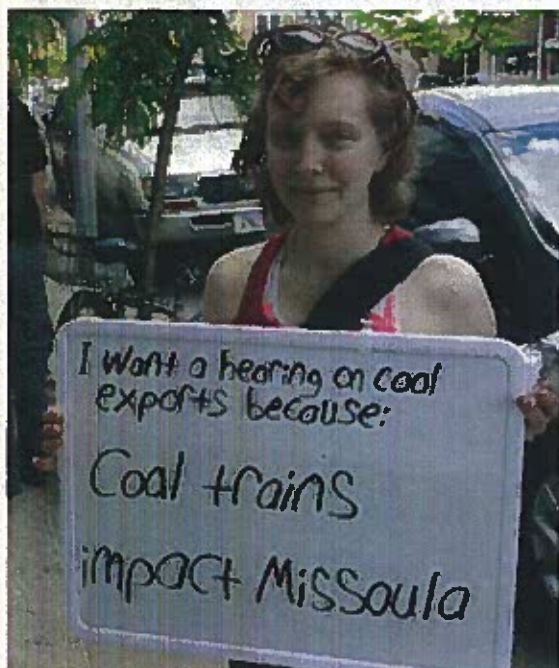
Lowell Chandler
Blue Skies Campaign
blueskiescampaign@gmail.com

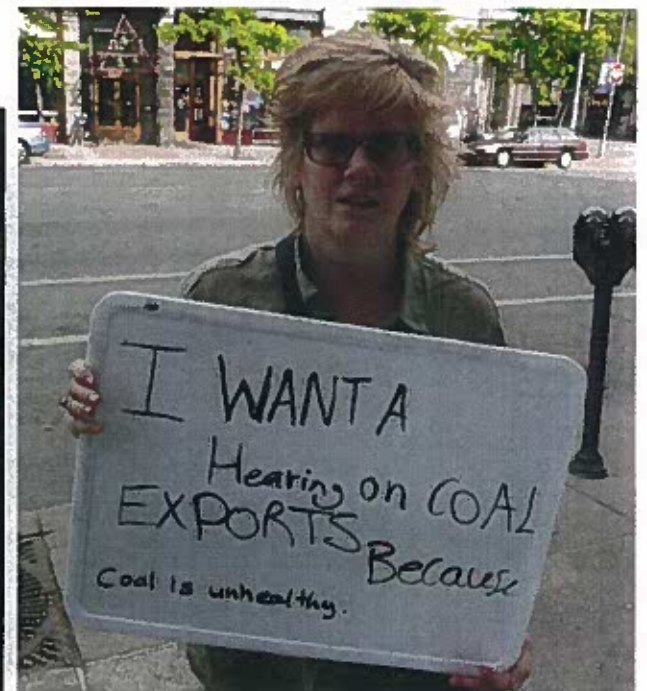


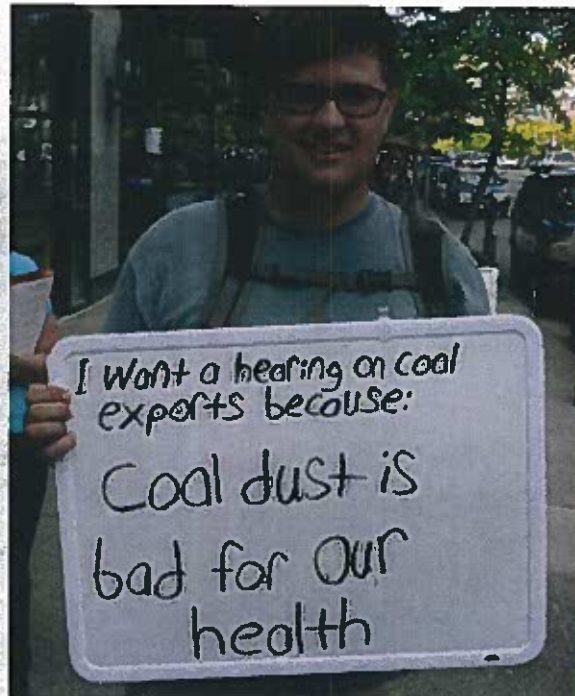


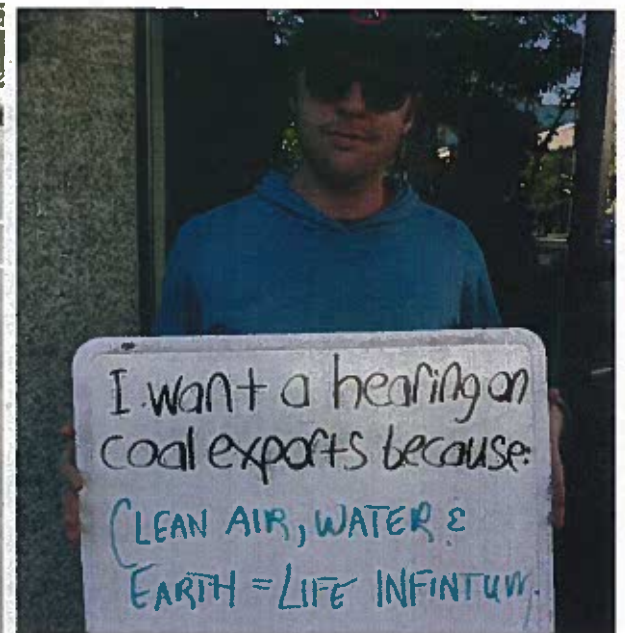


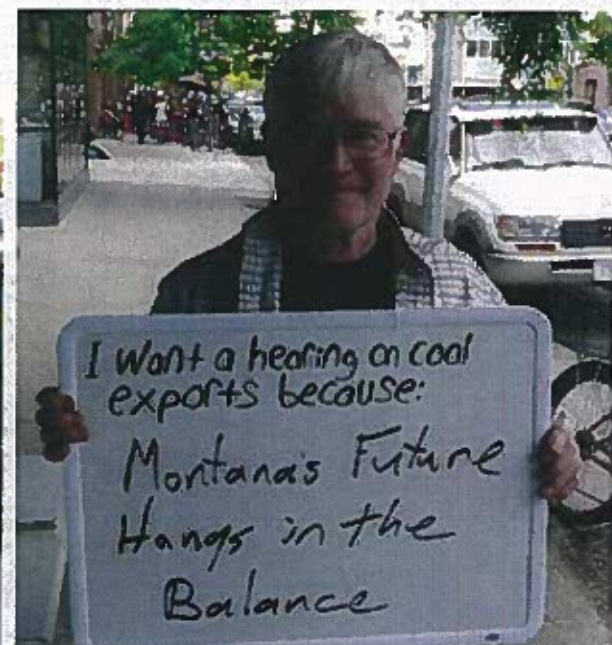
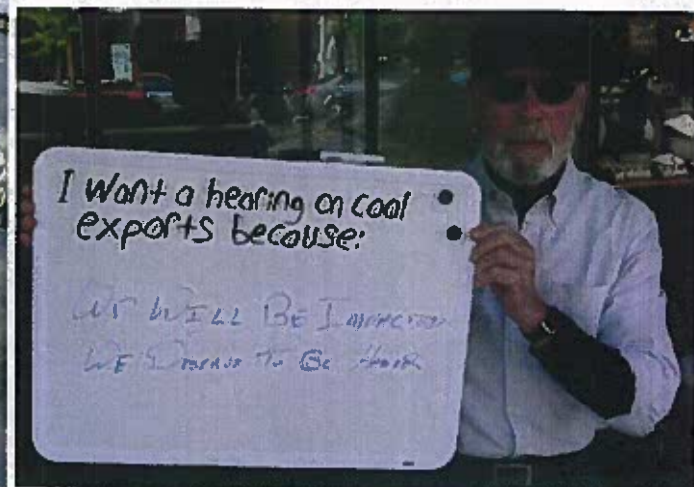
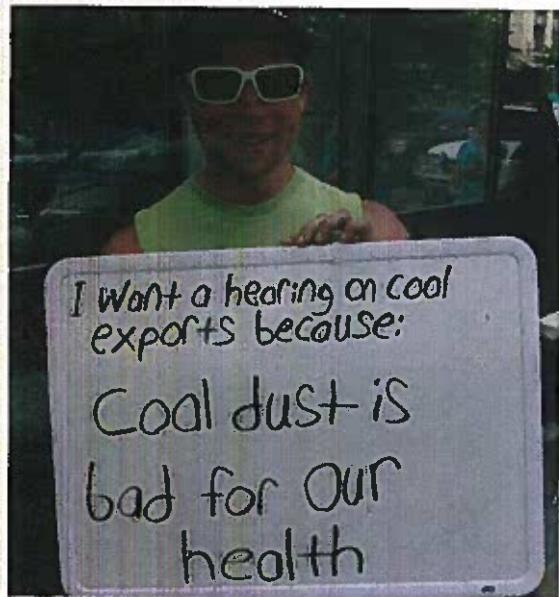


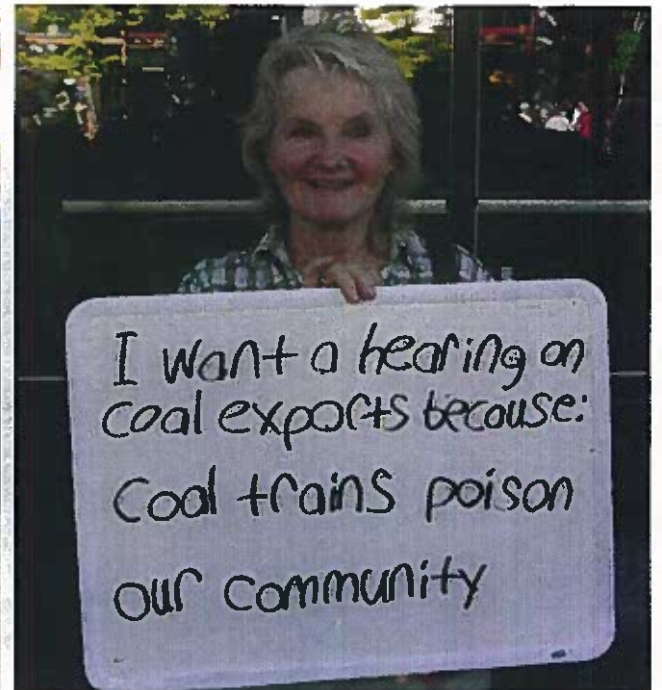
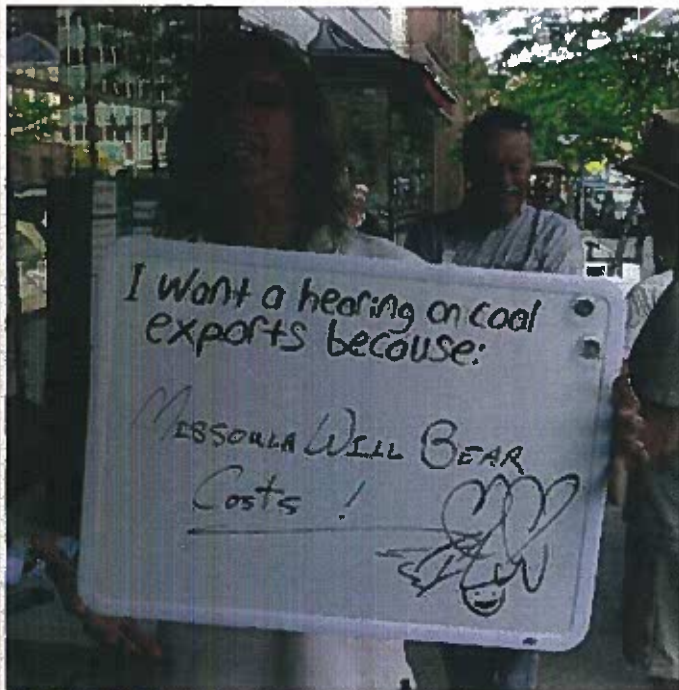




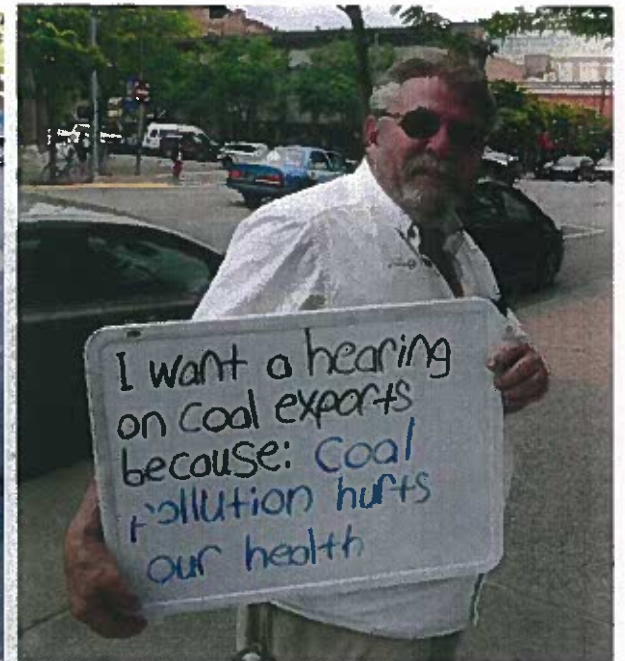


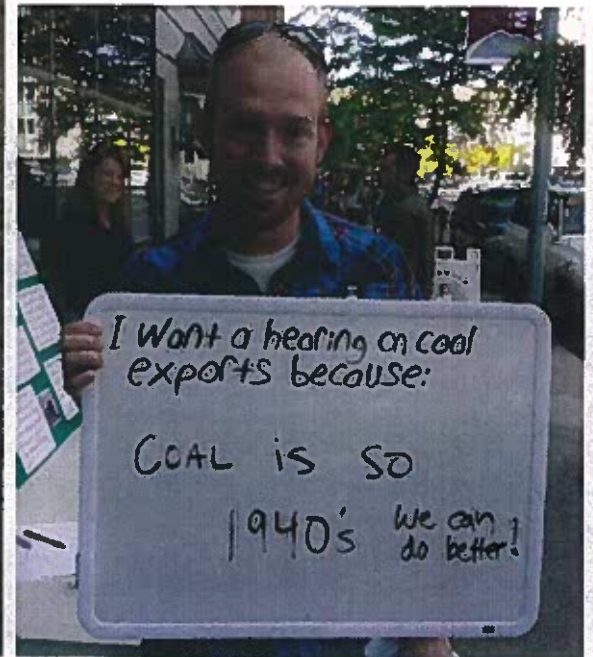
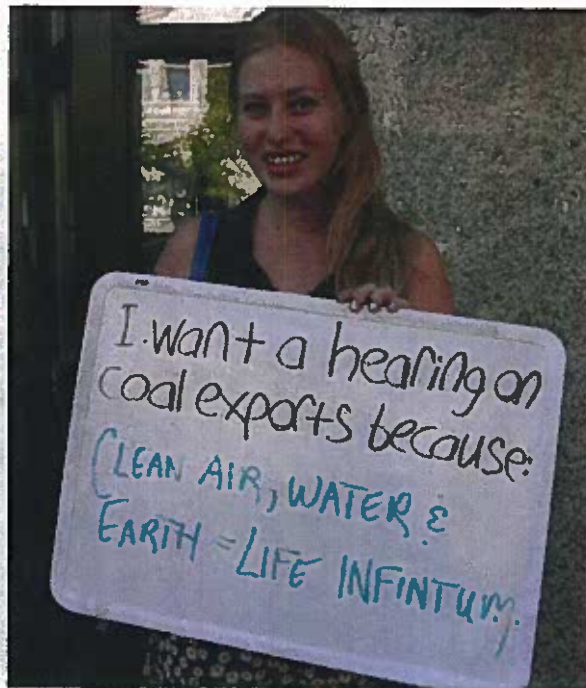


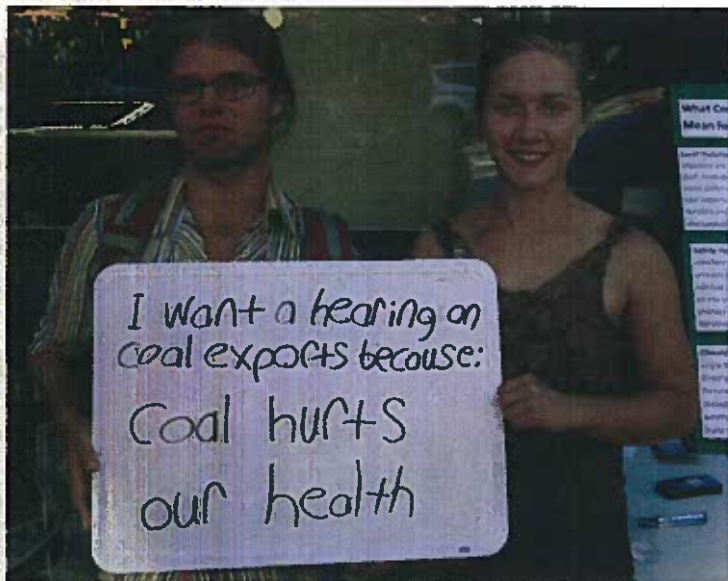
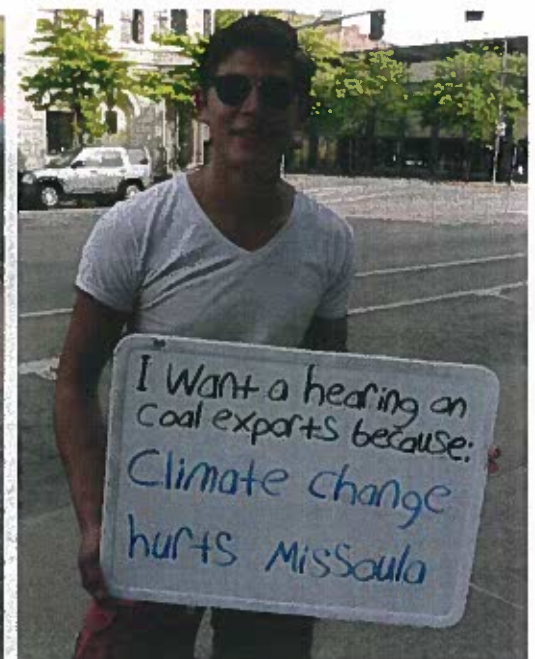


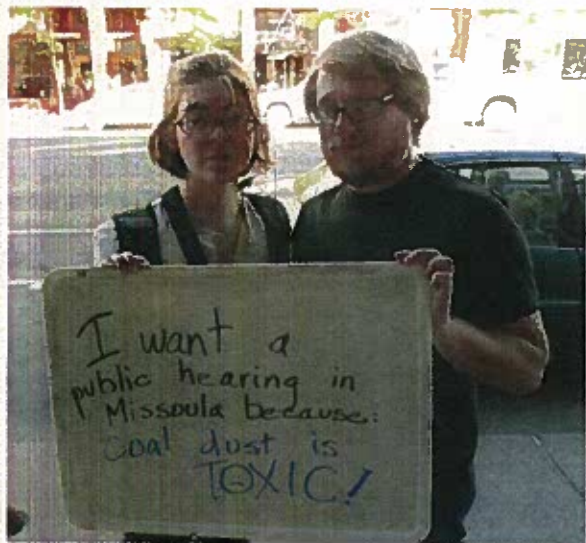












Coal Dust and Diesel Pollution in the Missoula Rail Yard:

