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Submission Text

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927 Eighth Avenue, Helena, Montana 59601 My name is Bob Filipovich; it's F-I-L-I-P-O-V-I-C-H. I've lived at 927 Eighth Avenue, Helena for the last 27 or so years. I'm opposed to building the Tongue River Railroad. I've discovered in the research I've been doing that although as a society we've thought a fair amount about the burning of coal, for instance the mercury and sulfur that have been mentioned, green house gasses more recently, studies, for example, done by Green Peace and by Open Source have almost paid no attention to this issue of transportation. What I'm trying to say here is that we haven't really had a lot of time to think about the effects of transportation of fossil fuels, in this case coal. Therefore, we don't really know too much about them.

The second point is quite local. I'm a member of the Lewis and Clark County/Helena Transportation Coordinating Committee. That committee has just drawn up its once-a-decade transportation plan. It's been mentioned once already that the underpass that would run between the railroad and Montana Avenue, the cost of that is estimated in the draft plan at approximately 21 million dollars. I want to remind you that there are actually eight crossings within the study area for this plan, including East Helena. The situation from that perspective becomes a little more complicated. Suffice to say here that Henderson intersection would have to be deepened and widened. That's an underpass, that's expensive.

The Benton crossing, which is right part of another priority in the draft plan, namely the widening of that avenue to the north of the railroad there. The Montana Avenue crossing is part of another priority, a roundabout, and that would address the octopus intersection of Helena Avenue. What I'm trying to say here is that there's a whole lot of tax dollars involved in these railroad crossings. As far as I can tell, they're the most expensive part of the transportation parts of the transportation plan if they're taken as individual priorities.

Further is the long view. Montana has been involved with what has come to be called economic colonialism before. You remember amalgamated copper? Also known as the Anaconda Company, also known as the company. We've seen that. We've seen the effects of that in all sorts of that in all ways that were pretty darn ugly. In the last legislative session, I think I saw a kind of reincarnation of that economic colonialism, in the form of fossil fuel lobbying, pretty successful lobbying I must say. Most of it having to do with oil and gas and drilling eastern Montana, but it looked to me a lot like what we saw in this state 100 years ago. I think we need to keep that in mind. History rhymes, doesn't necessarily repeat itself, but I ask you to keep it in mind.

Thank you.