



February 10, 2015

Daniel R. Elliott, Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

RE: Tongue River Railroad – City of Hood River, Oregon

Dear Chairman Elliott and Members of the future Transportation Board:

The City of Hood River Council understands there is an ongoing review process considering the proposed Tongue River Railroad to service the Otter Creek Mine in Western Montana. The railroad line and expansion of coal production will lead to additional rail traffic through The City of Hood River on its way to West Coast ports.

As you will see from enclosed Hood River Resolution 2012-15, the City has significant and varied concerns over the transport of coal through the City and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The bottom line is that the City of Hood River opposes coal export projects such as the Tongue River Railroad that entail transporting coal through the Columbia River Gorge and Hood River.

Please carefully consider this information and consult with the City of Hood River as you move through the review process for the Tongue River Railroad

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Blackburn", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Paul Blackburn, Mayor
City of Hood River, Oregon

Resolution 2012-15

A Resolution stating the City of Hood River's concerns and opposition to transporting coal through the Columbia River Gorge

WHEREAS, The City of Hood River has committed itself to being a leader in protecting the environment, air quality, and water quality in the Columbia River Gorge, and

WHEREAS, burning coal leads to greenhouse gases, and the impacts of climate change on the Columbia River Gorge and other tourist attractions negatively impact Hood River's economy, and

WHEREAS, coal is commonly transported via open top rail cars, contaminating cities, towns, farmland, forestland, streams, and rivers within the Columbia River Gorge with coal dust and chunks of coal, and

WHEREAS, coal contains toxic heavy metals - including mercury, arsenic, lead, and uranium - and exposure to these toxic heavy metals in high concentrations is linked to a multitude of health problems, such as cancer and birth defects, and

WHEREAS, increased rail traffic will lead to an increase in diesel emissions in communities along rail lines, and

WHEREAS, up to 54 additional trains per day will have detrimental effects on traffic congestion and air quality due to idling cars, and

WHEREAS, increased noise and vibration from large freight trains have been shown to have a negative impact on psychological health, and

WHEREAS, up to 54 additional trains per day may inhibit the travel of emergency vehicles in the Columbia River Gorge

WHEREAS, increased freight train traffic will have a negative effect on property values, and

WHEREAS, an increase in coal train traffic would raise the risk of a train derailment taking place, and communities within the Columbia River Gorge are not equipped to deal with the public safety and health risks caused by a coal train derailment, and

WHEREAS, public health risks associated with diesel emissions and other pollutants from coal trains disproportionately impact children, the elderly, and those with existing respiratory issues, and

WHEREAS, the route coal trains would follow through the Columbia River Gorge runs along the Columbia River through popular recreational areas, a major source of the economy in the Gorge, and

WHEREAS, the negative impacts of shipping coal by barge on the Columbia River will have similar effects on the Columbia River Gorge as those associated with shipping coal by rail.

Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River urges appropriate permitting authorities to require an environmental impact statement that identifies and measures the impacts on our community from a significant increase in coal train traffic, and

Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River urges appropriate permitting authorities to hold at least one environmental impact scoping hearing at a location in The City of Hood River, and

Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River transmits copies of this resolution to the Governor of Oregon, to all members of the Oregon State Division of Lands Board, and to each state Senator and Representative in both Oregon and Washington whose districts fall within Columbia River Gorge, the Washington Department of Ecology, and the Washington Department of Natural Resources, and

Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River transmits copies of this resolution to each Senator and Representative from Oregon and Washington in the Congress of the United States and

Be it further resolved that passage of this resolution shall not preclude the City of Hood River from taking additional actions to protect residents from the effects of coal trains in the future.

Approved by the Hood River City Council this 23rd day of April, 2012, to take effect immediately.


Arthur Babitz, Mayor


Jennifer Gray, City Recorder