

Received: 9/23/2015 12:00:00 AM

Commenter: Nick Engelfried

Organization:

State: Montana

Agency: Surface Transportation Board

Initiative: Tongue River Railroad

Submission Text

Nick Engelfried

321 South 1st Street West, Missoula, Montana 59802

My name is Nick Engelfried. I live in 321 South 1st Street West here in Missoula. I'm organizer with both the Blue Skies campaign and 350 Missoula. I want to urge the Surface Transportation Board to choose the no action alternative, do not approve the Tongue River Railroad.

I specially want to object to them not taking into full consideration the impacts that this project would have on communities like Missoula, up and down the rail line, and ignoring those impacts in their draft EIS.

Here in Missoula in particular, our city council passed a resolution and sent a letter to the Surface Transportation Board specifically requesting that they hold a public hearing, an *official* public hearing here in Missoula, so that folks here would be able to speak directly to the Surface Transportation Board. Our hearing today is kind of our back up next best option since they didn't decide to hold an official hearing here.

The county commission, the Missoula County Commission, also requested that there'd be a hearing here. Several of our state legislators representing districts in Missoula made the same request, as well as lots and lots of citizens. To me it seems like considering the amount of interest here in this community, considering the number of officials, lawmakers, and homeowners, people who have spoken up, the Surface Transportation Board should have held an official public hearing here, but at the very least they should have been there drafting Environmental Impact Statement giving full consideration to the impacts that coal trains would have on this town.

I also just want to say that myself and another volunteers with Blue Skies and 350 Missoula had been out in downtown Missoula during Saturday markets and many other days of the last month or two inviting people to submit written comments and post cards about the Tongue River Railroad. The vast majority of the people who stopped by our table and take the time to learn about the issue are very concerned about having more coal trains come through, very opposed to the idea of making us more dependent on coal. I think that there is a lot of concern in this community and it's very evident.

Since the Surface Transportation Board didn't hold an official hearing here, some of us from 350 Missoula are going to be traveling out to the official hearing in Miles City next week and we will be bringing with us comments that we've been collecting downtown, comments collected here at this hearing, and we will make sure that this get presented directly to the Surface Transportation Board folks.

Thank you all.