

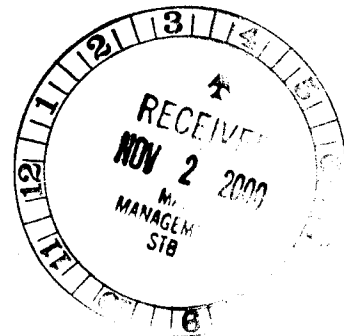
October 30, 2000

Office of the Secretary
Case Control Unit
STB Finance Docket No. 33407
Surface Transportation Board
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Washington, DC 20423-0001

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Ms Victoria Rutson, Environmental Project Manager

Subject: Comments on the Potential Rochester By-pass Requirement as Part of the Environmental Impact Assessment of the DM&E Coal Handling Plan

We believe that the proposed change in the DM&E operation will have a major detrimental impact on the City and Citizens of Rochester, MN.

First of all, the basic assumption of current usage by the DM&E was WRONG. The DM&E currently runs two to three trains per day through Rochester. The fact that the DM&E gave you a higher figure not only invalidates the previous assessment, but should count strongly against the DM&E. They have presented false information which demonstrates their lack of character and trustworthiness. We believe that they have lied about many items, but this one is obvious and simple to prove. Justice demands that they be punished.

Secondly, the plan will cut the City of Rochester exactly in half, tremendously impacting the flow of people, goods and emergency services across that division. We are a typical example. Our church is on the south side of town; we live on the north. How much extra time will we have to allow for to get to services and meetings? That extra time will be added on to each and every service/meeting. Averaging 3 per week and a 10 minute contingency for trains, that is a half hour impact. Church is just one activity - most of our meetings, shopping, library, concerts and visiting friends will require crossing the track. Over time we will migrate toward activities on "our side of the track". This impact will divide the city into two.

Rochester is a unique city. It has been named the best small city in America twice by Money Magazine and been in the top five several other times. It has an international reputation; international airport; and ranks 50th in the nation for growth during the 1990's. The noise, vibration and time impacts will make the city less desirable. Vibration will impact the precise medical procedures carried out by the clinic. The Mayo Clinic will move some of its function away. Other business will follow. The city will no longer be a dynamic growth city.

The risks to Rochester citizens include the accident risk of crossing a high speed railroad track and the time risk of the train stopping emergency vehicles. . Other cities have typically had trains crossing at one end or organized themselves around the fact of the railroad. Rochester's major growth has come after the demise of major railroad traffic through the center of town and hence is not organized in a way that would minimize that risk. The risk is much higher because the railroad exactly divides a city that was not built up with this major consideration. The problems for Rochester should be viewed as if no railroad had ever run through Rochester, and the DM&E plan was for a new track to bisect the city.

Finally, the STB is governing based on nineteenth century laws. When citizens understand the arrogance of a concept that is biased in favor of railroads and against the best interest of the people, they will demand the elimination of the STB. It is in the STB's interest to mitigate the environmental impact to Rochester before it becomes a major scandal and further damages the STB's image.

To review, the DM&E has lied and deserves punishment; the plan will severely damage a unique, dynamic city; the plan presents higher than normal risks to the citizens of Rochester because the city was developed without the railroad traffic; the impact to Rochester is so great that it will essentially divide the city in two; and lastly the unreasonableness of this plan will further degrade the image and power of the STB.

Susan L. Lemke Lyle Thomas Lemke

Susan L Lemke
620 20th ST NE
Rochester, MN 55906
(507) 288 4692
tomlemke@prodigy.net

Lyle Thomas Lemke