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November 13, 2000

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Office of the Secretary
Case Control Unit
STB Finance Docket No. 33407
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K. Street, NW
Washington, DC 20423-001

Dear Secretary:

I am President of the Huron Area Chamber of Commerce. I was supposed to deliver these remarks at the November 13th hearing in Pierre, but the weather prevented my attendance. Our organization is strongly in favor of the Draft Environment Impact Statement relating to the DM&E revitalization project.

Several years ago, Huron's No. 1 employer, Dakota Pork Industries, closed and Huron lost over 800 jobs. We are still reeling from that catastrophic event. Our population has declined and as a result our retail revenues are flat; and we have also lost some significant retail businesses like JC Penney Co.

In addition, to paraphrase Ross Perot, there's a giant sucking sound coming from the South. The City of Sioux Falls is eating our retail lunch. In short, retail in Huron is hurting.

The DM&E project can dramatically turn that around for Huron and the surrounding area. It would provide hundreds of high-paying jobs. Spin-off industries will provide additional employment opportunities. Our population will increase and new retail businesses will inevitably follow. Increased competition and more variety will help us compete with the behemoth in the South: Sioux Falls. This project will assure the social and economic viability of Huron and the surrounding area for decades to come.

We are also excited about the prospect of passenger service being provided in the region for the first time in almost 50 years and the increased ability of DM&E to ship agricultural products.

It must be emphasized that if railroad service is further degraded or ultimately abandoned, Huron and its smaller sister cities like Cavour, Iroquois, Wolsey and Wessington will experience

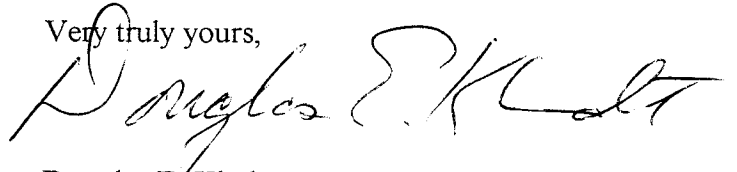


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further decline. The Huron area is not blessed with significant natural resources, but we do have the railroad and a central location that is uniquely suited to this project's needs. It is difficult to imagine another opportunity like this coming to Huron. Is rural America worth saving? We certainly believe so. This project is the proverbial brass ring. We must grab it to ensure our survival.

Certainly, there are obstacles to overcome in a project of this magnitude, but as John F. Kennedy so aptly said; "There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long range risks of comfortable inaction." The time for action is now. Please approve this project without further delay. Thank you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Douglas E. Kludt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Douglas" being the most prominent.

Douglas E. Kludt
President

DEK/la