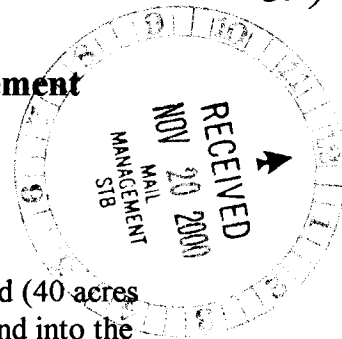


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**DM&E Powder River Basin Expansion Project
Feedback/Comments to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

2000/11/17 09:55:11

To: Surface Transportation Board



I am a private landowner with the DM&E currently separating two parcels of my land (40 acres and 50 acres) just east of Kasson. I am requesting that you deny the request to expand into the Powder River Basin and haul more coal. Following are my comments, feedback, and concerns.

My first set of comments are personal impacts:

- My **quality of life will significantly be reduced** with up to 37 trains (and probably more) per day rolling within 500 feet of my house. My windows rattle now, I can't imagine how much the house will be impacted with this upgrade.
- I'm retired and am very concerned about the reduced property values I will see with this expansion. I expect to see a **reduction in property value of at least 25 to 30%**.
- I have a private well and septic system (I know there are thousands of residences near the railroad with the same situation). Can you predict what impact these massive trains will have on these facilities? **Cracked well casings, polluted wells, what will happen?** Can this possible environmental impact be traded off for the benefit of DM&E being able to haul more coal past my place? I certainly don't think so!
- I don't understand how it can be appropriate for a company such as DM&E to be allowed to **destroy so many peoples quality of life for pure profit** reasons and no others. There is no need to have additional hauling capacity for coal. The two existing railroads are able to keep up. If indeed they are allowed to proceed, it seems that the impacted folks should somehow be compensated for their damages!
- My 50 acre parcel of farmland is landlocked and only accessible via a private rail crossing between my two pieces of land. What's to become of my farmland when the upgrade occurs? **Do I still get to have my private crossing?** I doubt it. Then what? How do I get to my land to farm it? I depend on the income from this land to supplement my retirement income.

Impacts to others:

- It concerns me deeply that the people most affected by this expansion (quality of life and property values) are those with **lower incomes** and many of these folks are **minorities**. I think this clearly is what you would term "**environmental injustice**".
- There are **Senior Citizen Apartments** that are very near the DM&E in Rochester that will be affected by the **noise and the delays** associated with train track crossings, delays not only to themselves, but to any emergency services they'll need with time. Also, there are **nursing homes** nearby that would be **impossible to evacuate** in the case of a hazardous spill.
- The DEIS talks about upgrade impact mitigation, but most of the statements have **no specifics attached** to them. You cannot make statements like attempt and "where appropriate", etc and really expect anything to happen. You must get specific and require specific actions by DM&E, paid for by DM&E, to make sure the mitigation happens.
- You've been given many comments by the Mayo Clinic, various groups in Rochester, and many private citizens. I've personally heard many of these and agree wholeheartedly with everything they're saying. You must listen as well!

**ENTERED
Office of the Secretary**

NOV 22 2000

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DM&E Powder River Basin Expansion Project Feedback/Comments to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

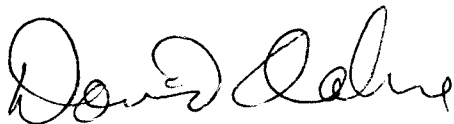
Business Case Impacts:

- DM&E currently provides services to several **small towns** and grain elevators along their line. I believe those **services will reduce** or even be eliminated if the proposed upgrade takes place. Given the complexity of managing 37 trains a day hauling coal, it will be logistically impossible for DM&E to deal with merging in 1 or 2 trains with a few cars being exchanged at various elevators and terminals. I sincerely believe DM&E will put their efforts where the most profit is, and that's with hauling coal.
- DM&E states they have a mileage advantage over their competitors, and therefore will take lot's of business away from them because they'll be able to haul the coal cheaper. Do you really believe the competitors are simply going to give up the business. No Way! They will reduce their rates. Then DM&E will have to reduce rates and pretty soon what was a **good business case becomes marginal**. The utilities will win, but not the railroads, and certainly not all the citizens along the rail line whose quality of life is impacted or their life lost because of more accidents with trains and caused by train derailments.
- I strongly believe the **expenses associated with this will be much greater than current estimates** and therefore the business case is not as good as proposed. If you approve this, you may be facilitating huge losses to unsuspecting investors, and for what purpose....lower utility rates for fewer people than are impacted by the upgrade. There is no logic in this approach.

If you do approve this request, please be certain to require specific actions from DM&E. There's no way you should be approving this based on their verbal statements to try to do a good job. That's pure balony and will be lost the minute you approve.

I strongly urge you not to approve this request!

Sincerely,



David Aakre
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Kasson, Mn, 55944