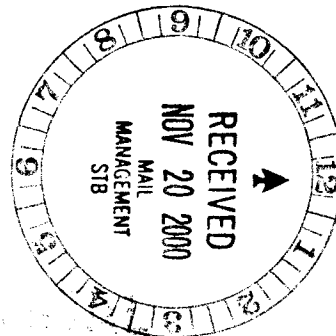




SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Section of Environmental Analysis

DM&E Powder River Basin Expansion Project
Draft Environmental Impact Statement

COMMENT SHEET



Name: Terry Balm

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Comments may be submitted today or mailed to:

ENTERED
Office of the Secretary

Office of the Secretary
Case Control Unit
STB Finance Docket No. 33407
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20423-0001
Attn: Victoria Rutson

NOV 22 2000

Part of
Public Record

Ms Rutson:
Please provide any comments on the DM&E Powder River Basin Expansion Project Draft EIS.

11/17/2000

I attended your public meeting on the DM&E expansion project in Rochester on the evening of 11/16/2000. Thank you again for taking time to hear our thoughts and concerns.

In the Rochester meeting, I spoke in favor of your denying the DM&E expansion (the "No Action" option) as a concerned Rochester senior citizen. Two thoughts to augment my verbal comments occurred to me later that evening. The first thought is that ^{the} considerable comment made against a rail bypass around Rochester is, in reality, speaking in favor of denial of the expansion project. These rural folks rightfully share the concerns of the city folks about many of the negative impacts of frequent coal train traffic. This is especially true in the Rochester area where frequent train construction (new or upgrade) or derailments could be disastrous. A bypass route could avoid destroying current farm buildings, so their bypass objections must be considered to be concerns over negative environmental, economic, or safety effects of heavy train traffic.

My second thought regards possible benefits of the rail expansion. There were several comments made indicating that coal from the Powder River Basin is being economically moved to market without this DM&E project. Would electric rates be reduced along the DM&E route due to the expansion project? That is doubtful. Would agricultural products from along the DM&E route get to market faster and cheaper? That too is doubtful. DM&E is saturating their track traffic capacity profitably, moving coal.

(even)

Additional comments: Thus I repeat my plea to deny this rail expansion project. There is no good reason that the economic gain of a few (ie DMRE) and some remotely possible slight economic advantage to a few others (ie farmers) should override the considerable environmental, economic and safety negative impacts to many of us. The safety concerns include potential loss of human life due to rail crossing collisions and ^{increased} obstruction. No nominal economic gain is worth the loss of human life.
Thank you again for your consideration of all our concerns-

Gerald J Balm

Jerry Balm
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Rochester, MN 55906

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Attn: Victoria Rutson
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