



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Section of Environmental Analysis

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

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COMMENT SHEET

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Comments may be submitted today or mailed to:

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

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

Please see enclosed statement.

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Office of the Secretary

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Additional comments: _____

Lowell Slyter
20829 475th Ave
Aurora SD 57002-6538



Office of the Secretary
Case Control Unit
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Attn: Victoria Rutson
Environmental Project Manager
Environmental Filing



My comments are concerning the rail issue of the Brookings' community and please notice I underlined community to emphasize that this affects a much larger area and population than just the city of Brookings. So far the city leaders have lead you to believe they are speaking for the community in total. Let me assure you they are not speaking for or representing a large segment of the community's population. I disagree with the draft impact statement that a by-pass is the preferred alternative for the following reasons.

1. SAFETY A by-pass will not eliminate the present line through town. Therefore the area will have more than twice as many rail crossings as it now has. I believe there are currently four active crossing in Brookings now. A 16 mile by-pass will not eliminate those crossings only add about 16 more, at least one per mile. In addition many University students will have to cross any by-pass to travel to the many research units North of Brookings. Currently they do not have a railroad to cross. It will require all East- West traffic into Brookings on US 14 to cross a rail crossing going to and from Brookings. Crossings in town will have greater safety features than rural crossings. The following letter to the editor sums up the safety issue very clearly.

Safety is the issue

I attended the meeting last week at the multiplex on the railroad issue. In my opinion the information presented may have avoided much of the controversy around the whole issue. My thanks to Robert Foster and those responsible for the meeting. Several issues became very clear. The 1st question is, do we want a railroad in S. D.? Most agree, yes we need a rail transportation system to meet the needs of ag and other industries in the state. The current system definitely needs to be up graded to provide a reasonable level of timely service and keep it operating. Secondly, if we are going to have a rail line where is the safest place to have it? Based on the discussion at that meeting it became very clear to me that the present location with the planned improved safety features is the safest. A bypass, any bypass, will double the number of times a school bus or anyone else will have to cross a railroad when going from South of the present tracks to the North. A bypass will not remove the present set of tracks! It will only double the number of crossings to get across town. A bypass will not have the safety features, gates, fencing, etc. that will be provided if the current tracks remain the only tracks. Further more, with a bypass the current

tracks will not have the level of new safety features mentioned earlier according to the information presented at that meeting. Therefore, we will simply have two sets of unsafe track instead of one with numerous safety features. That makes the decision pretty easy for a reasonable solution. Leave the tracks where they are and make them as safe as possible for the many children who ride the school buses as well as all traffic. I hope reason will prevail. Forget a bypass, negotiate the safest track possible and construct an overpass on 22nd avenue to allow vehicle traffic no delays from trains in the case of emergencies.

Lowell Slyter
Aurora

2. IMPACT on ENVIRONMENT I would suggest that your board walk the proposed by-pass route since you have not had the opportunity to live in this area before you conclude that a by-pass is the preferred route environmentally. The current line crossing the Big Sioux River and its' flood plain has enough negative impact on water, wildlife and wetlands especially during spring flooding. Why and how could a second rail line do anything but double the negative impact? An additional rail road bed will cause additional flooding, impede wildlife movement and habitat and disturb additional wet lands.

3. REDUCTION of INCOME of AFFECTED FARMERS Disruption of farming enterprises will reduce income and increase expenses for those whose land it dissects. They have no choice; it is not only their home that they will lose but their livelihood as well. The people in town have a choice they can sell and move to another location and that action does not affect their job or income at all. Please keep this in mind as you listen to the arguments from the trackside residents. They purchased their property with the rail line in place! Many of the farmers that would be affected have lived on their farms their whole lifetime and some for generations. Thus in addition to the financial loss they incur a tremendous emotional loss of seeing a family farm that has been in their family for several generations broken up and lost.

4. DUE PROCESS Many of the people that will be affected by the proposed by-passes did not have opportunity to be a part of this process. A number of them have testified at recent meetings that they were never contacted by

either DM & E or the drafters of the by-passes prior to seeing the proposals in the paper. I believe they have a right to be a part of this process.

In conclusion thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns. I am thankful for the part that the railroad has and is playing in the economic development of South Dakota. I do implore you to listen to those who live in Brookings County as well as those who live trackside. Please consider safety, environmental impact, livelihood and emotional trauma of those farmers affected and cost to the public before approving the desires of those who choose to purchase homes along or near the current tracks. I believe the decision should reflect true concern for all citizens of Brookings County and City not just the wishes of those who would like to exert their power. Thank you for your consideration.

Lowell Slyter
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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Lowell Slyter", with a stylized flourish at the end.