

ROCHESTER-OLMSTED COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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Office of the Secretary

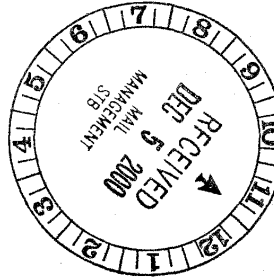
DEC 12 2000

Part of
Public Record

November 28, 2000

001680

Elaine K. Kaiser
Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20423-0001



RE: STB Financial Docket No. 33407

Dear Ms. Kaiser:

On October 6, 2000, the United States Environmental Protection Agency published noticed in the Federal Register of the availability for review and comment of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Powder River Basin Expansion Project, which has been filed by the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad (DM&E). Written comments are due to the Surface Transportation Board by January 5, 2001.

The Rochester - Olmsted Council of Governments (ROCOG) is the federally designated transportation planning organization for the Rochester, Minnesota urbanized area. The organization is established to fulfill the requirements of the U.S. Department of Transportation that all urbanized areas have in place a transportation planning process that develops fiscally constrained plans and programs that facilitate the development, management and operation of an integrated transportation system that enables the safe, efficient and economic movement of people and goods.

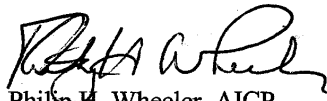
The Powder River Basin Expansion Project presents the community with one of most significant transportation planning challenges we have faced. The prospect of a significant increase in train traffic will impact the efficiency of our transportation system with resulting economic costs to the community. Given the uncertainty of what conclusions or recommendations would be forthcoming in regards to the project prior to release of the DEIS, ROCOG found it difficult to begin the process of assessing potential impacts, alternatives and costs prior to the release of the document. Now that the document has been released for public review and comment, we face the prospect of having to develop a response to the DEIS within the constraints of what is mandated for ROCOG to be an open and cooperative planning process.

ROCHESTER-OLMSTED COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
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We believe the results of an open and informed planning effort are important to a full and fair consideration of the environmental impacts of this project. For this reason, the ROCOG Policy Board has authorized me to request that the Surface Transportation Board provide an additional 90 days for review and comment, resulting in a full 180 day comment period for the project. This will provide our organization and our member units of government the necessary time to thoughtfully consider, evaluate and provide comments to the Board on this matter.

Your attention and consideration of this matter is greatly appreciated.

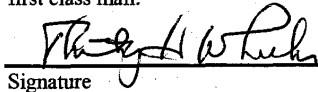
Sincerely,



Philip H. Wheeler, AICP
Executive Director, ROCOG

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that I have this day served copies of the document upon all parties of record in this proceeding by first class mail.



Signature

11/29/2000

Date