

CITY OF BROOKINGS



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February 27, 2001

Office of the Secretary
Case Control Unit
STB Finance Docket No. 33407
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20433-0001

ENTERED
Office of the Secretary

MAR - 7 2001

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Public Record

Dear Secretary Vernon Williams,

I want to thank the Board for its work on this important issue. Further, I want to express the City of Brookings' appreciation for the Board's agreement that a bypass around Brookings is necessary to mitigate negative impacts of the DM&E expansion. The City is of the opinion that a bypass is the only method to truly mitigate the negative impacts.

Please find enclosed the City of Brookings City Council Resolution making a recommendation to the Surface Transportation Board on the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad Corporation's (DM&E) construction application (STB Finance Docket No. 33407.) The City of Brookings is recommending revision to the B-4 alternative. This is a shortened version of the B-4 alternative that uses less property, affects less people and utilizes the State of South Dakota right-of-way. The B-4 alternative was acceptable, but this variation of B-4, referred to as B-4A, is a better solution. The City has also provided a proposal to sever the in-city line to allow service to local shippers, but eliminate several pedestrian and at-grade crossings, referred to as B-4Aa.

The DM&E expansion project is of huge concern to the Brookings Community. There is huge concern because the proposal expansion will dramatically harm the Brookings community if it is allowed to proceed as requested in the DM&E's application. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) properly stated that the use of the existing rail line through the City of Brookings would cause negative impacts from the construction and operation of the rebuilt railroad. You will see in this comprehensive analysis that a change from three slow moving trains a day to thirty-seven high speed a day will have a dramatic affect on the City of Brookings.

The City of Brookings is unique. Comparing Brookings to other communities with large amounts of train traffic is not reasonable. The City of Brookings grew around a rail line that had limited use. The DM&E line runs through commercial districts, a commercial historic district and a large residential area. More than three hundred homes are within three hundred feet of the existing railroad right-of-way. There are six at grade crossings through the City. The proposed expansion increases the probability of train/pedestrian and train/vehicular collisions. In addition to traffic delays and decreased safety, Brookings people would be subjected to decreased air quality and unacceptable levels of noise and vibration.

The City has carefully followed the STB's notices and in this report demonstrates that an alternative bypass (called B-4A or B-4Aa) are "reasonable and feasible" and would not "simply shift the potential environmental consequences of the applicant's proposal to different communities and populations". This bypass variation is much shortened from the B-4 alternative, less expensive to build than the B-2 alternative and allows the "applicant to achieve its goal of providing efficient rail transportation".

The City Council has offered \$4 million in funding for a bypass. The State of South Dakota is committed to providing right-of-way and funding the grade separation at I-29. This joint effort demonstrates the need and commitment of the community.

The City is confident that you will find this alternative worthy of examination and incorporating into the final EIS as the recommended bypass for Brookings.

Once again, thank you.

Sincerely,



Michael Williams, City Manager
City of Brookings

Enc.

mw/jrd

RESOLUTION NO. 06-01

A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING APPROVAL OF THE B-4A BYPASS
TO THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD.

WHEREAS, The Brookings City Council desires to do what is best for the City of Brookings.

WHEREAS, The City of Brookings with a population of 17,200 is one of the largest urban areas in the State of South Dakota. It is located on Interstate 29 and U. S. Highway 14 and is an important educational, health care, business/economic and recreational resource for this region.

WHEREAS, Brookings is surrounded by a large agricultural area with land devoted to raising field crops – corn, wheat, soybeans – and providing animal pasture. It was established and grew initially as a supply and marketing center for this agricultural activity.

WHEREAS, Mid-sized cities such as Brookings play an extremely important role in the effort to achieve economic diversity for South Dakota. Mid-sized cities are able to provide the workforce, housing, education institutions and social, recreational and cultural amenities necessary to attract industry and commerce and enable it to survive. Brookings and others like it have existing infrastructure (roads, wastewater facilities, airports, etc.) necessary to provide services for these businesses and their employees.

WHEREAS, Brookings has grown at the rate of 7% in the last 10 years. It is predicted that the City will continue to grow in the next decade by approximately 10%.

WHEREAS, Like other mid-sized urban concentrations on the Northern Plains area, Brookings though attractive as a location for new industry and an important part of the State of South Dakota's future economy is a relatively fragile/vulnerable urban place. The urban area is relatively small and concentrated. Its layout is much like it was around the turn of the Twentieth Century; the commercial/governmental area is situated in the center and is surrounded by compact layers of business, housing, schools, etc. Industrial use is primarily located on the east and west edges of the City.

WHEREAS, Brookings has found over the years that land uses with adverse impacts on its residential population can have a disproportionate quantitative and qualitative impact on the City's livability. Use changes and impacts affect the City a great deal because of its limited size and tight pattern of development. The place where these impact uses are located is extremely important to the City's existing residents and its future development.

WHEREAS, For this reason, land uses having the potential to cause major adverse impacts have been historically located outside of town or on the outer fringe of the urban center to avoid hurting the existing urban area and to preserve the quality of life in the City. Examples

of these uses which have been placed on the perimeter include: the Industrial parks, landfill and the Highway 14 bypass.

WHEREAS, Residents and businesses in the City of Brookings have examined, analyzed and discussed the coal train and the impacts from various alternative routes, for three years. Widespread publicity and discussion have occurred during this period, and the views of residents and businesses are well known though not loudly expressed.

WHEREAS, Among other activities, the City Council met with the DM&E in an attempt to negotiate a Community Partnership Agreement and developed and reviewed two specific bypass alternatives, and many other suggested routes, studied and examined the impacts from the alternative rail routing alignments, reviewed the DEIS and the extensive analytical material, attended hearings, held meetings, traveled to, observed and conferred with residents of other cities impacted by coal train routes and analyzed financial costs, opportunities and impacts related to the funding of a bypass.

Based on the above, the Council of the City of Brookings hereby adopts the following findings, conclusions and recommendation.

1. DM&E coal train will provide an overall benefit for the State of South Dakota and to the City of Brookings and as a result, the construction of the new line from the Powder River Basin to the Mississippi River is strongly supported.
2. DM&E coal train will result in a major change in rail travel at the City of Brookings. The number of trains passing through the City daily will increase from four to potentially forty (1,000%). Brookings has never had a large volume of through train traffic and was not built around or to accommodate a train system.
3. Routing the DM&E coal train on the existing rail alignment through the City regardless of the type, nature and amount of mitigation incorporated will have the following significant adverse impacts on the City:
 - The increased rail traffic would affect in some way 60% of Brookings County's population.
 - The additional rail traffic would increase the exposure index at major urban intersections to a level where grade separations should be considered where feasible.
 - The ability of emergency vehicles to get to various parts of the City would be compromised unless grade separations were provided at key locations.
 - The increased noise and vibration and decrease in air quality would have a negative impact on property values adjacent to the existing alignment.
 - Three highly utilized pedestrian crossings in the City of Brookings would have to be mitigated to minimize significant safety concerns.
 - Service to existing customers would be more difficult and less timely.
 - Future growth south of the tracks in Brookings might be negatively impacted.

- If grade separations are constructed where justified by exposure index values or sound impacts, several property owners would have to be relocated, streets would have to be closed and new entrances to several businesses would have to be identified and constructed.
 - Increased rail traffic would cause considerable delay and general traffic interruption for the traveling public.
 - Additional right of way may need to be acquired to construct any future passing sidings.
 - Numerous property owners would be negatively affected by construction activities that would occur essentially in their back yards.
4. The City of Brookings has carefully evaluated Alternative B-4 as set forth in the DEIS. While Alternative B-4 as set forth in the DEIS remains a preferred alternative when compared with Alternative B-2, the City has developed a variation of Alternative B-4 which is Brookings' preferred alternative alignment. Because of its similarity to the Alternative B-4 alignment it is referred to as Alternative B-4A. Routing DM&E coal train on the proposed B-4A bypass adjacent to the Highway 14 bypass to the north of the City will avoid adverse impacts of Alternative B-2 and could result in beneficial impacts for both the land in this area and the City and County of Brookings. Among other potential beneficial impacts are the following:
- The proposed bypass affects only a few property owners in comparison to the in-city route.
 - The proposed route would bypass 60% of Brookings County's population.
 - The proposed bypass would eliminate large increases in train traffic at urban intersections with high average daily traffic counts.
 - Improved safety for pedestrians and drivers would be possible if the coal train traffic was bypassed.
 - There would be no appreciable change in train noise and air quality along the current railroad alignment.
 - The ability of emergency vehicles to get to various parts of the City would not be negatively affected with the bypass.
 - There should be no appreciable negative economic impact on property values of the many homeowners adjacent to the existing railroad alignment. All through rail traffic is bypassed.
 - The concern over increased vibration and potential structural damage to building foundations along the current route would be negated with a bypass.
 - Construction on new trackage for the proposed coal train traffic would be easier along the new route compared to upgrading the existing route under traffic.
 - The wider right of way width on the bypass would lend itself better to future bypass siding construction.
 - Land for wetland mitigation along the proposed bypass would be donated by a local landowner.
 - The bypass would eliminate the need to fully mitigate the hazards associated with three highly utilized pedestrian crossings in the City of Brookings.

- Current traffic interruptions in Brookings from train passage would not change with the proposed bypass.
 - Future growth south of the current tracks in Brookings would not be negatively impacted with a bypass as proposed.
 - No additional property would have to be acquired within the City if a bypass was constructed.
 - The construction of the proposed bypass could create business opportunities for DM&E in the form of future industrial expansion in the Brookings area.
 - A bypass would allow the coal trains to maintain higher speeds than normally possible through urban areas.
5. The establishment of the Highway 14 bypass on the north side of the City some 25 years ago, is proof of the benefit to all of creating a major transportation corridor bypass to avoid adverse impacts and to benefit the use.
 6. The socio-economic cost of routing the coal train through the City dramatically exceeds the socio-economic cost of routing the coal train on a bypass north of the City.
 7. The financial costs incurred by the DM&E for reconstructing the in-city route and associated mitigation features under any scenario will most certainly exceed the total costs of constructing the bypass and related mitigation. Indeed, the expenditure of \$34 million of probable costs of mitigation under Alternative B-2 will not assure acceptable mitigation of the adverse impacts of Alternative B-2.
 8. The City in recognition of the importance of constructing the bypass and preserving access and service to local shippers has previously offered \$4 million to this effort and is willing to do whatever else it can to preserve service to local shippers and facilitate the selection, development, funding and utilization of the bypass route for the DM&E coal train.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Brookings thanks Governor William J. Janklow for his leadership in submitting and supporting the Brookings Bypass Proposal.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Brookings thanks the Section of the Environmental Analysis (SEA) of the Surface Transportation Board (STB) for identifying the Brookings Alternative B-4 of the DEIS (Decision No. 31225) as the preferred alternative.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Brookings will work to support Alternative B-4A or any alignment associated with Alternative B-4.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Brookings expresses financial support for Alternative B-4A or any alignment associated with Alternative B-4.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Brookings, in recognition of the importance of constructing the bypass, has offered financial support of \$4 million to construct the Bypass, which includes financial support to preserve access and service to local shippers.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Brookings recommends that the STB approve and order the B-4A Bypass as described in the "Supplemental Discussion and Impact Assessment of Bypass Variation at Brookings, South Dakota".

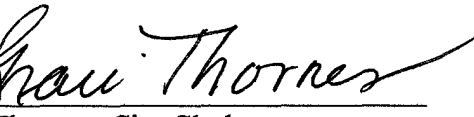
BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Brookings seeks direction from the SEA/STB with regard to all appropriate issues raised above.

Passed and approved this 27th day of February 2001.

CITY OF BROOKINGS


Mayor Virgil H. Herriott

ATTEST:

 
Shan Thornes, City Clerk