

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT

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SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD Section of Environmental Analysis

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

COMMENT SHEET

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To the STB,

My name is Peter Hartman. I live on Rochester's east side one block from DM&E's rail road tracks. Currently the train traffic along the DM&E line is light, usually no more than 3 trains a day, sometimes just one a day. Today's trains move slowly and aren't very long. They don't make excessive noise unless you're right up by them. From one block away they aren't a problem. There is a public foot and bicycle trail right along the track that leads from the Zumbro River to East Park and on to Quarry Hill Park. People of all ages enjoy this trail. Numerous Canadian Geese fly overhead and occasionally a wild turkey is seen.

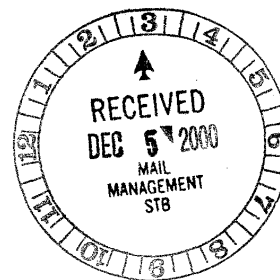
If it is in the best interest of our nation to approve the DM&E Expansion Project then

1. the Expansion must do as little environmental damage as possible and
2. individuals and communities along the coal line must be compensated for their losses. DM&E must be made to bear the cost of mitigating noise, vibration, traffic and safety problems that are created by the Expansion.

Environmental concerns

There are many issues concerning the environment that are poorly or not at all addressed in the DEIS. The DEIS is inaccurate and incomplete. A new Environmental Impact Study should be undertaken. One example of this is the lack of comment on what happens to the coal once it reaches Winona, MN. How will the Mississippi River be impacted? What impact will a huge pile of coal sitting on top of the sandy soils of the Mississippi River bottom have?

As far as a Bypass around Rochester, I believe it would cause more environmental harm than an upgrade in place. The Bypass route would be longer and the construction of a new track would do terrible harm to the landscape.



Mitigation and Compensation

If coal trains are to thunder across southern Minnesota then DM&E must be responsible for

1. mitigating the harmful effects of the Expansion and
2. compensating individuals for their losses.

Should a neighbor be able to financial, physically and emotionally harm another neighbor? Should a neighbor be able to violate noise ordinances all day and all night long blasting other neighbors with 70 decibels of percussion sounds? If something a neighbor did that cost me 20 percent of my house value couldn't I sue for reparations? Should a neighbor be able to block the roads, even blocking them to emergency vehicles?

The DEIS did not adequately address mitigation in urban residential areas. Here is what DM&E can do to mitigate the effects of the coal trains in Rochester. DM&E buys a half block wide stretch of property on either side of the tracks. The displaced homeowners and businesses must be generously compensated for their properties (15% above market value at 3-15-2000 prices) and paid moving expenses. In this strip of land along the tracks DM&E will build two ridges one on either side paralleling the tracks. These barrier ridges should be 5 feet taller than the coal trains. On and adjacent to the barrier ridges vegetation will be established to give the area a park like or native habitat like appearance. Trees planted on the barrier ridges will give additional noise protection. On the outside edge of the barrier ridges a pedestrian and bicycle trail will be built. On the inside edge of the barrier ridges right along the tracks a fence will be built to keep people off the tracks. All existing crossing will be maintained but will be upgraded by either building an overpass or an underpass.

In rural areas as many of the crossing should be maintained as possible. Lost crossings will cause farmers economic hardships. DM&E should offer to buy land when farms are cut in two. DM&E should establish a land exchange system so that farmers could sell land on one side of the tracks and buy land on the other side of the tracks. Where the tracks are near rural residences or farmsteads DM&E must build noise protection barriers or purchase the property if it is too close.

Mitigation and compensation will be expensive but this is what needs to be done to make areas near the tracks livable. The DM&E Expansion is a complete change from how the tracks are currently used. The cost to mitigate and compensate must be part of the cost of the Expansion Project. Why should individuals and communities incur loss so that DM&E can profit?

Sincerely,

Peter R Hartman

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

Attn: Victoria Rutson
Environmental Project Manager
Environmental Filing

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Case Control Unit
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Additional comments: