

December 12, 2006

Honorable Vernon A. Williams
Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

218291



**Re: STB Ex Parte No. 665
Rail Transportation of Grain**

Dear Secretary Williams:

Enclosed for filing in the above referenced matter are the original and ten copies of my comments as a North Dakota businessman who uses rail transportation.

Thank you for your assistance, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "David Polries".

David Polries
President
Dakota Dry Bean
5100 6th Avenue, North
Grand Forks, ND 58203
701-741-9093

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BEFORE THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Ex Parte No. 665

Rail Transportation of Grain

Written Testimony of Submitted by
David Polries, President
Dakota Dry Bean
December 12, 2006

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In accordance with this Board's Oct. 11 2006 announcement, David Polries, on behalf of himself, submits these comments for a public hearing to be held on Nov. 2, 2006, before the Surface Transportation Board.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to provide my viewpoint on transporting grain, specifically dry beans, by rail before the Surface Transportation Board. This is an important issue that merits discussion. I am an active member of the U.S. Dry Pea and Lentil Association, but feel compelled to offer separate testimony in order to demonstrate that not all producers advocate the corrective measures that you will hear today. Rail transportation has been improving in North Dakota and that is a story worth telling.

Where I agree with my fellow producers in the Association is that rail transportation is critical to the survival of rural America. Producers in North Dakota must have readily available and timely access to rail service if we are to remain competitive in U.S. and export markets. By working with BNSF Railway, I believe I do have access to timely service that has not only helped me remain competitive in a global market, but also grow my business.

The best way to demonstrate this service is through my own experience. As I mentioned, I ship several hundred cars of dry peas annually by rail. You will often hear from my counterparts that this commodity does not readily adapt to the shuttle system that is prevalent in grain-producing states like North Dakota. This is true. But I have found that BNSF works hard to accommodate my shipping needs. Over the past few years, I have experienced tremendously improved service at a fair rate. Late car orders are not the problem they once were in this part of the country.

The question you may ask yourselves is, why? The answer is because railroads and producers are working together. Without railroads, I don't have a business. Without customers, railroads won't stay in business for long. We have to cooperate or we will not survive and that is the dynamic that I've seen developing in North Dakota in recent years.

For example, BNSF has been holding meetings in North Dakota and Montana the past couple of years. The purpose of these meetings is not so much to discuss specific agriculture movements but for each one of us to get a better understanding of our place and role in the grain supply chain. Communication is critical to the success of this effort.

I have found that once both sides are talking with one another, we usually see where we have common ground and what we can accomplish together to grow our respective businesses. It is a simple concept actually. If I am able to grow and sell more of my crop, then the railroad is able to haul more freight, and that is good for both of us.

It is important that a different perspective is heard in today's proceeding. You will hear much discussion of poor service and surging rail rates which is not productive. What is also not productive is the trading of accusations and lobbying of Congress for unnecessary restrictions or regulation on the rail industry. From my point of view, this will restrict the railroad's ability to maintain their financial health and producers will pay the price with decreased service. I advocate a different approach. I have found that a constructive dialogue can and will develop when railroads and producers reach out to one another. I encourage my fellow producers to attend the same town hall meetings that I have attended and to begin a dialogue with their rail carrier. The result is well worth the effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments for this proceeding.