

Meeting 1-6.12.15

PUBLIC MEETING
FOR THE
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
FOR THE
PROPOSED TONGUE RIVER RAILROAD

FORSYTH, MONTANA

JUNE 12, 2015

2:30 P.M. MT

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1 FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2015

2 2:30 P.M. MT

3 FORSYTH, MONTANA

4 -oOo-

5 JENNIFER PIGGOTT: Well, it feels better in
6 here than it does outside, that's for sure. Nice and
7 cool.

8 We'll go ahead and start the public meeting
9 portion of this afternoon. If you would, if you have a
10 cellphone on, if you would go ahead and silence it, we
11 would appreciate it, and then I'd like to introduce from
12 the Surface Transportation Board Mr. Ken Blodgett, who
13 will be providing just a few remarks before we move into
14 your oral comments.

15 KEN BLODGETT: Tell me, can everybody hear me
16 okay?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's humming.

18 KEN BLODGETT: You can't? You can hear me?

19 Okay. Good afternoon, and thank you all for
20 coming to this afternoon's meeting on the Draft
21 Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed rail
22 line of Tongue River Railroad.

23 My name is Ken Blodgett, and with me here
24 today is Catherine Nadals, and we're here representing
25 the Surface Transportation Board's Office of

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1 Environmental Analysis. Also with me at the table is
2 Alan Summerville of ICF International, the project
3 manager for our third-party contracting team; and
4 Elizabeth Diller, also of ICF International. And
5 Jennifer Piggott will be acting as our facilitator
6 today.

7 The Surface Transportation Board is the
8 federal agency responsible for the economic regulation
9 of interstate surface transportation within the
10 United States and for granting authority for the
11 construction and operation of new rail lines and
12 associated facilities.

13 The board's mission is to ensure that
14 competitive, efficient, and safe transportation services
15 are provided to meet the needs of shippers, receivers,
16 and consumers. In all of its decisions, the board is
17 committed to enhancing the national transportation
18 policy goals as established by Congress.

19 The Office of Environmental Analysis, or OEA,
20 is responsible for ensuring that the board is in
21 compliance with the requirements of the National
22 Environmental Policy Act. We fulfill this
23 responsibility through independent environmental review
24 of railroad actions, which require the board's approval.

25 On October 16th, 2012, the Tongue River

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1 Railroad Company filed an application with the Surface
2 Transportation Board to construct and operate a rail
3 line from Miles City, Montana, to two endpoints near
4 Ashland.

5 On December 17th, 2012, Tongue River Railroad
6 filed a supplemental application in which it identified
7 its preferred routing for the proposed line as the
8 Colstrip alternative, between Colstrip and the Ashland
9 area.

10 The Surface Transportation Board is the lead
11 agency responsible for preparing the Draft Environmental
12 Impact Statement. Four cooperating agencies worked with
13 the board in comparing the Draft EIS: The
14 Bureau of Land Management, the Corps of Engineers, the
15 U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Montana state
16 agencies. These cooperating agencies all have
17 decision-making authority independent of the board and
18 are agencies from which Tongue River Railroad would
19 obtain separate approvals or permits before
20 construction.

21 The purpose of today's meeting is for us to
22 receive comments, both oral and written, on the Draft
23 Environmental Impact Statement, was served on -- at --
24 which was served and made available to the public on
25 April 17th. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement

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1 reflects OEA's analysis of the potential environmental
2 impacts that could result from the construction and
3 operation of the proposed line.

4 Public involvement is an important component
5 in the environmental review process. Our hope is that
6 the comments you provide to us today will help us to
7 address your concerns and any concerns you may have
8 about the construction and operation of the proposed
9 rail line, as well as appropriate mitigation measures.

10 The public comment period will last until
11 August 24th, 2015. After the public comment period has
12 come to a close, OEA will consider all comments received
13 and address each comment in the Final Environmental
14 Impact Statement, which will present our final
15 conclusions and recommendations for mitigating possible
16 environmental effects. Issuance of the Final
17 Environmental Impact Statement will complete the board's
18 environmental review process.

19 The board will then make a final decision on
20 the proposed rail line construction. In making that
21 decision, the board will consider the entire
22 environmental record, including all public comments
23 received, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, the
24 Final Environmental Impact Statement, and our final
25 recommended environmental mitigation. No

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1 project-related construction may begin until the board
2 has issued that final decision and it has become
3 effective.

4 Those who have indicated that they would like
5 to make a public comment on the record this afternoon on
6 the Draft EIS, which will be recorded by the court
7 reporter, will be called upon to speak in the order in
8 which they signed in today.

9 If you would like to provide a handwritten
10 comment, there's a comment area in the room somewhere.
11 Over there. There's forms and boxes where you can write
12 your comments and put them in the box. You can also
13 provide comments by writing to the Surface
14 Transportation Board in Washington or visiting the
15 project Web site, tonguerivereis.com, where you can
16 submit a comment electronically.

17 All oral and written comments will be given
18 equal weight and consideration. In preparing the
19 written comments, we encourage you to be as detailed as
20 possible regarding the content of the Draft
21 Environmental Impact Statement.

22 That concludes my remarks, and I'll now turn
23 the floor over to Alan Summerville, who will talk a
24 little bit more about the environmental review process.

25 ALAN SUMMERVILLE: Good afternoon. Can

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1 everyone hear me?

2 During the open house portion of this meeting,
3 we provided information on the environmental review
4 process and on the project, and I just want to take a
5 couple of minutes right now to summarize that for those
6 of you who weren't able to make it to the open house
7 portion and try to recap for those who were.

8 How's this sound? Good. All right.

9 Let's see. Okay. In the meeting brochure and
10 on one of the posters in the back of the room is a
11 figure depicting the environmental review process. To
12 initiate the scoping process, OEA issued notification of
13 its intent to prepare an EIS to the public; elected
14 officials; federal, state, and local agencies; tribal
15 organizations; and other potentially interested
16 organizations.

17 OEA issued a Draft Scope of Study and held
18 agency and public meetings to obtain comments on topics
19 that the EIS should analyze and possible alternatives to
20 the Tongue River Railroad proposed alignment.

21 Interested agencies and persons were invited to
22 participate in the scoping phase by reviewing the Draft
23 Scope of Study, submitting comments in writing, and
24 attending scoping meetings held in the project area.

25 After considering comments received through the scoping

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1 process, the board published a Notice of the Final Scope
2 of Study for the EIS on March 22nd, 2013.

3 Throughout the development of the Draft EIS,
4 OEA met in person and through teleconferences with
5 federal, state, and local agencies, as well as tribes.
6 OEA prepared the Draft EIS by analyzing the potential
7 environmental impacts of the proposed Tongue River
8 Railroad and the reasonable alternatives, including the
9 "No-Action" alternative. The Draft EIS also addresses
10 the impacts of trains traveling to destinations outside
11 the project area, which are also known as "downline
12 impacts."

13 Any of the build alternatives could have minor
14 to highly adverse impacts on the following resources:
15 Transportation, greenhouse gases and climate change,
16 noise, biological resources, water, visual, and
17 historical and cultural resources, land resources,
18 geology and soils, socioeconomics, and environmental
19 justice. All other resources would experience
20 negligible impacts.

21 The Draft EIS also includes OEA's preliminary
22 recommendations regarding mitigation. Each of these
23 measures will be considered by the board as potential
24 conditions if the board decides to grant TRRC authority
25 to construct and operate the rail line.

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1 As Ken mentioned, the Draft EIS was
2 distributed and made available on April 17th to
3 interested members of the public; parties of record;
4 elected officials; tribes; and appropriate federal,
5 state, and local officials. OEA provided extensive
6 notification through various meetings to the public area
7 and downline communities.

8 The Final EIS will consider and respond to all
9 comments received on the Draft EIS and will include any
10 appropriate changes and recommendations for additional
11 mitigation measures. It will also identify OEA's
12 preferred alternative. Completion of the Final EIS will
13 be announced to the public in the Notice of Availability
14 published in the Federal Register and by notification to
15 the interested parties.

16 At this time I'd like to hand the meeting back
17 over to our facilitator, Jennifer Piggott, who will go
18 over some ground rules, and then we can begin to hear
19 public comments.

20 Thank you.

21 JENNIFER PIGGOTT: Let me know if you can't
22 hear me. I talk pretty loud, so it might be better for
23 me not to use the mic.

24 We'll now begin the oral comment portion of
25 this afternoon. Before we begin, I'd like to go over

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1 just a few things.

2 If you haven't already done so, like I said,
3 please silence your cellphones so we don't interrupt the
4 meeting. If you would like to speak and did not sign up
5 when you arrived at the meeting, please raise your hand
6 and we'll get you registered.

7 Okay. A court reporter will transcribe your
8 oral comments for use in preparing the Final
9 Environmental Impact Statement. Please do not provide
10 any information in your comments that you would not want
11 to see published in the final document.

12 Please speak slowly and clearly so the court
13 reporter can easily record your comments. Please state
14 your full name and spell it out for the record, and
15 indicate if you're representing a group or an
16 organization this afternoon.

17 Out of respect for others, we ask that you
18 please limit your comments to three minutes. If you
19 think you'll have more comments than you can present in
20 the time allotted, please make the most important
21 comments first. This time limit has been set at each
22 meeting to ensure everyone who wishes to speak has a
23 fair and equal opportunity to provide their comments.

24 If you don't get a chance to voice all of your
25 comments, you can submit them in writing. If you have a₁₀

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1 written statement, you can read it aloud, and we
2 recommend that you also submit that written statement as
3 a written comment.

4 If time permits at the end of the meeting,
5 we'll invite up additional speakers and anyone who
6 didn't get a chance to finish their original comments.

7 Please feel free to provide your comments in
8 either written or oral form. Both forms will have equal
9 weight in the final document.

10 Finally, this portion of the meeting allows
11 you to provide comments that will be transcribed. OEA
12 will not answer questions or respond to comments during
13 this portion of the meeting. OEA will respond to
14 comments in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.
15 This will allow as much time as possible for members of
16 the public to comment.

17 I will now call up our first speaker this
18 afternoon, which is Commissioner Doug Martens.

19 DOUG MARTENS: I'm Doug Martens,
20 M-a-r-t-e-n-s, with Rosebud County Commissioners.

21 We're just here to see if we can help continue
22 to provide the services to our constituents that we are
23 currently providing. I had a couple quick comments on
24 the mitigation stuff in the Draft EIS. The one was
25 MM-9. It refers to any slash burning or open burning

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1 during construction of the railroad. It says in there
2 that the railroad must obtain a burn permit from DEQ,
3 and I would ask that you add that they need to get a
4 burn permit from the county as well.

5 The other one is UM-18. It said that the
6 railroad would be required to have plowed fire guards.
7 If possible, I would like to have language added to that
8 that those plowed fire guards be four-wheel-drive
9 accessible so that we can use them for fire engine
10 transportation.

11 And that was all I had. Thank you.

12 JENNIFER PIGGOTT: Great. Thank you for your
13 comments.

14 Our next speaker this afternoon is Flora
15 Duffer.

16 No? Okay.

17 Our next speaker is Mike Coryell.

18 MIKE CORYELL: Thank you, and I appreciate
19 this forum and what you're doing to move this process
20 forward.

21 I don't have anything specific in terms of the
22 EIS, but what I have to say is that -- and I represent
23 the Miles City Area Economic Development Council, as
24 well as myself -- but what I want to say is that we are
25 proponents of the railroad, but when we look at this, we₁₂

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1 see that there's different options.

2 And we appreciate the fact that, considering
3 these options, that the companies have chosen the
4 preferred option of going to Colstrip. And we think
5 that that's an absolutely excellent choice, in terms of
6 what we're trying to accomplish. It certainly decreases
7 the cost, it impacts less land, and it just makes it a
8 more efficient process to do that.

9 Countries and worlds are going to grow.
10 People are going to, you know, continue to flourish,
11 et cetera. There's going to be changes. And it's our
12 belief that changes are going to affect everybody, but
13 if we do it in the right way, which I think is being
14 done, that these changes will be a positive effect on
15 not only our rural and city areas, but also for the
16 entire country. So we're very much a proponent of this
17 railroad and a proponent of the preferred route.

18 So thank you.

19 JENNIFER PIGGOTT: Thank you for your
20 comments.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't think that
22 mic's turned on.

23 JENNIFER PIGGOTT: I think we may just need to
24 have folks -- it's on. It's just -- test test. Yeah,
25 you just got to get a little closer to it.

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1 Okay. Our next speaker is Kathleen Masis.

2 KATHLEEN MASIS: Masis.

3 JENNIFER PIGGOTT: Masis.

4 KATHLEEN MASIS: I didn't realize it was so
5 close.

6 Good afternoon. Thank you for having us. I'm
7 a retired physician, and I've been in public health all
8 my career, and I'm concerned about the public's health
9 in relation to the proposed mine -- railroad. So that's
10 how I looked at the Draft EIS, was how much and how
11 would the proposed railroad and the coal that it
12 transported affect our health and well-being.

13 I'm from Billings, but I consider myself a
14 member of the greater Tongue River Valley community. I
15 love the Tongue River Valley. And I am a member of the
16 Physicians for Social Responsibility and the Union of
17 Concerned Scientists. I'm also a member of Northern
18 Plains Resource Council, but I'm not representing
19 anybody but me.

20 And I looked at their -- the PSR and the UCS
21 analysis of the life cycle of coal, and I appreciate the
22 way that the Draft EIS was organized. My concern -- how
23 many minutes -- can you tell me when I have one minute
24 left? My concerns are about the potential benefits to
25 society of accessing the Tongue River coal and making it₁₄

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1 available for electricity generation. Do these benefits
2 outweigh the known risks to health?

3 And I have comments about the specific
4 findings in the Draft EIS, but I'm going to go to the
5 end, just I hope I get back up here again.

6 The -- it looks to me like it does not -- that
7 the benefits of increasing the U.S. coal by
8 1.4 million tons a year, which even though there's
9 1.5 million tons in the -- no, a billion tons under
10 Otter Creek in those hills, the -- your analysis showed
11 1.4 million tons a year would be the increase to the
12 U.S. energy supply because of the displacement of the
13 other coal. And I do not see, especially with the
14 historical, cultural, moderate adverse effects that you
15 found, that this would be a benefit to Tongue River
16 Valley, to Montana, or to the U.S.

17 Thanks.

18 JENNIFER PIGGOTT: Thank you for your
19 comments.

20 Our next speaker is Elli Elliott.

21 SUSAN ELLIOTT: My official name is Susan,
22 S-u-s-a-n, Elli, E-l-l-i, and Elliott, E-l-l-i-o-t-t.

23 And I have come over here from Red Lodge,
24 Montana, today. And if you know anything of Red Lodge,
25 there are many wealthy retirees there. I am not one of 15

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1 those people. I am taking my only day off from my two
2 jobs to be here today because this is really, really
3 important.

4 It's important to me as a Montanan that you
5 have come here to listen to us face-to-face and not --
6 and I would hope that you would communicate to the
7 people who will make a decision about this that it's not
8 about what investors see, which is the bottom line, and
9 they see this as some kind of asset and don't see what's
10 here that the poet Wally McRae, whose land is threatened
11 in this, describes as things of intrinsic worth.

12 And I believe it's of intrinsic worth to the
13 whole nation that Montana values and Montana communities
14 continue to thrive in the culture that has developed in
15 places like the Tongue River Valley. There's not --
16 there's no other place like it. There's no other place
17 like it. And once it's destroyed, it's gone. And
18 adverse impacts, you can call them moderate, but they're
19 permanent.

20 And you're jeopardizing some things that are
21 very important to me. I live in a gorgeous place on the
22 Beartooth Front, and yet the Tongue River is also really
23 important. I mean, we can't just preserve the gorgeous
24 places. We struggle for those, and I do that as a
25 member of the Carbon County Resource Council. I'm

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1 speaking on their behalf, but, you know, everywhere is
2 threatened, but this is unnecessary.

3 We're now -- we're looking at something that
4 you will make a decision about -- or the people you take
5 this to -- make a decision about the public good,
6 because what's been asked for is the use of eminent
7 domain to create right of ways across private land and
8 historic family ranch operations and through cultural
9 heritage of an entire people.

10 For -- eminent domain should be used for the
11 public good. There is no public good here. This is for
12 the good of a failing coal company. And to do something
13 in the name of the public good that benefits a few
14 investors and makes permanent damage, let them lose
15 their money. It's a great -- much greater loss for us
16 to lose this thing of intrinsic worth.

17 Besides that, I've learned from the impact
18 statement that my niece's husband's livelihood could be
19 threatened at Colstrip if this is done. So I just want
20 to throw that in.

21 But thank you for holding hearings. It's
22 important to see us face-to-face. I'm sorry for not
23 stopping.

24 JENNIFER PIGGOTT: Fine. Thank you for your
25 comments.

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1 Ms. Elliott was actually our last speaker. So
2 let me first ask if there's anyone who hasn't provided a
3 comment who would like to provide an oral comment this
4 afternoon?

5 Okay. A second question is: Those that did
6 speak, would anyone like to elaborate on your comments?

7 Please.

8 KATHLEEN MASIS: Kathleen Masis. And I'm
9 going back -- let's see. So what -- we know that the
10 top ten -- the top ten coal-producing mines in the U.S.
11 are surface mines in Powder River Basin, and most are in
12 Wyoming. The only reason for the Tongue River Railroad
13 is to transport coal from the proposed Otter Creek Mine,
14 and that's considered Powder River Basin coal.

15 The Otter Creek Coal Mine is currently the
16 largest proposed surface mine in the U.S. The market
17 for coal in the U.S. has been softening because it's
18 relatively, quote, dirty as a source of electricity,
19 compared to alternatives like natural gas and nonfossil
20 fuels like sun and wind.

21 There are significant pollutants released when
22 the coal is mined, washed, transported, burned, and then
23 aftereffects which contribute to loss of life and
24 health. And greenhouse gases are emitted. Coal
25 combustion is reported to emit 30 percent of total U.S. 18

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1 carbon dioxide pollution that contributes to global
2 warming.

3 Post-combustion coal, ash, slurry with arsenic
4 and lead threatens drinking water and waterways. And
5 what I found by reading the Draft EIS was that the net
6 reduction of pollutants and greenhouse gases from the
7 combustion of the coal transported by the proposed
8 Tongue River Railroad would be "negligible" -- that's
9 the word -- because production of Tongue River coal
10 would cause total U.S. coal production to increase on
11 average by only 1.4 billion tons a year.

12 So there was no -- so, negligent. 1.5 billion
13 tons in the ground that is -- there's a proposed coal
14 mine, but it would make negligible pollution because the
15 Draft EIS says in its market analysis that there's only
16 1.4 million tons that would be -- that would increase
17 the U.S. coal production.

18 So what else did I find in the Draft EIS?
19 The mining, we have pictures of miners, covered in coal
20 dust, coming up from underground mines and gas mains,
21 with black lung disease. But technology and production
22 standards have made coal mining safer. And
23 mechanization has resulted in the need for fewer miners.
24 Fewer injuries and deaths from accidents also.

25 Surface mining is also cheaper. So that

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1 lowers production costs. In the case of the Tongue
2 River Valley, Otter Creek Mine, you would have surface
3 mining, which is less dangerous for the miners, but
4 worse for the surrounding communities because of the
5 noise and dust of blasting.

6 Soil erosion and contamination of water
7 supplies can occur. According to the Physicians for
8 Social Responsibility, coal rubble, with a capital R,
9 or, quote, overburden is deposited on the surface,
10 destroying plants and animals and introducing into the
11 food web trace minerals and metals once deeply buried.
12 After a mine is abandoned, acidic mine drainage can
13 degrade the water.

14 The Draft EIS does not analyze the
15 environmental health effects of the proposed mine. That
16 is the only reason for Tongue River Railroad to be
17 built. Unless I missed something, the effects of mining
18 were not included.

19 Then you have to wash the coal with water and
20 chemicals to separate the soil and rock impurities, such
21 as arsenic and mercury, before it's transported. This
22 process produces a liquid waste the consistency of
23 cement called slurry or sludge. It has to be stored
24 somewhere and groundwater contamination prevented.

25 So let's look at the Draft EIS and see what it₂₀

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1 has to say. Washing the coal and sorting the waste
2 slurry is not considered in the Draft EIS.

3 So the Tongue River Valley coal, if mined,
4 would be transported to the proposed Tongue River
5 Railroad -- by the proposed Tongue River Railroad to the
6 existing railroad lines, which go both east and west,
7 either to domestic power plants or international
8 markets. The environmental impacts of trade and
9 transport were looked at, and they include diesel
10 exhaust, particulate matter. There's 40 toxic air
11 contaminants, carcinogens, and ozone-forming compounds
12 and fine particulate matter in diesel exhaust itself.

13 Exposure to fine particles alone is known to
14 cause asthma attacks, heart attacks, lung cancers,
15 strokes, and premature death. In addition, communities
16 along the railroad lines may be exposed to toxic coal
17 dust inhalation. These are well-known adverse effects
18 of coal transport.

19 So looking at the Draft EIS, the effects of
20 diesel exhaust are reported as all within regulatory
21 standards, except the one-hour nitrous oxide is
22 elevated. But then the report indicates that the model
23 that measures this, or predicts it, was -- is known to
24 be an incorrect model and it tends to overreport,
25 exaggerate nitrous oxide one-hour concentrations and,

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1 therefore, there are predicted to be no air quality
2 standards exceeded. Okay.

3 The findings of the Draft EIS are also that
4 particulate matter from coal dust, while increased,
5 would not exceed regulatory standards for the human
6 population. The Draft EIS indicates that larger,
7 visible dust particles, which are classified as nuisance
8 dust -- and that's the usual term -- might spread beyond
9 the railroad right of way and could build up on your
10 roof -- these are words from the Draft EIS -- hinder
11 visibility, soil laundry that is hung out to dry, but
12 can be mitigated by topper agents applied to the coal
13 cars. So I'll just let that stand.

14 The Draft EIS also documents the adverse
15 impact of noise from the railroad and proposes
16 mitigation, but does not mention the cumulative noise
17 from the mines I already mentioned.

18 Combustion phase of coal's life cycle causes
19 the greatest adverse effects. At the power plant, coal
20 is pulverized just before being burned. Gas and solid
21 byproducts of burning coal are released through the
22 air -- into the air through smoke stacks, including over
23 70 harmful chemicals that contribute to global warming.
24 Solid waste known as coal ash is also produced and must
25 be stored.

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1 Coal from the proposed Otter Creek Mine is low
2 in sulfur and also lower carbon content, compared to
3 coal from the east; Appalachian coal, for example.
4 Since it needs less scrubbing to remove sulfur dioxide,
5 it can be cheaper to burn than eastern coal. On the
6 other hand, having a lower carbon rating means that it
7 does not burn as efficiently, and the market for coal
8 takes this into account.

9 And now I'm going to mention the market
10 analysis. The market analysis, it was fascinating and
11 it -- I'm sure it really helped a lot in producing this
12 complicated Draft EIS. But I found a couple of
13 deficiencies which should be rendered prior to
14 finalizing the Final EIS.

15 One was that you used a level price of coal
16 for the next 20 years, and that price that you said was
17 based on domestic price of coal during the 2007 to 2012,
18 those years. Now, we know that 2007, there was a --
19 domestic price of coal was at its peak. And since 2012,
20 the domestic price of coal has gone down. So it
21 should -- these new realities should be put back into
22 your model.

23 And the reason why I think it's so important
24 to put it back and redo the model is because the results
25 of your model are treated as reality in this Draft EIS. 23

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1 I mean, it's why you could say that you don't have to
2 look at the increased combustion of coal, because
3 there's only 1.4 million tons going to be added to the
4 U.S. coal supply. And that's -- that number comes from
5 your market analysis. So, okay.

6 I have one other, I think just one other main
7 point, which is the cultural/historical culture. So the
8 finding, your finding was that the adverse effects would
9 be moderate. So that means not severe or whatever the
10 higher level is. Moderate cultural/historical effects
11 on the Tongue River Valley and the people who live there
12 and have ceremonies there next to the Tongue River,
13 which is right across from where all of the alternatives
14 have a terminus, and the ranchers, as you know, the
15 Amish, there are a lot of cultures, there are a lot of
16 people who could be affected.

17 Now, the assessment of the historical/cultural
18 resources and the possible effect on them was not
19 completed. There was not enough time to do it. And in
20 the process that was outlined of how decisions are made
21 here, that means that the decisions -- not the
22 decisions, but the recommendation by the STB -- no, by
23 the OEA to the STB of which alternative will be made
24 after the EIS is finalized, that is before the
25 historical/cultural assessment is completed.

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1 And this means to me that the "No Build"
2 alternative is necessary, because of the vulnerability
3 and the importance of the communities in the Tongue
4 River Valley. It is irresponsible to choose any
5 alternative other than the "No Build" when you do not
6 have the full historical/cultural assessment, and you
7 have already told us that the adverse effects are going
8 to be at least moderate.

9 We're talking about the life and health of
10 this group of communities. If one looks at the Tongue
11 River Valley and you see coal in the ground and dollar
12 bills, and you don't see what we do, which is the
13 culture, then you don't -- the loss that would be
14 experienced with building this railroad, which has
15 already been, as far as I'm concerned, it's pretty --
16 it's been expressed that it is an unnecessary railroad
17 for 1.4 million tons a year of coal. That is going to
18 heat a -- that would make enough electricity to heat a
19 town -- a city a little bit bigger than Billings for a
20 year.

21 So in order to do that, you're going to
22 destroy -- well, I don't know that it will be destroyed.
23 It could only be degraded. It may not be destroyed.
24 That your scoping document from the -- about doing this
25 Environmental Impact Study stated that putting in this

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1 railroad would transform the Tongue River Valley from a
2 rural to an industrial setting. And -- okay. So that
3 is your words.

4 Thank you.

5 JENNIFER PIGGOTT: Thank you for your
6 comments.

7 Is there anyone else that would like to
8 provide -- sir?

9 MIKE CORYELL: Yes, Mike Coryell from Miles
10 City, Montana. I'd just add a couple comments.

11 I worked for Western Energy for 28 years. I
12 have a family of four kids, five grandchildren. We
13 lived just a matter of, like, three or four blocks from
14 the power plants. We were out in the mine. And I
15 currently have four extremely very healthy, very
16 productive children working in this area and other
17 areas. There is no health issues whatsoever. And I
18 would have thought that, you know, based on some of the
19 testimony that we would have exhibited that, having
20 worked right next to the plants and worked in the mine.

21 The second thing is, is I lived -- I've lived
22 in Miles City now for ten years and I've watched coal
23 trains come through that town day after day. And I
24 would challenge anybody to find any residual coal dust
25 whatsoever, you know, laying along the routes of those

26

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1 trains. So -- and with the way that those -- that the
2 coal is sealed, you know, by BNSF, you don't see any of
3 that residual dust and stuff affecting people.

4 So thank you.

5 JENNIFER PIGGOTT: Thank you for your
6 comments.

7 Would anyone else like to make an oral comment
8 this evening -- this afternoon, or elaborate?

9 Sir?

10 CHARLES CHERRY: My name is Charles Cherry,
11 C-h-e-r-r-y.

12 I've lived in Montana my entire life. In the
13 early '80s I worked in Colstrip, doing landscaping,
14 because that's -- I own a landscaping business of my
15 own. A lot of the property that the coal was removed
16 from, after they got done mining it, actually looks
17 better today than it did before they -- before they
18 dug -- coal was dug from the ground.

19 As far as greenhouse gases, I used to be on a
20 board called AMTOPP, which is Association of Montana
21 Turf, Ornamental, and Pest Professionals. We do
22 fertilize lawns. We use pesticides, insecticides,
23 herbicides. And the thing that I think frustrates me
24 the most about the greenhouse gas quote is that I don't
25 know if there are a lot of people in the United States

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1 that realize that most of the greenhouse gases come from
2 volcanos, natural fires that are lit by lightning,
3 natural evolution of the country.

4 So, you know, when people talk about
5 greenhouse gases, it sometimes frustrates me, because
6 they don't consider what happens when a volcano erupts,
7 when a fire, a forest fire, you know, gets started. So
8 the amount of smoke from both of those affects
9 greenhouse gases a lot more than cars and stuff like
10 that.

11 And I don't have exact numbers, but I know
12 that over the years, on the board that I was in -- on
13 for ten years, we discussed that a lot. And so I just
14 feel personally that the greenhouse gas part is -- and
15 also I -- my place of business is right beside the
16 Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad and so I see
17 car -- train cars going by every day.

18 And I actually over the years have noticed to
19 see if there is coal gone from the front of railroad
20 cars, because I know they spray a surfactant as the cars
21 are loaded at the mines. And it's pretty amazing, if
22 you look at a train, the front of those cars still have
23 the same amount of coal in them as when they left the
24 filling site, or whatever it's called. But those are my
25 comments for today.

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1 Thank you.

2 JENNIFER PIGGOTT: Thank you for your
3 comments.

4 Would anybody else like to make a comment or
5 elaborate on a previous comment?

6 Yes?

7 SUSAN ELLIOTT: This is very brief. I'm Susan
8 Elliott again, Elli Elliott.

9 I just want to just pose the question: Why
10 have another mine? And especially if it has a
11 deleterious effect on the existing mines that are
12 employing people in this state with good jobs and, you
13 know, frankly, Colstrip has a good community. And if
14 this would threaten the mining operations that exist,
15 that needs to be taken into consideration, perhaps to
16 some greater extent.

17 JENNIFER PIGGOTT: Thank you for your
18 comments.

19 Anybody else like to provide an oral comment
20 or elaborate on a comment?

21 Okay. Thank you for your comments and your
22 participation. I'll turn it back over to Ken for a few
23 final words before we conclude.

24 KEN BLODGETT: I would just like to thank
25 everybody for coming out this afternoon and

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1 participating in this hearing. The Surface
2 Transportation Board does appreciate your input and your
3 participation in the environmental review process.

4 You can continue to provide comments in
5 writing through August 24th by -- in writing and mailing
6 them to the board at our Washington, D.C., address or
7 submitting comments electronically on the project Web
8 site, tonguerivereis.com.

9 So that concludes this meeting. We'll have
10 another meeting here in the same location at 6:00 p.m.
11 this evening.

12 Okay. Thank you.

13 (Whereupon, the proceeding
14 concluded at 3:20 p.m.)

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A	<p>afternoon's (1) 2:20</p>	<p>applied (1) 22:12</p>	<p>6:2</p>	<p>8:13;22:9;25:1,5</p>
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