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February 10, 2015

Daniel R. Elliott, Chairman  
Surface Transportation Board  
395 E Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20423

RE: Tongue River Railroad – City of Hood River, Oregon

Dear Chairman Elliott and Members of the future Transportation Board:

The City of Hood River Council understands there is an ongoing review process considering the proposed Tongue River Railroad to service the Otter Creek Mine in Western Montana. The railroad line and expansion of coal production will lead to additional rail traffic through The City of Hood River on its way to West Coast ports.

As you will see from enclosed Hood River Resolution 2012-15, the City has significant and varied concerns over the transport of coal through the City and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The bottom line is that the City of Hood River opposes coal export projects such as the Tongue River Railroad that entail transporting coal through the Columbia River Gorge and Hood River.

Please carefully consider this information and consult with the City of Hood River as you move through the review process for the Tongue River Railroad

Sincerely,

Paul Blackburn, Mayor  
City of Hood River, Oregon

**Resolution 2012-15**

**A Resolution stating the City of Hood River's concerns and opposition to transporting coal through the Columbia River Gorge**

WHEREAS, The City of Hood River has committed itself to being a leader in protecting the environment, air quality, and water quality in the Columbia River Gorge, and

WHEREAS, burning coal leads to greenhouse gases, and the impacts of climate change on the Columbia River Gorge and other tourist attractions negatively impact Hood River's economy, and

WHEREAS, coal is commonly transported via open top rail cars, contaminating cities, towns, farmland, forestland, streams, and rivers within the Columbia River Gorge with coal dust and chunks of coal, and

WHEREAS, coal contains toxic heavy metals - including mercury, arsenic, lead, and uranium - and exposure to these toxic heavy metals in high concentrations is linked to a multitude of health problems, such as cancer and birth defects, and

WHEREAS, increased rail traffic will lead to an increase in diesel emissions in communities along rail lines, and

WHEREAS, up to 54 additional trains per day will have detrimental effects on traffic congestion and air quality due to idling cars, and

WHEREAS, increased noise and vibration from large freight trains have been shown to have a negative impact on psychological health, and

WHEREAS, up to 54 additional trains per day may inhibit the travel of emergency vehicles in the Columbia River Gorge

WHEREAS, increased freight train traffic will have a negative effect on property values, and

WHEREAS, an increase in coal train traffic would raise the risk of a train derailment taking place, and communities within the Columbia River Gorge are not equipped to deal with the public safety and health risks caused by a coal train derailment, and

WHEREAS, public health risks associated with diesel emissions and other pollutants from coal trains disproportionately impact children, the elderly, and those with existing respiratory issues, and

WHEREAS, the route coal trains would follow through the Columbia River Gorge runs along the Columbia River through popular recreational areas, a major source of the economy in the Gorge, and

WHEREAS, the negative impacts of shipping coal by barge on the Columbia River will have similar effects on the Columbia River Gorge as those associated with shipping coal by rail.

Now therefore be it RESOLVED, that the City of Hood River opposes coal export projects that entail transporting coal through the Columbia River Gorge either by rail or by barge.

Be it further resolved, that the City of Hood River supports economic growth that does not jeopardize the City of Hood River's commitment to fight the serious impacts of climate change, and

Be it further resolved, that the City of Hood River urges the Governor and other decision makers to work on a comprehensive policy to prevent shipping/exporting coal through the Columbia River Gorge by rail or barge.

Be it further resolved, that the City of Hood River intends to address any impacts to public health and/or property caused by the transport of coal through The City of Hood River by actively enforcing local public health, safety, building, electrical, and fire codes, and

Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River intends to address any impacts to surface and/or groundwater caused by the transport of coal through The City of Hood River by actively enforcing applicable environmental statutes delegated to The City of Hood River, and

Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River strongly requests that the State of Oregon through its elected officials require the railroad and barge companies to mitigate any public safety hazards created by the transport of coal through the Columbia River Gorge such as access by emergency vehicles and

Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River requests that the railroad, and make public, any plans for new or expanded rail facilities or significant rail traffic volume increases within the Columbia River Gorge, and

Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River requests that the railroad and barge companies provide representatives to meet periodically with local citizen groups and local government officials from the Columbia River gorge to seek mutually acceptable ways to address local concerns, and

Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River requests that the railroad submit an emergency environmental clean-up plan in case of a derailment that affects local watersheds and recreational areas, and

Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River requests that the railroad and barge companies perform an Environmental Impact Study prior to approval of permits and later provide continued environmental monitoring of noise, air, groundwater, and surface water quality, including monitoring for the presence of coal dust, and that the results will be shared with local and state agencies, and

Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River requests that the railroad and barge companies carefully monitor the loading of coal at the coal mines as part of the contract(s) with the coal companies to assure best loading practices in order to reduce the amount of coal and coal dust coming out of the rail cars, and

Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River urges appropriate permitting authorities to require an environmental impact statement that identifies and measures the impacts on our community from a significant increase in coal train traffic, and

Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River urges appropriate permitting authorities to hold at least one environmental impact scoping hearing at a location in The City of Hood River, and

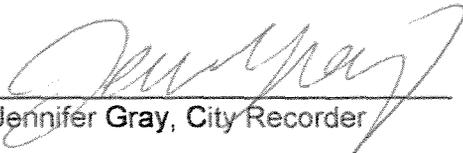
Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River transmits copies of this resolution to the Governor of Oregon, to all members of the Oregon State Division of Lands Board, and to each state Senator and Representative in both Oregon and Washington whose districts fall within Columbia River Gorge, the Washington Department of Ecology, and the Washington Department of Natural Resources, and

Be it further resolved that the City of Hood River transmits copies of this resolution to each Senator and Representative from Oregon and Washington in the Congress of the United States and

Be it further resolved that passage of this resolution shall not preclude the City of Hood River from taking additional actions to protect residents from the effects of coal trains in the future.

Approved by the Hood River City Council this 23rd day of April, 2012, to take effect immediately.

  
Arthur Babitz, Mayor

  
Jennifer Gray, City Recorder