

January 18, 2013

GPT / Cluster Spur EIS
c/o CH2M Hill
1100 112th Ave. NE, Suite 400
Bellevue, WA 98004

I am a resident of Anacortes, Washington, retired from a lifetime career as a journalist, technical editor, and free-lance writer. Much of the subject matter I covered concerned natural science and the environment. In addition, I am a mother and grandmother, and have tried all my life to give my children the most healthful lives possible. My husband and I chose to live in this area of Washington State because of its spectacular natural beauty, as well as its pure, clean air and water. My purpose for submitting the following comments is to direct attention to certain issues that I believe should be part of the EIS concerning the effects of coal transport relating to the Gateway Pacific Terminal (GPT).

My particular concern is about the direct and indirect health risks to humans of all ages posed by coal dust and diesel particulates associated with the transport of coal along the rail corridor from Montana and Wyoming to the proposed GPT at Cherry Point, WA.

It is already clear that uncovered coal cars lose huge amounts of dust and cinders in transport. Such losses are reported to be about 500-2000 pounds per car during a journey of several hundred miles. In addition, diesel train engines pulling coal trains belch out huge amounts of particulates, which can lodge in lung tissue, causing emphysema, cancer, asthma, and other respiratory ailments.

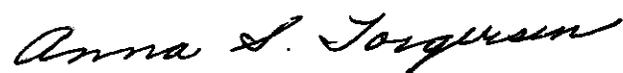
I urge the EIS team to critically analyze the long-term anticipated direct and indirect public health costs posed by illnesses related to inhalation of coal-dust and diesel particulates. Such particulates are well-known elements in human respiratory diseases, especially in children. I want to see an analysis of how to charge back to the coal industry the costs of treating such respiratory diseases for the large numbers of people who live along the rail corridors. And---what are the monetary losses to Washington state when those ill children mature and are unable to hold productive jobs?

What would be the potential per-car per-mile taxes that states and municipalities could impose on the rail carrier and coal producer to mitigate expected private and public health costs?

If coal cars were covered or sealed, what would be the reductions in dust and diesel exhaust emissions? Would it make much of a difference? I'm assuming a minimal difference. Coal dust and diesel exhaust particulates would always be a problem because covers would blow off, equipment would fail, or de-railments would occur.

Contaminated, polluted air is a long-term problem that could affect the Pacific Northwest far into the future---do we dare destroy the health of those who purposely came here to live in this presently pristine environment?

Sincerely,



Anna S. Torgersen
4910 Paisley Place
Anacortes, WA 98221

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GPT / Cluster Spur EIS
c/o CH2M Hill
1100 112th Ave. NE, Suite 400
Bellevue, WA 98004

Thirteen years ago, my husband and I chose Anacortes, Washington, as our retirement home. We were careful to choose a quiet suburb that had pure water and clean, unpolluted air. We are fortunate at the moment. But those who live along the proposed coal train route to---and including Bellingham--- may have their lifestyle and health severely threatened soon if the GPT is approved. And if the environment for all of us changes for the worse because of long parades of coal-bearing trains, all our lives will be threatened.

Serious problems will arise in several different ways. Transportation and traffic problems, for example.

(1) The trains are so long that normal traffic intersections will have interminably long waits---a serious problem for emergency vehicles like fire trucks, ambulances, and police cars.

(2) Normal traffic---cars, buses, and trucks going back and forth to work and to the office will back up to adjacent streets and cause serious congestion, primarily in cities and towns.

Will the coal industry and the railroad company pay to build detours, overpasses, and bridges to ease this congestion? Probably not. Consider that in the EIS.

(3) Inevitable derailments, spillage, and accidents will cause more traffic, as well as pollution problems.

Will the coal industry and the railroad company be willing to pay the cost to repair these situations? Probably not. Legal suits will probably result. Costly ones. Consider that too in the EIS.

(4) Downtown businesses will suffer and perhaps fail because customers will not want to battle the traffic congestion.

Will the coal industry and the railroad company be willing to help re-design the layout of the cities to encourage shoppers? Probably not unless they are required to. Consider that too in the EIS.

(5) The continual, loud noise of trains passing through town and whistles blowing night and day in living areas---both urban, suburban, and rural--- will lead to sleeplessness, anxiety problems, and perhaps illness of the residents who live near the train tracks.

Will the coal industry and the railroad company be willing be pay for medical costs as a result of suits brought by those who become ill as a result of unending, continual train traffic by their homes? Probably not, unless they are required to. Consider that in the EIS.

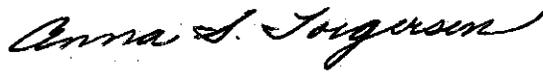
The solution? No trains. We don't want them. Only the mining companies and the Chinese will benefit. (And maybe not even the Chinese, eventually.) Consider that in the EIS.

The amount of money earned by Washingtonians who get jobs from this project is miniscule compared with the incredible costs to city and state taxpayers who will have to correct the problems---health, transportation, and environmental---caused by coal-bearing trains.

A job may last only a few years. But the damage caused to thousands of people can last forever.

Please. No trains.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anna S. Torgersen".

Anna S. Torgersen
4910 Paisley Place
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Seventy years ago, I was living in Ohio, and even as a young child noticed that the areas near the train tracks were dirty and repulsive. As you know, Ohio was a big buyer of coal. Coal was everywhere. The Ohio River was contaminated by coal dust and particulates. My aunt and uncle lived in Steubenville---a dirty, filthy town with heavily polluted air blowing west from Pittsburgh.

As the years passed, my husband and I moved farther and farther west---away from the polluted, industrial eastern cities filled with dirty, noisy trains. When we came to Washington, we were thrilled, and now make our home in Anacortes. Therefore, I am vitally interested in the potential ecological threats posed by the Gateway Pacific Terminal (GPT) project. My purpose for submitting the following comments is to direct attention to specific data and analyses that I believe should be part of the EIS that examines the ecological ramifications of coal transport relating to the GPT.

My particular concern is about the direct and indirect ecological effects that might affect the stability and long-term health of terrestrial, fresh water, marine, and estuarine habitats along the rail corridor from Montana and Wyoming to the proposed GPT at Cherry Point, Washington.

Because rail corridors often follow river courses, and the three or more proposed rail corridors each extend for several hundred miles, the effects of coal-dust, particulate coal, and diesel exhaust would be distributed over huge areas, particularly watersheds and downstream areas.

Currently, the costs of public health and environmental damages associated with coal mining, processing, transportation, and combustion in the U.S. is estimated at over a third of a trillion dollars annually. I would like to have the EIS team thoroughly research current known-, or suspected long-term effects of coal-derived particulates and chemicals on riverine terrestrial and aquatic arthropods, animals, and fish. It would be appropriate also to present in the EIS, data on the cost of ecological cleanup after catastrophic train derailments in recent times, and also the time it has taken for downstream ecological recovery when such derailments have occurred near water courses.

Much of the quality of life here in the Pacific Northwest is centered on our pure, clean air and water. Our identity as a region is focused on our marine and estuarine bird and animal wildlife, anadromous fish, and signature marine mammals like the orca. Minimally, I want to see the EIS report on the already known, but also the projected long-term effects, of coal-derived particulates and chemicals on acidification, littoral and benthic flora and fauna both near and far removed from the proposed Cherry Point Terminal. Some projections indicate that the terminal and one or more proposed rail corridors for the GPT might be in use for scores of years. EIS data must include projections of environmental effects for the entire, foreseeable life of the GPT! Anything less would be unconscionable.

I urge the EIS team to critically analyze the long-term anticipated direct and indirect environmental costs posed by the projected amounts of coal-derived

contaminants. I want to see an analysis of how to charge back to the coal industry the costs of rectifying and mitigating environmental disasters stemming from rail accidents and events relating to the ship-loading and transport of coal. Please consider what might be the potential tonnage-, per-car, and / or per-mile taxes that states and municipalities could impose on rail carriers and coal producers to mitigate or correct environmental disasters associated with the GPT.

If coal cars were covered or sealed, what would be the reductions in dust and diesel exhaust emissions? Would it make much of a difference? I'm assuming a minimal difference. Coal dust and diesel exhaust particulates would always be a problem because covers would blow off, equipment would fail, or derailments would occur.

As a person who has lived in an area where coal was transported, stored in huge piles, and burned, what is planned for Washington is very upsetting to me.

Sincerely,



Anna S. Torgersen
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