

## Proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal coal export proposal draft EIS scoping comments

Dear Decision maker,

I reside in The Dalles, Oregon and I own properties in this city. I am concerned about how the proposals for a significant increase in the transportation of coal, both by rail and by barge through the Columbia River Gorge will effect the entire Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and the communities that are located along the transportation routes which could be used to move the coal along the entire distance from the mines to the export ports.

I am a former member of the City of The Dalles planning commission and am currently the chairman of the Traffic Safety Commission. Speaking as a citizen of this community, I believe the proposal to transport coal by barge on the the Columbia River will significantly impact the level of shipping activity at the lock at The Dalles Dam and congestion will occur on the river where our city is located. Our city has recently built new docking facilities on the Columbia River in order to increase economic activity for our port industrial area and our downtown business district which has been suffering with a 40% vacancy rate during the recent economic downturn. We have just invested several millions of dollars to build the dock and an adjacent festival park to continue in our efforts to reconnect the downtown with the Columbia River after many decades of being cut off from our river frontage by I 84. The dock is located where congestion and delays of river traffic would occur. Our new festival park, which hopefully will increase the beauty and commerce in the downtown business district, is adjacent to the Union Pacific railroad. If future proposals to transport coal include the use of these rail lines, that would definitely have a negative effect on the use of this park facility. The road (Union St.) which serves both the new docks and park is an **at grade** crossing. Longer and more frequent traffic back-ups would have a significantly negative effect on commerce and tourism. Increased noise and diesel emissions together from coal dust coming off the passing trains and settling over the park are a major concern. A large hotel and conference complex has planned to locate in our downtown area. This complex will also front on this rail line. Any significant increase in rail traffic, especially coal trains would impact the desirability of this project.

There has been a lot of attention paid to rail and barge traffic which move west and east between the mines and the coast, but I believe we must also pay attention to the impact this same traffic would have on vehicular and pedestrian movement in the communities which travel in directions that would intersect the movement of coal transportation. There are seven crossings of the Union Pacific tracks in the City of The Dalles, of which 4 are **at grade** crossings. Three of these at grade crossings serve businesses and industry on land which is governed by the port. There is only one access point (Chenoweth Interchange on I84) that will not be effected by an increase in rail traffic. The port property in the downtown area can only be accessed by an **at grade** crossing. It is my belief that potential traffic congestion created by increased rail traffic and the resulting vehicular traffic delays will be a major problem. Emergency vehicle access for fire and ambulance services could be seriously impaired because of delayed responses.

In the recent past we have had train derailments in our area. I remember a derailment where numerous freight cars spilled over in the area just east of the Discovery Center in The Dalles. That resulted in a major clean up which took many months to satisfactorily resolve. It affected landscape for years afterwards along the Riverfront Trail, which is a recreational walking and biking trail along the Columbia River that travels from the Discovery Center west of town to The Dalles Dam. Because of past history I have concerns about the increased coal train traffic degrading the rail-bed in our area.

I am also concerned as a board member of The Dalles Watershed Council about the potential for spills, accidents and derailments near any of the creeks that flow through town and under the rails. We have three creeks which would be involved and all are habitats which support endangered species of migratory salmon. Those creeks would be 3 mile Creek near State Highway 197, Mill Creek in downtown The Dalles, and Chenoweth Creek which flows through the port properties on the west side of town.

I ask that the scope of the environmental assessments for the Gateway Pacific Terminal at Cherry Point in Watcom County, Washington be broadened to include all communities, such as ours in The Dalles, Oregon, which might be impacted by rail and barge coal transportation to serve this

project and others in the future, and that the scope of these assessments be comprehensive and analyze all potential human and environmental effects. As to my traffic and safety concerns I would ask that you document the potential that exists for coal train rail and barge traffic accidents, spills, derailments, fire, and community impacts that happen at all rail crossings and bridges that cross our streams and rivers.

Respectfully,

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