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Testimony in opposition to increased coal train traffic.
Scoping Meeting, Spokane, Washington, December 4, 2012

Representing myself, my family and neighbors near Sagle, Idaho, which is one of the conveyor communities along the proposed coal train routes.

Request for Environmental, Safety, Economic and Life-Quality Assessment for all of the conveyor communities on the proposed coal train routes. Moreover, we request a commitment that the results of these studies will be made public record and that reliance on them be mandatory in the decision-making process.

Cost vs. Benefit: The process should be, and unavoidably is, a balancing of the costs vs. benefits for all stake holders. Among the stake holders with a great deal to lose are the residents of the small conveyor towns and larger cities along the proposed coal train routes.

Tragedy of the Commons: This is a modern example of the Tragedy of the Commons, where natural resources are privatized and exploited for the benefit of a very few at the expense of the many. A few coal and railroad barons stand to gain. China gets a supply of inexpensive dirty energy to continue its immoral climb to manufacturing supremacy. There appears to be no benefit whatsoever for those between the mines and the terminals, yet the risks to them are significant and quite real.

The studies leading to approval or disapproval of this project should include, among many other items, the following four major concerns:

1. The costs and risks to each community of derailments
2. The environmental risks and potential economic losses there from
3. The value and risk to Quality of Life and Public Safety
4. The REAL numbers of jobs, both temporary for construction and long-term along the rail lines (not just at the mines and terminals)

1. **Derailments are NOT hypothetical risks --**

crossing accidents
Derailments are REAL:

Statistics from Federal Railroad Administration:

So far in 2012, BNSF has had ^{accidents} 300 ~~derailments~~, causing over \$50-million in damages, 7 deaths and 19 reportable injuries.

Union Pacific in 2012 has had ^{accidents} 430 ~~derailments~~, resulting in more than \$69-million in damages, 8 deaths and 30 reportable injuries.

Sandpoint, Idaho alone had three derailments in 2012, one very close to a major intersection. One derailment north of town resulted in rail cars rolling and sliding about 200 feet down an embankment onto private property.

Pasco, Washington, July 2012: 31 cars of a 125-car coal train derailed at Pasco, Washington

Coal Train Derailments are a very real risk: A Few Examples

April 2011: Red Oak, Iowa, BNSF coal train rear-ends stationary maintenance machinery, Diesel fire kills crew (NTSB report)

July 7, 2011: 34-cars of coal train derailed in Arkansas

November 2012: Grantsville, Kansas, home damaged in coal train derailment when 23 cars of a 120-car coal train derailed.

September 2011: Emmet, Kansas, 56 cars of coal train derailed.

July 2012: BNSF coal train derailment in Texas (and Pasco, Washington)

July 2012: UP coal train derailed, destroyed bridge and crushed two people in cars below in Chicago, Illinois suburb.

August 2012: Elliot City, Maryland, two people killed, buried in coal when coal train derailed.

Study Requested:

Because of the frequency of coal train derailments (not the rate per mile), we respectfully request that a **thorough study be conducted in each of the conveyor communities along the proposed route using actuarial, statistical and existing modeling techniques to identify and assess the increased risks to residents, property and local economies from increased coal train traffic.**

2. Environmental Hazards Far Outweigh Conveyor Community Benefits –

A review of National Transportation Safety Board and Federal Railroad Administration reports clearly shows that derailments on bridges pose unique and substantial environmental risks, especially for communities reliant on lakes and rivers for their economic stability.

November 30, 2012: Derailment on bridge in New Jersey results in vinyl chloride dump into the Delaware River, evacuation of communities and irreversible environmental damage. A coal train had derailed on this same bridge previously.

The proposed coal train routes follow hundreds of miles of pristine rivers, in some stretches the tracks are built on the shoreline near the water line. Spillage or derailment will not only cause unsightly, harmful environmental damage, but will have a huge negative economic impact on the local communities, with these risk far outweighing any benefits these small towns will ever gain.

Study Requested:

We respectfully request that a careful, thorough assessment be made along the entire proposed route to identify specific places where a derailment or coal spill could possibly impact a lake, river or feeder stream. Such study should include the social and economic impacts to the local community of this type of event, including, among other issues, tourism and any local business or industry.

3. Quality of Life Risks Far Outweigh Potential Benefits, if any –

Small town quality of life has a value. Quality of life issues can be quantified and balanced against any potential, yet unlikely benefit from increased coal train traffic. Closely associated with other issues along the proposed coal train routes is the economic value of quality of life issues.

Clean air, clean water, solitude, the ability to travel easily and public safety bring people to the small towns of Wyoming, Montana, Idaho and Washington, driving small local economies and enhancing the lives of residents and visitors alike. These qualities are of huge important and value.

An increase in coal train traffic WILL, without any doubt, also increase air pollution through discharge of coal dust and Diesel particulate and noise pollution as these heavy, long trains move through. In addition, traffic delays, potential delays to public safety vehicles and the possibility of crossing accidents are simply not worth the value, if there is any, to local small towns.

Quality of Life issues and safety are especially relevant in the portion of the routes known as “The Funnel” which is an area between Sandpoint, Idaho and Spokane, Washington. This area is relatively densely populated and involves state and federal highways. Disruptions of movement in this area where the train density will be highest, is an important consideration. Traffic safety problems posed by hundreds of rail crossings needs a complete study.

Study Requested:

We respectfully request a study of the economic, public safety and other life-quality impacts on conveyor communities of the inevitable diminution of the quality of life compared to any real benefit to be gained by them.

4. What are the Real Jobs Numbers? Benefit of jobs outweighed by risks--

Reportedly, Western Washington proponents of the increased rail traffic argue that jobs will be created. We do not down play the importance of jobs, but we question the numbers and the benefit compared to the risks along the routes.

The plan certainly will create some temporary construction jobs at the new terminal sites, but how many new permanent jobs will be created in the USA? How will this benefit the local communities? Specifically, how will this benefit the conveyor communities?

Most significantly, along the routes – among the conveyor communities – how many good jobs bringing in outside money will accrue to these small towns. We know, for example, that in the area of North Idaho, when rail crew workers are required (for derailments or crossing improvements), they don't come from the local community; rather, they are brought in from out of state.

Study Requested:

We respectfully request a thorough analysis and report clearly delineating and clearly showing in real numbers how many new jobs are anticipated at the mines, the terminal and in each of the conveyor communities along the routes. These numbers should be broken down in useable form to include temporary construction jobs as well as permanent new jobs in each community along the routes.

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