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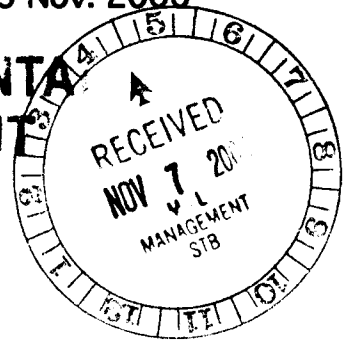
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Victoria Rutson, Environmental Project Mgr.
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STB
1925 K ST NW
WASHINGTON DC 20423-0001

Ms. Rutson,

Enclosed is a copy of my comments made last evening at the project hearing in Rapid City, SD.

I digressed slightly from my prepared remarks in my verbal presentation so I have printed this updated copy this morning.

Sincerely


Jim Ross

STB HEARING ON DM&E EXPANSION APPLICATION

2 NOVEMBER 2000 RAPID CITY, SD

My name is Jim Ross and I am a member of the Economic Development Committee of the Chamber of Commerce in Belle Fourche and I wish to speak in support of the DM&E application. My qualifications to speak on this subject include a work history with 39 years of jobs involving transportation of goods by package carriers, post office, air carriers, trucks, ships and railroads.

The City of Belle Fourche grew up around the new depot of the Freemont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley railroad which was opened in December of 1890. For 110 years the railroad has been a vital element in our economic picture.

Currently, the bentonite industry's four clay plants at Belle Fourche and Colony, Wyoming ship approximately 1.3 million tons of bentonite in 18,300 railroad cars out of here each year.

The alternative to rail shipping for this product is truck and some bentonite does move by truck, both bulk and bagged. If possible to shift it ALL to trucks it would take approximately 58,000 trucks each year. That would be about 160 trucks every day, seven days per week, loading out of these four bentonite plants and traveling on our highways. The cost could be prohibitive because each truck has one or two drivers and a power unit. With rail each train with up to about 130 cars has two operators and three to five power units..

Belle Fourche needs a strong, viable railroad to support the bentonite industry and the other smaller, but no less important, shippers and receivers of freight in this town and the rest of the Northern Black Hills. The DM&E Railroad needs the proposed expansion to enable them to do the necessary rebuilding of their roadbeds and rails so they can continue to serve us.

We believe a strong DM&E Railroad will help the economy of the rest of the state of South Dakota through job growth and business growth all along the route of the DM&E. We also believe that problems and conflicts can be resolved by study and negotiation, allowing the expansion to proceed.

The Economic Development committee instructed me to add one proviso to this message of support: That the DM&E be a good neighbor, as much as possible, in its land acquisition and operations.

Thank you