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Commenter: Cate Campbell

Organization:

State: Montana

Agency: Surface Transportation Board

Initiative: Tongue River Railroad

Submission Text

The proposal for a railroad being built for Arch Coal, by means of condemning private property, surpasses understanding. Arch has not even built their coal mine yet. The product will not be used domestically but shipped overseas to Asian markets via ports which also haven't been built yet. The draft EIS mentions the coal being sold to domestic markets but that does not hold up under scrutiny. The estimates for numbers of trains in the DEIS are very low. If the Otter Creek Mine is developed and the coal is shipped to the west coast [most likely], the number of trains will have a substantial impact on the entire shipping route. Hundreds of at-grade crossings will be part of the safety picture with the potential of delayed emergency response vehicles and increased train/vehicle collisions. The noise of increased train traffic through residential neighborhoods will be significant. Water quality will be impacted by the construction of the railroad through ranch land. Shipping coal trains along rivers, including much of the route to the west coast exposes waterways to derailments and dumped coal. Mining the high sodium coal will degrade irrigation water for ranchers along the Tongue River and the Yellowstone River. Air quality will be impacted by increased carbon emissions of burning coal no matter where it is consumed. The airborne carbon produced in China reaches our lungs in five days. Public comment hearings should take into account the entire impact zone which includes Western Montana due to the railroad conduit to the west coast. Having a hearing in Missoula is a reasonable request for a project of this size and significance. I urge the STB to take the "no action alternative". The proposal holds no upside for those of us in its path. If it gets the green light it will socialize the costs and privatize the profits. There is no provable public benefit or necessity for this project.