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SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Washington, DC 20423

Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis, and Administration

December 5, 2003

Mr. Charles W. Murphy, Chairman
Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council
P.O. Box D
Fort Yates, ND 58538

**Re: Tongue River Railroad Company, Inc. – Finance Docket 30186
(Sub-No. 3) – Construction and Operation of the Western Alignment**

Dear Mr. Murphy,

The Surface Transportation Board's (Board) Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) mailed your tribe information on September 24, 2003, seeking your tribe's participation National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 compliance process as a consulting party on the Programmatic Agreement (PA) which is being prepared as part of the environmental review process for the Tongue River Railroad Company's (TRRC) application to construct and operate a new rail line in southeastern Montana, known as Tongue River III. The information was also faxed to Vice Chairman Tom Iron on October 31, 2003.

I have called your office a number of times hoping to discuss the proposed rail construction project with you and respond to any questions you may have about the proposed rail construction project. SEA is moving forward with the PA process pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and related environmental regulations, including the NHPA.

If you would like to learn more about the proposed project or the PA process, please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone at (202) 565-1554, fax at (202) 565-9000, or e-mail at blodgettk@stb.dot.gov. Ethnoscience, who is working with SEA as a third party contractor in this case and is located in Billings, Montana, is also available to meet with your tribe to discuss the project and potential Native American effects. You may contact Lynelle Peterson of Ethnoscience directly by telephone at (406) 252-7945.

Sincerely,



Kenneth H. Blodgett
Environmental Protection Specialist
Section of Environmental Analysis