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Subject Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Upgrade

DM&E Upgrade Needed...and Soon.

I think the time has come for the overall benefit for the masses to outweigh the petty private agendas of the few. By this I mean that we are going to have to face the fact that we will need more railroads hauling low-sulphur coal to midwestern and eastern power plants. I know that this flies in the face of the city of Rochester and the Mayo Clinic with their fight to keep coal trains from coming through Rochester on already established railroad bed. In the next two decades, our nation is going to become more and more dependant on coal to fire our power plants. Estimates are that we will be using one third more electrical power in that time frame. Without alternate power sources anywhere on the horizon, we will be forced to utilize the resources we have, and that means more coal production and more railroads hauling this energy source. The coal burning plants cannot keep switching to natural gas or the price for that commodity will be prohibitive for the ordinary homeowner. We have just experienced that this past heating season.

I am especially appalled by the tactics of the Mayo Clinic to stop coal trains through Rochester. They are very dependent on coal for their heating; especially since they just hooked up a new steam line to the Rochester Public Utilities power plant which burns coal delivered, ironically, by the Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad whom they are fighting. Talk about biting the hand that feeds you!! They have protested coal trains near their facilities; yet, it was okay for them to build their facility in Lake City within 600 feet of the Canadian Pacific rails where there are close to 60 trains a day. Mayo says they are concerned about potential hazardous materials spills. The facts are that there are hazardous materials hauled through Rochester everyday, not only by the DM&E, but also by truck traffic on Highway 52 which goes very close to the west side of Mayo's St. Mary's Hospital facility. When the DM&E Railroad upgrades their tracks through Rochester, there will be far less potential for any kind of spill OR derailment than there is currently. Mayo is concerned that emergency vehicles will not be able to get across tracks because of blockage with train traffic. This is another of their scare tactics. Most all patients are brought in to St. Mary's Hospital via Highway 52, either from the north or south. Highway 52 passes over the DM&E tracks and is not subject to train blockage. The Rochester Fire Department has four stations, two north of the tracks and two south of the tracks. Therefore, equipment staging is not a problem. Gold Cross Ambulance (owned by Mayo) has one garage near the Highway 52 overpass and one garage on the south side of Rochester. Again, not a problem getting vehicles where they are needed. At all other crossings within the city of Rochester, the slow moving freights today can block an intersection for up to 14 minutes. A mile long coal train traveling at 50 miles per hour only blocks a crossing for 2-1/2 minutes! Quite an improvement.

Another non-issue that seems to come to the fore-front every so often is that of coal dust. There is no coal dust from trains originating in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming and the reason is that coal coming from the ground is 28% moisture. That is almost one third water in each loaded coal car! If anyone has any qualms about these facts they should take a trip to Boone, Iowa where there are 62 trains each day. Half of this traffic is coal trains of the Union Pacific Railroad. Boone is a very clean town and contrary to the "chicken little" stories emanating from Rochester, there is no evidence of coal dust. And, most citizens are unaware of the day to day train traffic through their town as the rails through Boone are whistle free.

Citizens of Rochester have been brain-washed by their city council into thinking that noise will be a problem. Trains running on continuous welded rail create much less noise than current trains running on jointed rail. Materials used in construction of new rail beds make for much quieter running of trains. The city of Rochester has spent over \$1

MILLION dollars and Olmsted County has spent over \$220,000 of the taxpayers money fighting what they perceive to be a monster; which in reality, may well be a Godsend. Having access to coal via another railroad may well be the best thing that can happen to the entire midwestern region of this United States. Rochester could be burning low-sulphur Wyoming coal as opposed to the high-sulphur stuff that they are currently getting from southern Illinois.

I have no stake in this matter and I will not profit from any upgrade by the DM&E Railroad, but I do not see where Mayo gets off trying to tell another private enterprise how and where to operate their business. It appears from the latest newspaper accounts that Mayo is now just trying to "save face" in the light of court decisions not in their favor. Mayo and DM&E actually have this in common: they are both private businesses trying to make money. Mayo claims non-profit status year after year, but we all know that they must continue to construct new buildings for "investments" each year to maintain that status and keep the IRS from their door. DM&E, on the other hand, is trying to run a railroad for the benefit of shippers and consumers AND to pay their employees. Making a profit would be an added bonus.

Mayo and the City of Rochester are now involved in what should be considered "Blackmail". They seem to think that it is okay if they try to block federal FRA financing to a private company. It is my understanding that Mayo was the recipient of a government loan to put three more stories on one of their buildings. DM&E did not try to block this loan derived from public tax money. We must not allow the Mayo Clinic and the City of Rochester to hold major areas of this United States at gunpoint. They must not be allowed to continue this interruption of progress because of personal agendas. At this point in time, with energy delivery at a premium, we need to stop all the bickering and think of the future. We must take action soon; getting more power plants built and making the delivery of coal easier. We need this upgrade of the DM&E, and we need it soon or we will all be sitting in the dark.

One of many concerned citizens,

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