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BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
FINANCE DOCKET NO. 33407
DAKOTA MINNESOTA & EASTERN RAILROAD CORPORATION
CONSTRUCTION INTO THE POWDER RIVER BASIN

Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Attention Victoria Rutson, Chief
Section of Environmental Analysis

Dear Board,

I want to respond to two issues in the DSEIS, historic preservation and the environmental affects of increased consumption of coal.

While I agree with the conclusion reached by the STB, that the Programmatic Agreement, PA, for historic preservation is signed, I disagree with the STB's comments on how this came to pass. The delay was a result of dissembling and/ or confusion on the part of DME and its' engineers, not respondents to the DEIS or signers of the PA. Nowhere in the DEIS is the possible destruction of the 17 historic stone bridges or other historic artifacts clearly discussed. Nowhere in DME's CEO Schieffer's extensive comments to the press, is this mentioned. And nowhere in DME's initially proposed PA is this brought up or attempted to be mitigated, the initial PA dealt with archaeological concerns. Employees at both the STB and DME's hired engineering company told me the plan was to take out the 17 stone bridges. Officially, in 2002, DME was stating they didn't know what they were going to do. Yet in the late 90's, Schieffer was personally telling residents that lived adjacent to the stone bridges that the bridges would be saved. Weeks before the comments to the DEIS were due, the MN SHPO did not know the EIS and the Section 106 process were being combined for this project. DME hadn't contacted him for "years". Clearly historic preservation and the Section 106 process were not being taken seriously by DME. They should have known better because the STB's own hired architectural historians opinion was that the line was eligible for the historic register as a "linear historic district." DME's stubbornness in addressing this issue in the PA created the delay in signing the PA.

The second area of the DSEIS that I am concerned about is that the STB does not plan to study the environmental and personal health harms of increased coal consumption. Not only are many more options for electricity production becoming available and viable, nuclear energy is a very viable option for the target market for the coal line, Chicago. The Chicago area has successfully operating existing nuclear power plants. Also the eastern half of Lake Michigan, near Chicago, has also been ranked as "excellent" area by the Department of Energy as a source of wind power. The STB response to the issue of increased coal consumption, obfuscated the issue. The STB should go ahead and make reasonable assumptions, not necessarily using one of the models, and come up with some data.

I hope my comments are considered.

Sincerely,


Karla K. Johnson