

**Extend the Comment Deadline for the Tongue River Railroad Scoping Process**

Karren Baird-Olson to: blodgettk

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Sent by: Sierra Club &lt;information@sierraclub.org&gt;

From: Karren Baird-Olson &lt;karren.bairdolson@csun.edu&gt;

To: blodgettk@stb.dot.gov

Sent by: Sierra Club &lt;information@sierraclub.org&gt;

**Please respond to Karren Baird-Olson <karren.bairdolson@csun.edu>**

Jan 10, 2013

MT Surface Transportation Board Ken Blodgett  
MT

Dear MT Surface Transportation Board Blodgett,

On the eve of the Christmas and New Year holidays and after all public scoping meetings had concluded in Montana, the Tongue River Railroad Company submitted a supplemental revised application for Tongue River Railroad, in which it identified for the first time in the project's 30-year history the "Colstrip route" as the company's preferred route for the railroad. At the same time, STB released to the public a new map of the Colstrip route. Several local landowners received yet another map that depicts a Colstrip route that is different from the route depicted in the map available on STB's website. Though this latter map has not been made available to the general public, it reportedly shows the proposed route of the railroad traversing land owned by an Amish community--land not shown to be impacted by any other map. In light of this confusion, I request that you extend the deadline for scoping comments so that the public can make meaningful comments on the actual preferred route, not on speculation.

We further request an expanded scoping process, including an extension of the public comment period and an additional public meeting to be held in the Colstrip area. Scoping hearings were held in many communities in south east Montana, but Colstrip was excluded. Now Colstrip is the end of the line, according to the new preferred route. Although the Colstrip route has been included among the railroad's alternatives since the project was first proposed, it was previously rejected as technically infeasible. The public has just become aware of this change when the Company submitted its supplemental revised application on December 17, 2012. Thus, Colstrip-area residents--including those ranches that will be effectively split by this train--had no reason to suspect they would be so heavily and adversely impacted by the preferred route.

Please consider this request seriously and take the right action. The very nature of the Tongue River Railroad has changed with this alteration of route. Now different people and different communities will be impacted. Extend the scoping period and uphold the spirit of all of the laws on the books that guarantee the public's right to participate in decisions that impact them. To do otherwise is to make a mockery of our process.

Sincerely,