



Millennium Bulk Terminal EIS Scoping Comments

Comment 1: Health/Economic Impacts relating to Rail Coal Transportation

The League of Women Voters of Bellingham Whatcom County believes we must consider the health impacts of rail transportation of coal. We request a programmatic EIS which would study the cumulative impacts on the health of citizens from the expected increase in rail transportation of coal from the Powder River Basin to all the proposed West Coast terminals.

We support the over 200 physicians from Whatcom County who have called for studies on the health impacts from the huge amount of coal dust that will be lost from the (150 car) coal trains (full and empty) which will service these facilities, as well as the release of increased diesel particulates from at least 4 diesel engines per train. ¹

Burlington Northern estimates over 500 lbs. of fugitive coal dust are lost from each car as it travels from the Powder River Basin to the coast. Dust from coal and diesel engines contain toxic substances including mercury which contribute to respiratory diseases such as asthma, emphysema and other chronic pulmonary diseases. ¹ Huge coal piles on site also contribute to dust and dust suppression methods are not always adequate----

<http://www.vancouver.sun.com/Unexpected+wind+gust+stirs+coal+dust+Roberts+Bank/6455530/story.html>.

We are also asking you to study the effect of noise on people's sleep, which leads to increased health problems such as depression, high blood pressure and cognitive impairment in children.

We need a cost/benefit analysis about how the train traffic will impact our air quality and our health system's ability to deal with our citizen's increased risks for serious medical problems as a result of the degradation of air quality.

Related to health costs are the delayed emergency response times that will occur when 150 car trains block vehicle crossings in the many towns that are divided by the rail tracks. How many deaths and/or serious injuries will be caused when emergency response is delayed? For instance according to a study by *Sightline Daily* (October 2013) some crossings in the Pasco area could be blocked up to 4 1/2 hours a day. If the only way to mitigate this impact is to build over passes, the costs should be borne by the proponents of the project not by individual municipalities or the state.

Currently over 900 pedestrian accidents and over 3000 collisions occur with rail crossings across the nation each year.² Please study how the addition of these super trains might increase this figure.

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With all the proposals on the table, we are looking at 35 more trains per day (one way) carrying fossil fuels. How will our grain and other commodity shippers have rail space? They will be forced to go north to Canada or south to California³ raising the price of goods and leaving us with the consequences of shipping dirty fuels

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¹ Whatcom Docs position paper and appendices coaltrainfacts.org

² "Heavy Traffic Ahead" Western Organization of Resource Councils July 2011

³ Ibid