

Comment: coal trains

I live in Spokane, Washington, and this comment is regarding the coal trains and their current and potential impact on this city. These trains have and will increase pollution, increase traffic, and expose residents to dangerous levels of toxins that are known to cause health problems. Given this, the coal trains should no longer be allowed to run through Spokane in their current fashion.

Foremost, the trains are known to drop coal while in route, contaminating waterways and contributing to the litter that already lines the City of Spokane. I live near a train trestle that passes near my residence and a creek. Since coal trains have increased throughout this area, I have noticed an increase in coal near my home and near the creek. I have walked by the creek on many occasions and have collected samples of the falling coal (see attached photos). I have found and continue to find new coal each time I pass the creek. These findings show that both rain run-off and direct falling coal are contaminating our navigable waterways. This creek runs into the Spokane River, directly contaminates the water that we drink, the water that animals drink, and the water that is home to various types of wildlife. On a related note, the falling coal lines our streets, which has a negative impact on the aesthetics of this city.

Additionally, the trains will increase traffic because the amount of trains already passing through the city will continue to increase. It has been estimated that the number of trains passing through Spokane County each day could reach up to 40 in number. Each of these trains takes about six minutes to pass through a railroad

crossing, blocking such crossings for about 4 hours a day. *See*

<http://www.powerpastcoal.org>.

With this traffic also comes noise. Federal rules governing the blowing of locomotive engine horns require that engineers of all trains sound horns for at least 15-20 seconds at 96-110 decibels at all public crossings. *See*

<http://www.coaltrainfacts.org/key-facts>. Decibels at this range are labeled

extremely loud, whereas anything above 105 decibels is considered dangerous.

<http://www.coaltrainfacts.org/key-facts>. Anyone living near these train tracks will be substantially burdened by the excess traffic and noise, and anyone that commutes in the city will be burdened by these as well.

Furthermore, the proposal will increase pollution and create health risks because of the dust and exhaust discharged by passing trains. Studies have shown that the coal dust can cause asthma and contains toxic metals such as mercury. Moreover, the diesel fuel and coal dust has also been linked to causing lung disease, hearts disease and cancer. *See <http://www.powerpastcoal.org>.*

There are few to no alternatives that will remedy the traffic issue. Should the proposal pass, the trains would be able to use city train routes to carry out business, and the residents will have to suffer the traffic delays. Even if train routes were changed to later hours to avoid rush hour, the noise that these trains would create would disrupt citizens in their homes in the evening.

Regarding pollution, the law should require that the coal trains take extra precautions to eliminate coal discharge. Discarded coal presents risks to our air and our water, giving rise to applicable environmental law statutes. Even if it means that

the city will lose revenue, the economic growth of the city should never be considered before the wellbeing and health of its citizens. Should only one person contract cancer because of this project, the project should not go on – the economic benefits would not outweigh the burdens.

Should the project go on, please study ways in which the discharge of both diesel fuel and coal dust can be limited before the project commences. Additionally, each citizen should be made aware of the risks and assisted in moving to safety should the project greatly affect their residence. Finally, the trains should be looked at under the scrutiny of applicable environmental statutes, as there are undoubtedly violations being committed.