

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD INITIATES BROAD POSTCARD MAILING TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE DISTRIBUTION OF DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT IN PROPOSED DAKOTA, MINNESOTA & EASTERN RAIL LINE CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION CASE**

Surface Transportation Board (Board) Chairman Linda J. Morgan announced today that the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) is mailing postcards to all parties of record and everyone currently on the Board's environmental distribution list for the Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad's (DM&E's) proposed rail line construction into Wyoming's Powder River Basin--approximately 5000 parties. The postcards will provide a more streamlined and efficient process for making the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) available to interested parties and the general public.

The postcards will allow SEA to verify and update names and mailing addresses. In addition, the postcards will inform the public that the Draft EIS will be available on the Board's website, at [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov), and at certain public locations within the project area, such as libraries. Finally, the postcards will provide those interested in receiving the actual document with a choice of formats, including CD-ROM.

SEA estimates that, because of the size and scope of the proposal, the Draft EIS will be quite large--approximately 2000 pages and several volumes. To reduce the amount of paper needed, limit waste, and wisely use scarce natural resources, SEA encourages recipients of the postcards to review the Draft EIS via the Board's web site, CD-ROM, and at publicly available locations whenever possible. Those who wish the CD-ROM version or hard copies of all or part of the Draft EIS will be asked to return the postcards by July 3, 2000.

SEA, together with its cooperating agencies, anticipates issuing the Draft EIS later this summer. The Draft EIS will address a wide range of environmental issues, including alternatives, and contain recommended environmental mitigation measures, as appropriate.

Prior to issuing the Draft EIS, SEA will publish notice of the document's availability in the Federal Register and local newspapers. SEA will provide at least 45 days for public review and comment. At the close of the public comment period, SEA, together with its cooperating agencies, will prepare a Final EIS responding to the comments received on the Draft EIS. In reaching their respective decisions in this case, the Board and cooperating agencies will take into account the full environmental record, including the Draft EIS, the Final EIS, and all public and agency comments received.

The Powder River Basin Project is DM&E's proposal to construct approximately 280 miles of new rail line and upgrade approximately 600 miles of existing rail line in Minnesota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. The project would allow DM&E to extend its existing system westward to access coal mines in Wyoming's Powder River Basin. This proceeding is docketed at the Board as *Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad Corporation Construction into the Powder River Basin*, STB Finance Docket No. 33407.

Additional information regarding this proceeding may be obtained by telephoning SEA's toll-free Environmental Hotline at **1-877-404-3044**, or by viewing and downloading Board decisions in Finance Docket No. 33407 via the "Decisions and Notices" link on the Board's Website at [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov).

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