

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD ISSUES FINAL DECISION ON "TONGUE RIVER RAILROAD'S" PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION & OPERATION OF THE "WESTERN ALIGNMENT" IN ROSEBUD & BIG HORN COUNTIES, MONTANA

The Surface Transportation Board announced that it has issued a decision today granting final approval to the Tongue River Railroad, Inc. (TRRC) to construct approximately 17.3 miles of new railroad line in Montana, known as Tongue River III or the "Western Alignment," subject to environmental mitigation conditions.

TRRC previously submitted two related applications that were considered and approved by the Board and by its predecessor agency, the Interstate Commerce Commission, in 1986 and 1996, respectively (Tongue River I and Tongue River II). The proposed Western Alignment is an alternative routing for the southernmost portion of the 41-mile, Ashland-to-Decker alignment approved in Tongue River II, known as the "Four Mile Creek Alternative."

The primary purpose of Tongue River I, II, and III is to expedite the transportation of coal from existing and future mines to markets in the Midwestern and Northeastern states by a safer, more efficient, and cost-effective route. The Board's decision today finds that the Western Alignment is a superior route to the portion of the Four Mile Creek Alternative that it would replace. The decision states that "the Western Alignment is shorter and less steep and also minimizes [environmental] impacts to the Tongue River Canyon, an environmentally sensitive 10-mile section of the Tongue River." The decision also imposes a new set of environmental conditions on the authority granted in Tongue I and Tongue II.

The STB's decision approving the construction and operation project in the case entitled [Tongue River Railroad Company, Inc.--Construction and Operation--Western Alignment, STB Finance Docket No. 30186 \(Sub-No. 3\)](#) is available for viewing and downloading on the Board's Web site at <http://www.stb.dot.gov> under "E-Library," then under "Decisions & Notices," beneath the date "10/9/07." A printed copy of the Board's decision also is available for a fee by contacting **ASAP Document Solutions, 9332 Annapolis Rd., Suite 103, Lanham, MD 20706, telephone (202) 306-4004, or via asapdc@verizon.net.**

###