

## RESOLUTION NO. 14-39

**A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Whitefish, Montana, to request that the Surface Transportation Board and Montana Department of Environmental Quality hold public hearings in western Montana, including Whitefish, during the review process for the proposed Tongue River Railroad and Otter Creek Mine in Southeast Montana.**

WHEREAS, the City of Whitefish, Montana, is an historical railroad town bisected by the Hi-Line rail line operated by Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad company; and

WHEREAS, this rail line represents one of two routes through western Montana that are likely to be used to transport coal from Southeast Montana to West Coast export terminals; and

WHEREAS, Arch Coal's proposed Otter Creek Mine in Southeast Montana is designed to supply coal to West Coast coal export terminals; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Tongue River Railroad would be the main conduit for transporting coal from Otter Creek to the existing BNSF line; and

WHEREAS, developing the Otter Creek Mine and building the Tongue River Railroad could lead to increased coal train traffic through Whitefish; and

WHEREAS, that increased traffic could add to the congestion already caused by Bakken crude oil trains that have contributed to delays and adverse rescheduling of Amtrak's Empire Builder route and increasing delays at two at-grade crossings, Birch Point and Second Street, in Whitefish; and

WHEREAS, the Whitefish community lacks the funding to mitigate community impacts of increased train traffic through construction of quiet zones, underpasses or overpasses; and

WHEREAS, the addition of loaded coal trains to the existing mix of freight traffic requires mitigation planning in the event that a derailment dumps loaded railcars of coal or crude oil in or around Whitefish, with additional complication caused to the Whitefish community if Whitefish Lake is affected since the Lake is one of their public water sources; and

WHEREAS, these impacts may affect the health and quality of life of Whitefish residents; and

WHEREAS, the Surface Transportation Board has committed to consider down-line impacts in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Tongue River Railroad, and the Surface Transportation Board has authority to require railroad companies to help mitigate community costs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Whitefish, Montana, as follows:

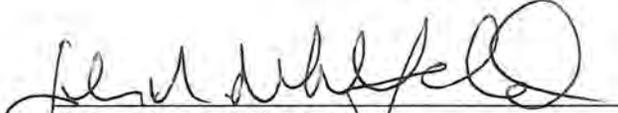
Section 1: The City of Whitefish has a unique interest in the building of the Tongue River Railroad and the development of the Otter Creek Mine due to its location that could affect the health and well-being of Whitefish residents, and that Whitefish stands to be affected by new coal train traffic.

Section 2: The Whitefish City Council respectfully requests the Surface Transportation Board to actively seek input from the Council and Whitefish residents for inclusion in the draft EIS for the Tongue River Railroad.

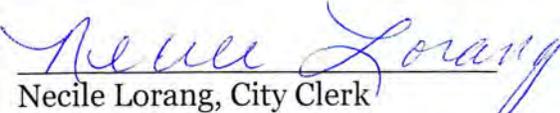
Section 3: The Whitefish City Council respectfully requests that the federal Surface Transportation Board and state Department of Environmental Quality hold public hearings in western Montana, including Whitefish, during the public comment periods on the draft Environmental Impact Statements for the Tongue River Railroad and Otter Creek Mine, respectively.

Section 4: This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption by the City Council, and signing by the Mayor thereof.

PASSED AND ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WHITEFISH, MONTANA, ON THIS 2ND DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2014.

  
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John M. Muhlfield, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Necile Lorang, City Clerk