

I have been a resident of Lincoln County for 75 years, county attorney and deputy district attorney for 45 years, and a rancher who will be seriously and adversely affected if the proposed rail line from Brush to Haswell is implemented since it will bisect my grasslands for three miles and leave some portions in such small un-watered tracts, that it will be useless for grazing. More importantly, Lincoln County is my home of choice and I have been personally involved with sensible land use issues and regulations involving mega electric transmission lines, nuclear waste dumps, mega landfills, sewage disposal, super slab highways, hog farms, and now rail lines.

Historically, whenever the front range has some activity or business that is a nuisance, a bother, or otherwise troublesome and inconvenient, be it a nuclear waste dump, mega landfill, super slab highway, or hog farm, the standard response is "send it to Eastern Colorado, because there is nothing out there."

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It now appears that the front range does not want coal trains running up and down the I-25 corridor causing traffic tie ups at railroad crossings, noise, and a multitude of other general inconveniences.

One of the arguments for shifting the north south rail lines eastward is that our rail lines are, or soon will be, maxed out at capacity. Since we are finally waking up to an energy crises of global proportions and global warming, it would seem that we should be looking for long range solutions rather than just moving the problem to some other location, i.e. Eastern Colorado. It makes little or no sense to ship coal from the coal fields of Colorado and Wyoming by rail to coal fired electrical plants east of the front range and then send the power back to the front range where the population growth makes ever increasing demands. The present system only benefits the railroads, which derive massive freight revenues from this energy wasteful process. The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad favors all new trackage, rather than utilizing some of the existing track since it is owned by the Union Pacific, and the BNSF does not want to share this freight revenue with the Union Pacific.

In this age of energy crisis and global warming, a new yardstick for measuring cost is needed. A far better measure should be energy consumption, rather than cost measured by US dollars, Euros, or Yens. With that standard of measuring cost, we would not be shipping our scrap steel half way around the world to China, and then shipping the smelted steel back to the United States, and we would not be shipping our wood to pulp mills in the far east and then shipping the paper back to the United States.

Several other wasteful and government supported activities come to mind. Faced with worldwide hunger, our government chooses to make alcohol out of a valuable food product (corn), and then to make sure that we don't curb this addiction, the government subsidizes the cost so that we consume more alcohol.

Another example of misguided short-term fixes is to put a moratorium on the gas tax earmarked for road maintenance so that we can continue our wasteful ways of burning gasoline in fuel inefficient vehicles. Postponing road maintenance can only lead to massive costs at a later date.

One of the biggest threats to private ownership of property is the power of eminent domain (condemnation), which allows an entity to take private property from someone who is not willing to sell or part with their property. That abuse made headlines when cities were condemning private property so that the property could then be transferred to private business enterprises that are willing to pay higher property taxes. The hue and cry against the proposed super slab by property owners who were not willing to give up their private property to enrich the proponents of a massive toll way planned to be several miles wide, with all of its attendant development, caused our legislature to deny eminent domain powers to the proponents of the super slab development.

Cash strapped local governments may favor the new rail line because of some potential for increased tax revenue. However, they should remember that the rail line is state assessed, which means that the tax revenue is shared by other government entities, while the county and cities bisected by the rail line are left to bear alone the burden, inconvenience, and adverse impact of the new location. Ask yourself why the inhabitants of the Front Range want to get rid of the Front Range rail traffic. During construction some local business may sell a few more hamburgers, but what happens when construction is completed and the new line in many instances become useless. We are left with the problem, and the customers for the hamburgers have moved elsewhere.

I have often heard some of our leaders and representatives in Washington, D.C., say "that they will not support any conservation efforts to stop global warming if such efforts will have a negative impact on the US economy." My question to them is: Do they not feel that unchecked global warming will not have a negative and disastrous impact on the US economy? The impact of global warming will be a thousand times worse if we continue our present course.

I would urge our local, state, and federal representatives to be mindful of the desires and adverse impact on we who live in this area. Yes, there are people living east of the Front Range, and not all of us think that covering the world with concrete, steel rails, and power lines will make the world a more beautiful place. We should take a multifaceted approach to solving the problem. Stop the wasteful and government subsidized practice of moving coal a thousand miles east to generate power and then sending the electric power back to the urban centers on the front range. This will free up some of our passengers. Require that the BNSF Railroad, where possible, co-use existing Union Pacific trackage. Do not allow a railroad to use condemnation powers at whatever location it chooses to stick its spade in the ground but rather make it demonstrate to our government and land use administrators that the line locations the railroad favors have considered all factors not just its bottom line revenue and truly minimizes adverse impacts for everyone. Stop the historic thinking of some people that every necessary, but nuisance endeavor, should be sent to Eastern Colorado. Our Lincoln County Representatives have a long history of protecting our area from "uncontrolled" nuclear waste dumps, mega landfills, hog farms, and power lines. Individual property owners in a condemnation case cannot question the location of the so-called improvement. Only our government through its land use powers can question the appropriateness of a particular location.

Therefore, I urge you and all our representatives to protect our environment