

Editorial: Whatever works to help DM&E

Private investment in railroad company good for South Dakota

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By The Editorial Board

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DM&E railroad's \$6 billion project to rebuild the line across South Dakota and Minnesota, hauling coal out of Wyoming's Powder River Basin, always was a good plan for our state.

It still is, notwithstanding the Federal Railroad Administration's rejection of a \$2.3 billion loan request to finance the effort.

Our desire now is to see DM&E succeed with its original plan - private financing - to make this work.

Remember, private financing was the idea all along. The federal loan option came about late in this process. And its rejection wasn't so much about fiscal responsibility as it was politics.

Don't think so? Look at the Minnesota politicians - Sens. Norm Coleman and Amy Klobuchar, Rep. Tim Walz and Gov. Tim Pawlenty - who fought DM&E's expansion tooth and nail but now say rail capacity is just so darned important. Of course, they objected before to the line's closeness to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester. But that's where the line is. Are they suggesting money to move it? No. They're just bemoaning the need for the rail expansion that they just helped kill.

Or maybe just delay. That's our hope here in South Dakota.

This project would bring jobs - even if some of them are temporary - all along the route. It would spur development in some areas. And it would help farmers.

"There is no group with more to gain than agriculture," said Lisa Richardson, executive director of the South Dakota Corn Growers.

That's obvious. A rebuilt DM&E would provide competition for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe, perhaps cutting shipping costs as much as 20 cents a bushel.

So yes, good luck to DM&E. If it means private investment. If it means restructuring the plan. Whatever it means. This project is good for South Dakota.