

Aggregates/Quarry/Rail

Business Challenge/Environment

After four years of failed attempts to win state and federal permits for a strategic Midwest quarry site that included an 11-mile rail spur, our national industry leading client was up against entrenched, intractable and well organized opposition. Any elected official supporting this highly controversial project faced intense and vocal condemnation. We needed to find a way to change the political climate, reverse the oppositions' momentum and provide political cover for elected officials to support the project.

Outcome

We generated vocal and sign-waving crowds in excess of 150 residents demonstrating support for the project and speaking at public hearings. The municipal board voted 3-2 to approve our client's plan. The U.S. Surface Transportation Board approved the rail spur.

Our Approach

We needed to change the debate. Campaign elements included:

- Development of a coalition of business leaders excited by the potential for new jobs and consumer spending.
- Conducted a job fair to identify local job seekers who could be organized to publicly support the proposal.
- Brought together residents who supported the rail spur as truck traffic mitigation.
- Pushed hard and achieved incremental victories such as issuance of a temporary air permit to show project inevitability.
- Rallied the superintendent of schools, teachers and parents to exert pressure on the local board to approve the project based on tax base and school budget arguments.
- Sponsored various events to rally our supporters at key points in the process.
- Organized constituent pressure on the local congressman to gain federal agency approval of a rail spur route that would avoid the need for controversial eminent domain proceedings.

CASE STUDY