

December 7, 2020

Joshua Wayland, PhD
Surface Transportation Board c/o ICF
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031

Attention: Environmental filing, Docket No. FD 36284

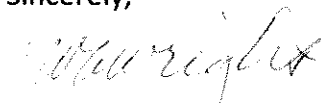
Dear Mr. Joshua Wayland:

The economy of the Uintah Basin has historically been highly dependent upon natural resource (particularly oil and natural gas) development and extraction, which has resulted in “boom or bust” cycles that generally characterize mining. Although all three counties are similarly isolated geographically from any major metropolitan area, they do differ somewhat economically. While Duchesne and Uintah Counties are predominantly dependent upon gas and oil production, Daggett County relies heavily on government, travel and tourism industries for their economic base. Because the counties are so heavily dependent on one major economic activity, it makes the economy very fragile and susceptible to sudden declines and even reversals of economic growth. This is why it is so important for local leaders of both government and private industry to work together to diversify the economy to make the area less vulnerable to the up and down cycles of having only one major economic cluster.

Another major obstacle to economic independence in the Uintah Basin is the lack of transportation infrastructure to this region. This deficiency is a major impediment for this region’s ability to reach its economic potential and in its ongoing efforts to diversify the economy. Because of the Basin’s rural and somewhat isolated location, local residents and business men must deal with costly distances. In order to access major Inter-mountain and Western U.S. markets businesses and industries within the Uintah Basin usually needs to transport to Salt Lake City first. With no major rail line servicing the area, nearly all materials produced or manufactured must be trucked in or out of the area by semi-tractor trailers adding significant costs to the transportation of goods. Salt Lake City serves as the nearest and most effective connection for rail and major air (freight or passenger) service to other U.S. markets.

For the above reasons of being overly dependent on natural gas and oil development/extraction as well as the restricted transportation access to this region, the Uintah Basin Railway (UBRY) project offers the Uintah Basin expanded economic prospects to strengthen and stabilize its economy as well as to create additional markets for economic opportunities that will diversify its economy. For these reasons, I strongly support the Uintah Basin Railway project and ask the Surface Transportation Board to favorably consider this project in its evaluation process for the economic welfare and benefit of this region.

Sincerely,



Will Wright, resident
Uintah County