



Uinta Basin Railway

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Public Meeting Brochure

for the Uinta Basin Railway
Draft Environmental Impact Statement



OCTOBER 2020

Uinta Basin Railway

Environmental Impact Statement and Public Commenting

The Uinta Basin Railway Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) is available for public review and comment. Comments are due December 14, 2020. The Surface Transportation Board's (Board) Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) is hosting online public meetings as part of OEA's ongoing public involvement process associated with the environmental review of the proposed rail line. The purpose of these meetings is to share information and solicit public comments on the Draft EIS. This brochure presents information about several topics to help with your participation in the review process, including the following.

- Online public meetings
- Board's environmental review process
- Project description
- Draft EIS outline
- Accessing the Draft EIS
- Commenting on the Draft EIS

Online Public Meetings

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, all public meetings for the Draft EIS are online. OEA will begin each online meeting with an overview of the proposed project and the environmental review process, including a summary of Draft EIS conclusions, followed by a facilitated comment session for individuals interested in making oral comments. The meeting facilitator will call upon pre-registered speakers in the order in which they pre-registered. Individuals not pre-registered and desiring to make oral comments will be called upon if time allows.

To register to make oral comments at any of OEA's online public meetings listed below, please visit www.uintabasinrailwayeis.com. OEA will provide additional meeting information and dial-in instructions following registration. All times listed are in Mountain Standard Time (MST).

November 16, 2020
2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

November 18, 2020
9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

November 19, 2020
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

November 30, 2020
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

December 1, 2020
2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

December 3, 2020
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.



Board's Environmental Review Process



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Board's Environmental Review Process

The Board's environmental review process ensures the Board's compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and assists the Board and the public in identifying and assessing the potential environmental consequences of a proposed action. OEA is responsible for directing the environmental review process. The Board's environmental review process for the proposed rail line includes the following steps.

Preliminary Meetings: OEA and the Seven County Infrastructure Coalition (Coalition) met to discuss the environmental review process, required environmental information, and the use of independent third-party consultants to prepare the environmental document on behalf of the Board. OEA directed and approved the third-party consultant's work and preparation of the environmental document.

Initial Site Inspection and Agency Consultation:

OEA conducted an initial site inspection to assess the project area and determine to what extent potential environmental impacts should be addressed. OEA sent consultation letters to federal, state, and local agencies to solicit comments, ideas, and concerns related to the proposed rail line.

EIS versus EA: OEA made a preliminary determination of the type of environmental review appropriate for the proposed rail line based on the site inspection, assessment of available environmental information, and review of any agency comments. The environmental document can be either an EIS for actions that could have significant environmental impacts, or an Environmental Assessment (EA) for actions that do not appear to have significant environmental impacts. OEA determined that an EIS was the appropriate level of environmental review for the proposed rail line.

Notice and Scoping: On June 19, 2019, the Board issued a Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS and Draft Scope of Study in which OEA sought comments on resources in the project area and possible alternatives to the Coalition's three proposed alignments. Interested agencies and persons were invited to participate in the scoping phase by reviewing the draft scope of study, submitting comments in writing, and attending and providing oral comments at scoping meetings held in July 2019, in Fort Duchesne, Price, Roosevelt, Vernal, and Salt Lake City, Utah, and Craig, Colorado. After considering the comments received through the scoping process, the Board published a Notice of the Final Scope of Study for the EIS on December 13, 2019, in the Federal Register and posted it on the Board's website (www.stb.gov) and the Board-sponsored project website (www.uintabasinrailwayeis.com).

Draft EIS: OEA prepared the Draft EIS using information supplied by the Coalition, information from public and agency scoping comments, information collected by OEA and its third-party consultant, and fieldwork. The Draft EIS contains an analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the Coalition's preferred alternatives, the Whitmore Park Alternative, and other reasonable alternatives, including the No-Action Alternative. The Draft EIS also includes OEA's preliminary recommendations for environmental mitigation. Based on OEA's analysis and consultation with appropriate government agencies, the Ute Indian Tribe, other interested stakeholders, and the public, OEA preliminarily recommends that, if the Board decides to authorize construction and operation of the proposed rail line, it should authorize the Whitmore Park Alternative to minimize impacts of construction and operation on the environment. A Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS was published in the Federal Register on October 30, 2020, initiating a 45-day public comment period that ends on December 14, 2020.



Final EIS: Based on comments on the Draft EIS and all available information in the environmental record, OEA will prepare the Final EIS. The Final EIS will consider and respond to all substantive comments received on the Draft EIS and will include any appropriate changes and recommendations for additional mitigation measures. A Notice of Availability announcing the release of the Final EIS will be published in the Federal Register.

Board's Decision: The Board will decide whether to approve, approve with conditions (which could include conditions designed to mitigate impacts on the environment), or deny the proposed rail line. The Board will consider the entire environmental record, the Draft EIS, the Final EIS, all public and agency comments, and OEA's environmental recommendations in making its final decision on the Coalition's application to construct and operate the proposed rail line.

Role of Cooperating Agencies

Five cooperating agencies assisted OEA in preparing the Draft EIS in accordance with NEPA and Council on Environmental Quality regulations. OEA regularly engaged the cooperating agencies during Draft EIS development, and each cooperating agency will consider the information in the Draft EIS during their decision-making processes. If the Board approves the proposed rail line, the cooperating agencies would have decisions to make regarding permits, grants of right-of-way, and other licenses prior to the start of construction. Cooperating agencies for the proposed rail line include the following.

- Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service
- Department of the Army, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management
- Utah Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office

Project Description

Proposed Action

The Coalition proposes to construct and operate an approximately 85-mile single-track rail line to connect the Uinta Basin to the existing interstate rail network. The proposed rail line would extend from two terminus points in the Uinta Basin near Myton, Utah, and Leland Bench, Utah, to a proposed connection with the existing Union Pacific Provo Subdivision near Kyune, Utah.

The Coalition anticipates that rail traffic on the proposed rail line would consist primarily of trains transporting crude oil from the Uinta Basin to markets across the United States. The Coalition also expects that trains would transport frac sand into the Uinta Basin for use in the oil and gas extraction industry. Additionally, the Coalition expects that shippers could also use the proposed rail line to transport various heavy and bulk commodities found in the Uinta Basin, such as soda ash, phosphate, natural gas, oil shale, gilsonite, natural asphalt, limestone, bentonite, heavy clay, aggregate materials, bauxite, low-sulfur coal, and agricultural products.

Project Purpose and Need

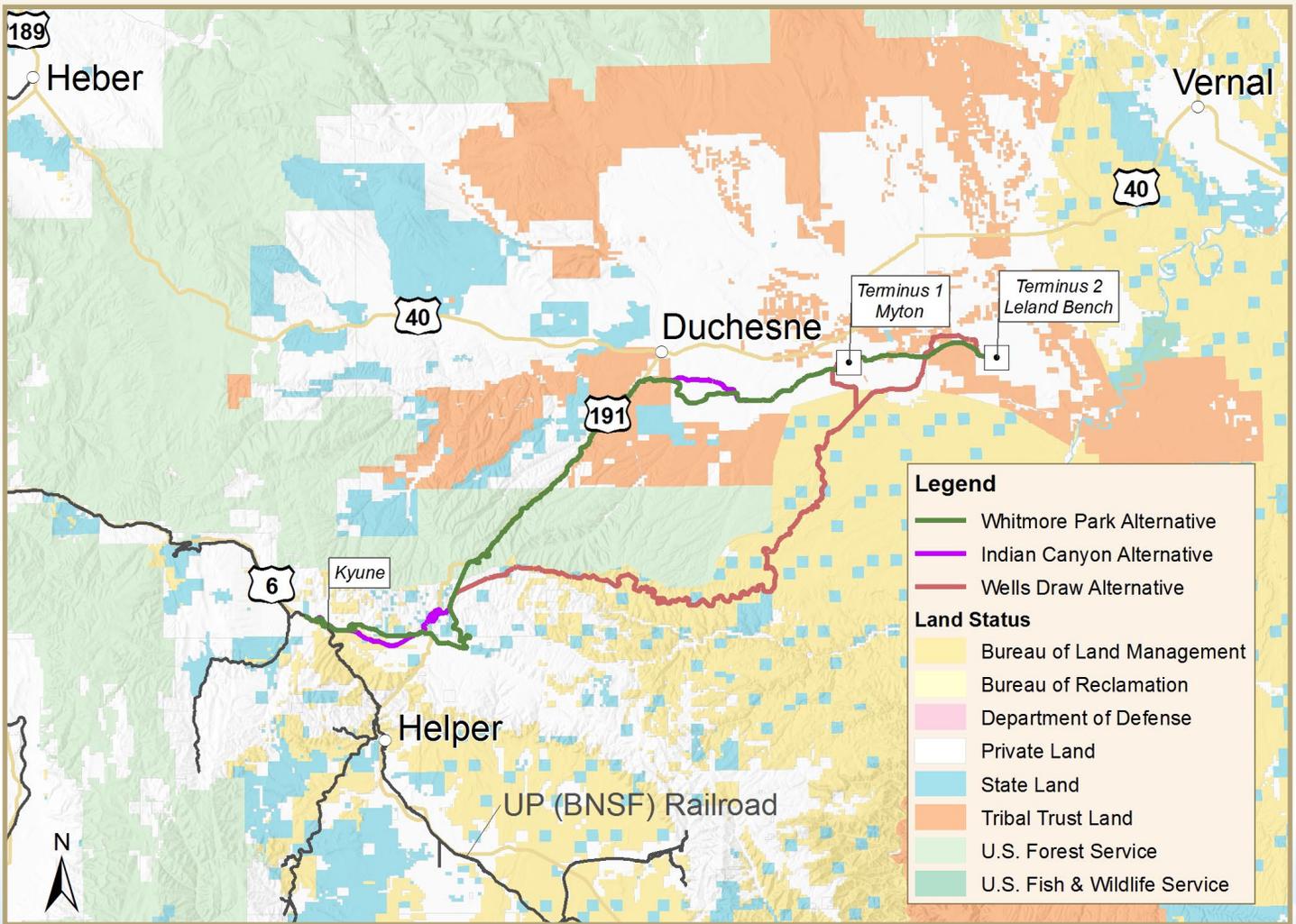
As described by the Coalition, the purpose of the proposed rail line would be to provide common carrier rail service connecting the Uinta Basin to the interstate common carrier rail network using a route that would provide shippers with a viable alternative to trucking. The Uinta Basin is an isolated geographical region with limited access to all transportation modes. According to the Coalition, the proposed rail line would provide customers in the Uinta Basin with multi-modal options for the movement of freight to and from the Uinta Basin; promote a safe and efficient system of freight transportation in and out of the Uinta Basin; further the development of a sound rail transportation system; and foster sound economic conditions in transportation and effective competition and coordination between differing modes of transportation.



Alternatives

NEPA requires that federal agencies consider alternatives to a proposed project in their environmental review. In this Draft EIS, OEA analyzed the potential environmental impacts of four alternatives. OEA analyzed three different railroad routes for this Draft EIS (the Action Alternatives). Any of the Action Alternatives would connect two terminus points near Myton, Utah and Leland Bench, Utah to an existing rail line owned by Union Pacific rail line near Kyune, Utah. OEA also considered the potential impacts of not constructing the proposed rail line (the No-Action Alternative). The Coalition’s preferred alternative is the Whitmore Park Alternative.

Project Location and Proposed Alternatives



Draft EIS Outline

The Draft EIS outline below provides the content and structure of the Draft EIS, which can assist with making effective comments.

The **Summary** includes an overview of the proposed rail line and alternatives and includes a table that summarizes all the potential environmental impacts.

Chapter 1 discusses the Coalition's purpose and need for the proposed rail line and provides background on the NEPA process.

Chapter 2 discusses the alternatives for the proposed rail line, including alternatives considered but not analyzed in the Draft EIS, and provides details on construction and operation of the proposed rail line.

Chapter 3 describes the affected environment and environmental consequences for each resource of concern. The chapter also describes the contribution of the proposed rail line to cumulative impacts on each resource. Resources analyzed in the Draft EIS include the following.

- 3.1** Vehicle Safety and Delay
- 3.2** Rail Operations Safety
- 3.3** Water Resources
- 3.4** Biological Resources
- 3.5** Geology, Soils, Seismic Hazards, and Hazardous Waste Sites
- 3.6** Noise and Vibration
- 3.7** Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases
- 3.8** Energy
- 3.9** Cultural Resources

3.10 Paleontological Resources

3.11 Land Use and Recreation

3.12 Visual Resources

3.13 Socioeconomics

3.14 Environmental Justice

3.15 Cumulative Impacts

Chapter 4 describes OEA's preliminary recommended mitigation measures that could be imposed to avoid, minimize, or compensate for potential environmental impacts resulting from the proposed rail line.

Chapter 5 discusses the public, agency, and tribal governmental consultation and coordination that OEA conducted throughout the environmental review process.

Chapter 6 describes the short-term uses of environmental resources and compares them with the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity and any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources that could occur as a result of the proposed rail line.

Chapter 7 lists key agency and consultant staff who provided analysis for and contributed to the Draft EIS.

Chapter 8 provides a list of agencies, tribes, organizations, and individuals that are being notified of the publication and availability of the Draft EIS.

Chapter 9 provides a list of references cited in the Draft EIS.

The 19 appendices provide more detailed information and data related to the resources analyzed in the Draft EIS.



Accessing the Draft EIS

The Board made the Draft EIS available on October 30, 2020. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) published a Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS in the Federal Register on the same day.

The Draft EIS is available for viewing and downloading via the Board’s website (www.stb.gov) and the Board-sponsored project website (www.uintabasinrailwayeis.com).

Printed copies of the Draft EIS are available for review at the following four public libraries in the project area.

<p>Duchesne Library 130 S Center St. Duchesne, UT 84021</p>	<p>Price City Library 159 E Main St. Price, UT 84501</p>	<p>Roosevelt Library 70 W Lagoon St. Roosevelt, UT 84066</p>	<p>Uintah Library 204 East 100 North Vernal, UT 84078</p>
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Commenting on the Draft EIS

The Uinta Basin Railway Draft EIS is available for review and comment. Please be sure to submit your comments before the end of the comment period on December 14, 2020.

Helpful Comments

Comments that address the content of the Draft EIS with sufficient detail are most useful, such as comments that address the impact analyses including methodologies and assumptions. Providing suggestions for specific changes in the document and the corresponding page numbers and sections of the document in your comment is also helpful. OEA will compile and consider all substantive comments and will respond to these comments in the Final EIS.

Less Helpful Comments

Vague statements or concerns that do not suggest a specific change or give OEA direction are less helpful. It is important to understand that a comment is not a vote for or against one of the alternatives. OEA must rely on supporting information, not on the number of comments received. Please avoid using form letters to convey your point. Your unique way of writing or phrasing a comment is important for OEA to understand your point of view.



How to Submit Comments

OEA encourages comment on any aspect of the document during the 45-day comment period (October 30, 2020–December 14, 2020). You may submit comments in writing, electronically, or orally at an online public meeting.

Please send **written comments** to:

Joshua Wayland, PhD
Surface Transportation Board
c/o ICF
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031
Attention: Environmental filing, Docket No. FD 36284

Comments may be **submitted electronically** on the Board-sponsored project website (www.uintabasinrailwayeis.com). Comments submitted electronically will be given the same consideration as mailed comments. Therefore, it is not necessary to submit identical comments by mail.

OEA will receive **oral comments** during the six online public meetings. For additional information on the public meetings and to register to speak, visit www.uintabasinrailwayeis.com.

Please refer to Docket No. FD 36284 in all correspondence addressed to the Board, including all comments submitted on the Draft EIS.

***Please remember all comments must be received or postmarked
by December 14, 2020 for full consideration in the Final EIS.***





For more information, please visit the Board-sponsored project website at www.uintabasinrailwayeis.com