



***SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD***  
***Washington, DC 20423***

*Office of Environmental Analysis*

October 30, 2020

Re: Docket No. FD 36284, Seven County Infrastructure Coalition—Rail Construction and Operation Exemption—in Carbon, Duchesne, Uintah, and Utah Counties, Utah: **Issuance of Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Notice of Public Comment Period and Meetings**

Dear Reader:

I am pleased to announce that the Surface Transportation Board's (Board) Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) has issued the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Uinta Basin Railway for your review and comment. The Draft EIS analyzes the potential environmental impacts of the Seven County Infrastructure Coalition's (Coalition) proposal to construct and operate an approximately 85-mile rail line connecting the Uinta Basin (Basin) to the national rail network. The Basin is an isolated geographical region, extending from northeastern Utah into northwestern Colorado, that is surrounded by high mountains and plateaus and that has limited access to transportation infrastructure. According to the Coalition, the proposed rail line would provide shippers in the Basin with a viable alternative to trucking, which is currently the only available transportation option.

The Coalition's proposed rail line would extend from two terminus points in the Basin near South Myton Bench and Leland Bench to a connection with an existing Union Pacific Railroad Company rail line near Kyune, Utah. Depending on future market conditions, between approximately 3.68 and 10.52 trains could move on the proposed rail line per day, on average, including both loaded and unloaded trains. The Coalition expects that those trains would primarily transport crude oil produced in the Basin, but could also carry frac sand, other proppant material, steel, machinery, or mineral and agricultural products and commodities into and out of the Basin. The Draft EIS analyzes three alternatives for the proposed rail line, as well as the No-Action Alternative. The alternatives are the Indian Canyon Alternative, Wells Draw Alternative, and Whitmore Park Alternative. In its request for authority, the Coalition identified the Whitmore Park Alternative as its preferred route for the proposed rail line.

Based on the analysis in the Draft EIS, OEA concludes that construction and operation of any of the alternatives would result in significant environmental impacts. Major impacts would include temporary and permanent impacts on surface waters and wetlands; impacts on biological resources, including federally listed threatened and endangered species and other protected species; permanent changes to land uses on public and private lands; and noise impacts on residences near the proposed rail line during rail operations. In the Draft EIS, OEA preliminarily identifies the Whitmore Park Alternative as the environmentally preferred alternative because it would avoid or minimize major environmental impacts compared to the Indian Canyon Alternative and the Wells Draw Alternative. The Draft EIS also sets forth OEA's preliminary recommendations for mitigating environmental impacts, as well as the Coalition's voluntary mitigation measures.

Five cooperating agencies assisted OEA in preparing the Draft EIS: the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service; the U.S. Department of the Army, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs; the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management; and the Utah Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office, representing all Utah State agencies. OEA also consulted with other federal, state, tribal, and local agencies, as well as other stakeholders, during the preparation of the Draft EIS.

### ***HOW TO COMMENT ON THE DRAFT EIS***

OEA requests and encourages the public and any interested parties to submit comments on any aspect of the Draft EIS. You may submit comments during the 45-day public comment period, which begins with the publication of the Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS in the Federal Register on October 30, 2020 and ends on December 14, 2020. When submitting comments, please be as specific as possible about any concerns or questions you have about the analysis and conclusions in the Draft EIS so that we can address them in the Final EIS.

Comments may be submitted electronically, through the mail, or orally at an online public meeting. It is not necessary to mail written comments that have been submitted electronically or given orally at a public meeting. Please refer to Docket No. FD 36284 when submitting written comments.

**Electronic:** Comments may be submitted electronically through the Board-sponsored project website, [www.uintabasinrailwayeis.com](http://www.uintabasinrailwayeis.com).

**Mail:** Comments may be mailed to the following address:

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

**Oral:** In addition to receiving written comments on the Draft EIS, OEA will host six online public meetings during which interested parties may make oral comments. OEA will begin each online meeting with an overview of the proposed project and the environmental review process. This will be followed by a facilitated comment session for interested individuals who have registered in advance to make oral comments. Each registered commenter will have several minutes to provide their oral comments. A court reporter will record the oral comments.

The online public meetings will be held at the following dates and times; all times are Mountain Standard Time (MST).

- Monday, November 16, 2020, 2:00–4:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, November 18, 2020, 9:00–11:00 a.m.
- Thursday, November 19, 2020, 6:00–8:00 p.m.
- Monday, November 30, 2020, 6:00–8:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, December 1, 2020, 2:00–4:00 p.m.
- Thursday, December 3, 2020, 6:00–8:00 p.m.

To register for an online public meeting, visit the Public Involvement page on the Board-sponsored project website ([www.uintabasinrailwayeis.com](http://www.uintabasinrailwayeis.com)). OEA will provide additional meeting information and dial-in instructions after registration.

OEA will consider all comments equally no matter how comments are received. It is not necessary to attend an online public meeting to provide comments on the Draft EIS.

***WHERE TO FIND THE DRAFT EIS***

The Draft EIS is available for viewing and downloading on the Board’s website ([www.stb.gov](http://www.stb.gov)) and on the Board-sponsored project website ([www.uintabasinrailwayeis.com](http://www.uintabasinrailwayeis.com)). OEA is also making the Draft EIS available at the following libraries.

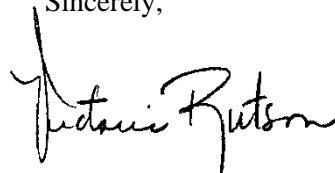
- Duchesne Library, Duchesne, Utah
- Price City Library, Price, Utah
- Roosevelt Library, Roosevelt, Utah
- Uintah Library, Vernal, Utah

***WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE COMMENT PERIOD CLOSSES***

After the close of the public comment period on the Draft EIS, OEA will prepare a Final EIS in response to substantive comments on the Draft EIS. The Final EIS will set forth OEA’s conclusions regarding the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Uinta Basin Railway and OEA’s final recommendations to the Board, including recommended environmental mitigation measures. The Board will then issue a final decision that will take into consideration the transportation merits of the proposed project and the entire environmental record, including the Draft EIS, Final EIS, and all public and agency comments received. In this final decision, the Board will decide whether to approve the proposed rail line, deny it, or approve it with mitigating conditions, including environmental conditions.

OEA appreciates the efforts and interest of all who have participated in this environmental review and worked to make the Draft EIS as informative a document as possible. We look forward to receiving your comments.

Sincerely,



Victoria Rutson  
Director  
Office of Environmental Analysis