

EI-30089

My name is Steve Evans. I have owned and operated radio stations in the Uintah Basin for over 25 years. I have also served in many community service organizations including president of the Vernal Area Chamber of Commerce. These experiences have provided me the opportunity to consult with numerous local retail business owners about the challenges they face. The Uintah Basin is the most challenging place to do business in the State. This is due to the cyclical nature of the extraction industry which is the primary source of local jobs. Although we have huge amounts of energy resources here, producers are limited due to the inability to transport product to market. Additionally, they are limited to selling their product to the North Salt Lake refineries who monopolize prices by placing big discounts on Uintah Basin Crude. The proposed railway will not influence the market price of oil, however, it will place crude exported from the Uintah Basin in a competitive market environment and help to stabilize the industry.

The Uinta Railway would allow producers the ability to transport to national and international markets, thereby, allowing the free capital system to work by creating a competitive bid for energy products produced in the Uintah Basin.

Utah's population is estimated to double by the year 2050. Communities along the Wasatch Front (SLC, Ogden, Provo) are already struggling with the unprecedented growth of the past decade. There simply isn't room to meet this projected demand. The Uintah Basin has an able workforce and room to grow. The Uinta Railway would provide a means to expand and diversify our local economy by creating local jobs and through mineral lease revenue, a means to build our local infrastructure to meet the foretasted State growth. With the ability to transport goods and services via rail, our economic development offices will then be able market this growth toward the Uintah Basin where we have an ample workforce, transportation, and affordable land.

With a stable economy comes more stable families. With this last phase of energy layoffs, hundreds of families from throughout the Uintah Basin have been separated as the family's primary breadwinner has been forced to leave the home to work a 10 on 10 off shift in another energy producing state. Local crime statistics prove that when there is a downturn in the local economy, crimes involving substance abuse, domestic violence and juvenile truancy increases.

The Uinta Railway will help mitigate these social problems by creating economic diversity and the development of local jobs.

My wife Lisa and I have 6 children and 12 grandchildren. Four of our children have had to find work outside of the Uintah Basin. They have each expressed a desire to move closer to home if they could find a job to support their families.

On behalf of local businesses and the many families affected by our unstable energy based economy, I urge your support for the Uinta Railway project.

Thank you for taking my comments under consideration.