

January 6, 2021

EI-30417

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

Attention: Environmental filing, Docket No. FD 36284

Dear Mr. Wayland,

Our community is just learning about the proposals to offer train service in the Arkansas River Valley, from Parkdale to the Tennessee Line. It is concerning, to say the least, that a project of this magnitude has been pushed through the system. I believe that all parties involved are taking advantage of the pandemic and the reality that people are not congregating as usual. Those involved are relying on secret discussions to move this plan forward. Of the five (5) meetings focused on this subject, only one was held in Colorado! This single meeting, held in the state where the proposed trail line will operate, was held in Craig, hours away from the valley that would be affected. I don't believe that this was a coincidence.

It is my belief that the parties involved in this railway line are making the public input process as difficult as possible. The site for "public comment" is deliberately difficult to find and access within the transportation board site. The short time frame for discussion is further proof that all involved are trying to push this plan through the system without adequate time for environmental studies and public input.

This is disturbing for several reasons:

- 1) The Arkansas Valley riverway is home to a fragile ecosystem.
- 2) The narrow canyon rail line and steep grade (in parts) would make regular train service a "disaster waiting to happen".
- 3) We, as a society, should not be supporting and encouraging the transport of oil shale through sensitive wildlife and river areas. The Arkansas River serves millions of people and is critical to our water stores and to farming. In these drought conditions, we simply cannot take chances with our critical (and diminishing) water sources.
- 4) The proposal calls for "up to 10 trains per day, with 100 cars per train". 365,000 railway cars of shale oil per year, through a fragile ecosystem, sounds like a recipe for disaster and 365,000 opportunities for a catastrophe that would take decades to recover from. There is also talk about transporting liquified natural gas. How many more toxic substances will be added to this line down the road?

I beg you to reconsider this dangerous plan.

Sincerely,

Laurel Biedermann
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