

January 31, 2021

To:
Joshua Wayland, PhD
Surface Transportation Board

Re: Proposed Uinta Basin Railway

As physicians, we are extremely concerned about the potential adverse health effects of the proposed Uinta Basin Railway. Completion of this project could increase oil production in the Uinta Basin by up to four times the current level. Oil and gas production has extensive, proven negative health risks, most of which are proportional to the amount of extraction taking place.

In communities that live near oil and gas production, such as the Uinta Basin, elevated risks of cancer have been found, asthma rates are increased, and many different heart and lung conditions have been found to be worsened.

Water pollution associated with oil and gas extraction has been shown to contaminate aquifers used for drinking water.

In the Uinta basin, these are not just potential health risks, but previously studied and proven risks. Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment have previously found, in a 2013 study, a rise in infant deaths and birth defects in the Uinta Basin at least six times the national average. A study in spring 2015 showed large amounts of volatile organic compounds (VOC's) in the atmosphere over the area. VOC's are a precursor to ozone or smog, which travels potentially hundreds of miles. VOC's are also known carcinogens, cause neurologic disorders and are endocrine disruptors.

On a larger scale, increasing the amount of oil and gas extraction in the Uinta basin contributes to the worldwide climate crisis by the release of greenhouse gases. Greenhouse gases, which are generated with all aspects of oil and gas production, from extraction to refining and ultimately combustion, worsen people's health in numerous ways. Air pollution is worsened, which already contributes to 200,000 deaths in our country annually. Climate change causes heatwaves, droughts, and worsening of infectious diseases, all of which lead to increased human suffering and death.

Residents in this region of Utah have already suffered enough health harms from oil and gas drilling. Please do not burden them with additional health hazards.

Thank you for taking this information into consideration.

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Climate Health Now Physicians