

Submission Number: *UBR-DEIS-00007*

Received: 10/30/2020 6:31:40 PM

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Organization: Roosevelt Economic Development Committee

State: Utah

Agency: STB

Initiative: Uinta Basin Railway EIS

Attachments: No Attachments

Submission Text

I highly recommend the railway be approved for construction using the Whitmore Park Alternative as identified as the best route in the draft EIS. All projects will have some environmental impact but this route provides the best alternative to mitigate as much impact as possible. I have lived in the Uintah Basin for most of my life and have experienced the boom and bust cycles that come with oil production and a non-diverse economy. Over the years the Uintah Basin has improved its infrastructure in many ways but lacks major infrastructure for importing/exporting goods to and from major economic centers. There have been many who have voiced both opposition and support for a railroad in the Uintah Basin. I add my support for the railroad based on the following factors: I have been involved in discussions with outside manufacturers who would love to bring or expand their business in the Uintah Basin if they had rail or interstate access. I see many Requests for information (RFI's) from potential business looking to start, expand their imprint, or grow their business. In those RFI's the Basin can meet all but one expectation; access to Interstate or Rail. Many opponents of the rail have stated "we need to work on diversifying our economy without the rail." Interstate is not a viable or cost effective option in the Basin but rail is both viable and economical. With a new inland port being built in Salt Lake City, efficient rail access to that area is critical to helping the Uintah Basin get into regional, national, and global markets. As the Greater Salt Lake Area and Silicon Slopes continues to develop and grow it will be important for surrounding rural areas to be able to provide support industry for that growth. The railroad will aid in our ability to receive and distribute products efficiently and cost effectively. The railroad will provide more options for distributing oil products. Opponents argue that the boom and bust of oil will never stop. That is probably true but during bust cycles the Railroad would still provide more options for distribution of waxy crude which has many diverse applications above and beyond just fueling cars, trucks, and semis. The railroad will provide an outlet for natural gas. Currently the Basin has some of the greatest natural gas reserves in the United States. As natural gas is becoming an alternative fuel option the ability to export that product will be extremely important. The railroad would provide an effective and efficient way for that. Opponents have argued that crime will increase, truck traffic will increase, and our current roads will not be able to support the increased traffic. This demonstrates their lack of understanding and knowledge about what actually happens in the Basin. We have dealt with the truck traffic during many boom cycles. Our roads have fared just fine and crime has remained lower than other areas in the nation. Truck traffic will increase within established oil field roads but will not have a major impact on surface streets. Opponents have also made false claims that truck drivers will lose their jobs. This is not true. The need for truck drivers remains constant. There is actually a national shortage of truck drivers. There is enough oil in the basin to keep rail and trucks busy. Opponents have complained that the only reason they don't become full time residents is due to a lack of educational opportunities in their recreational areas. They emphasize the importance of having quality educational opportunities. What they don't realize is that the production of oil and the sale thereof funds over 50% of education in the State of Utah. Oil production and export is vital not just to the Basin but to the entire state. Opponents have comp