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Received: 12/5/2020 6:36:33 AM**Commenter:** Steven McKee**Organization:****State:** Utah**Agency:** STB**Initiative:** Uinta Basin Railway EIS**Attachments:** No Attachments**Submission Text**

Over my lifetime in the basin I experienced the difficulties of transportation here. As a child there was approximately 10-12 Dairies that supported multiple families within a 10 mile radius of my home. Shipping was a major expense to this business activity. Both for moving product out and receiving products. That number of dairies dwindled down to 1 for years and now currently there are only 2 operating dairies in that same area. Shipping products has always been a major expense and cause for decline. I have witness the agriculture environment in the Basin decline and change over the years due to the lack of access to markets and because of shipping costs for fuel, equipment and products. Where once most of my town was supported by agriculture only a few families remain with full time agriculture employment. Many times then and now I have made major equipment purchases outside of the basin due to lack of selection in part because of shipping restraints. I have had to alone stand the cost of transportation costs. I believe a rail system would support this business endeavor, increase selection, decrease goods and service costs, and support the local social and cultural environment that we desire. Many of my extended family have worked in the extraction industry over the years and so I am familiar with the swings that take place in that industry. These swings have forced all but one of my 10 siblings to leave the Uinta Basin for better and more stable employment. The two of us that remain have also had to find employment in other industries. I believe that railway would help to provide stability and diversity to that economic environment. The Uinta Basin is uniquely qualified to provide skills and services to industry that need rail support. Manufacturing, housing, resource extraction, Educational training for those industries (UBTEC) and the desire of the people here to insert themselves into those industries. In addition it would provide diversity to the economy beyond resource extraction. I currently work in the Telecom industry, my day to day responsibilities do not rely upon physical transportation that the rail would provide, however my ability to grow and develop my industry does. I consider my skills and business essential to the developmental growth of the Basin. Therefor, without the railway the Basin will remain somewhat stagnate and monolithic as it has for the past 50 or more years. As I have traveled most of the various routes proposed for the railway I believe that the environmental concerns that exist can be minimized and in many ways the environment could be enhanced with this project. Most of the routes contain unused and mostly empty land. There have been far more impactful projects easily approved in the state of Utah for far less economic value. As a member of the Basin I feel that it is time that we are allowed to join and have a voice with that of the Wasatch Front. We wouldn't take away their rail system or freeway system because of environmental factors. We would find a way to accommodate. Please value and weigh the comments of the local people and our desires more than the organizations from outside of the area and their agenda. This will affect us, our lives, socially, economically, environmentally, and financially, not theirs. The country was founded on local people making local decisions about our own lives and not outside influences dictating what they do not directly participate in. The settlement of Utah was done so that people would have refuge to live our own lives as we seem fit, to take refuge from other's agendas. The Uintah Basin was set aside for people to establish homes and businesses by the sweat of our own brow. Please allow us in the basin to continue that tradition. I fully support this project it will benefit, me, my family, my neighbors, my culture, and business. This is much more than an oil project. Please allow this project to be built.