



UTE INDIAN TRIBE
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November 19, 2020

Via Certified Mail and Electronic Filing

Joshua Wayland, PhD
Surface Transportation Board
c/o ICF
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031
Attention: Environmental filing, Docket No. FD 36284

Re: Request for Extension of Public Comment Period on Draft Environmental Impact Statement – Uinta Basin Railway

Dear Dr. Wayland:

The Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation respectfully requests a 60-day extension of the public comment period for the Surface Transportation Board's Draft Environmental Impact Statement ("DEIS") on the Uinta Basin Railway.

The Ute Indian Tribe has a tremendous stake in this project and should be given the opportunity to participate at each juncture of the EIS process. Each of the three proposed routes for the rail line would traverse Indian country lands under the jurisdiction of the Tribe, and the preferred Whitmore Park route would cross significant portions of tribal trust land. The project could impact tribal lands, air, water, wildlife, and vegetation. The Tribe also has an interest in the potential socioeconomic impacts of the project, particularly as it relates to energy mineral development on the Reservation.

Recently, the Tribe was forced to temporarily shut down its government operations due to issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The skyrocketing rate of active COVID-19 cases have been felt by the Tribe, which has taken proactive measures to protect its citizens and government employees. However, these necessary measures will impact the ability of the Tribe to prepare comprehensive comments to the DEIS within the 45-day comment period.

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In consideration of the exigent present circumstances posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the unique and extensive interest the Ute Indian Tribe has in this project, the Ute Indian Tribe requests an extension until February 12, 2021, to submit its public comments on the DEIS.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Luke Duncan", is positioned above the printed name.

Luke Duncan, Chairman
Ute Indian Tribe Business Committee