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Received: 12/16/2020 1:36:23 PM**Commenter:** Thomas Winterton**Organization:****State:** Utah**Agency:** STB**Initiative:** Uinta Basin Railway EIS**Attachments:** No Attachments**Submission Text**

I am a small business owner here in the Uintah Basin. In the past 20 years, I have owned a construction business that specialized in customer homes and small commercial. I also owned two motels in Roosevelt and Duchesne, The Winterton Suites. 90% of our business was oil field related. At the present time, I am partners in a consulting company that focuses on start up companies and strategic partnerships. In my business, I help companies find solutions to their problems. Having grown up in Roosevelt, and living here for most of my 40 years, I am well aware of the boom/bust cycles that come with the oil industry. Both boom and bust cycles presents problems for the people who live in the Uintah Basin. I know that the oil industry will benefit greatly from railway to the Basin, but I am advocating for the railway for completely different reasons. I have had multiple opportunities to align local investment dollars and talent with outside needs. In one case, I was consulting with a company that needed additional machining and manufacturing. The Basin is attractive because of very low power rates, business friendly atmosphere, and capital from local business owners who would build the facility to produce the needed products. In the end, it did not happen because of a lack of transportation in and out of the basin. No interstate, no major airport, no railway. To entice any type of serious manufacturing, we need one of the three. This railway would allow the basin to more seriously compete for manufacturing. It would allow the Basin the opportunity to better diversify our economy, lessening our dependence on the oil extraction industry. I know that some environmental groups may oppose the railway because of the benefits it will bring to the oil industry in the area, but if they are serious about lessening the oil industry in the Basin they would realize that they need to help provide tools to the Basin to reduce our dependence on oil and gas. The Basin needs to diversify our economy. Right now, a large portion of our economy is based on oil. Almost everyone has a family member who makes a good living working in some aspect of energy extraction. Our voice is united and strong in our support of the oil industry. But bring in new manufacturing, the likes of which does not depend on the oil, and with it will come citizens and employees who also are not dependent on it. The railroad will bring many new jobs to the Basin, and many could be in industries that have nothing to do with the oil industry. I personally could have profited off of deals bringing new industries to the Basin had I had the availability of the railroad when I was pitching the projects. One last thing I want to address, the trucking industry. While the railroad will provide a way to haul oil out of the basin, trucking will be needed more than ever. The railway will not travel to each oil well. Because more oil will be sold outside the Basin, it will require more local trucking to get it from the wells to the railway. Highway 40 between Roosevelt and Interstate 80 is dangerous with all the increased oil tankers traveling it. I cannot imagine that truck traffic could increase much without serious consequences and major investment in highway expansion and upgrades. The railway can be a great solution to increase the safety on Highway 40. I strongly support the railway project. It is time that the Uintah Basin have an opportunity to compete in the world of commodities. It is time that our area be given equal footing when it comes to recruiting manufacturing and diversifying our economy. I hope to see this project become a reality. Thank you.