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Commenter: Mayor JR Bird

Organization: Roosevelt City

State: Utah

Agency: STB

Initiative: Uinta Basin Railway EIS

Attachments: No Attachments

Submission Text

Mr. Wayland,

My name is JR Bird and I'm the Mayor of Roosevelt Utah. We are the largest City in Duchesne County and are very excited for the opportunity to have rail as a form of transportation in our area for many reasons.

As I'm sure you are aware, the Oil and Gas industry is the primary economic driver in our area and has been for years. This can be very good when things are going well, but is devastating when the energy industry is doing poorly. Our area seems to be hit much more drastically than other areas that rely on similar industries because of our inability to effectively, and economically market our oil to areas other than the Wasatch Front. Transportation has been a bottle neck for us, not only in the energy industry, but other economic opportunities including Agriculture, Manufacturing and Machining. Being able to export our products via rail will open up many avenues of opportunity that will help to stabilize our economy, provide good paying stable jobs, and governmental revenues to build and maintain necessary infrastructure for the residents in our area.

Roosevelt City has the responsibility to maintain and upgrade Culinary and Secondary water systems, sewer, fire protection, police protection, and public roads just to name a few. Our city frequently accesses the Permanent Community Impact Board for Grants and loans to fund critical infrastructure projects. These funds are 100% funded with mineral lease monies which are generated by mineral production on Federal Land.

Although these funds are helpful it is still very difficult to maintain parts of the infrastructure in the older parts of our community that are nearing the end of their useful life (some older than 40 years) due to the inconsistency of tax revenues that follow the same ebbs and flows trend of the industry. Our revenues can swing wildly every 4 – 5 years. Currently grants are becoming more difficult to find which means we will have to rely on loans which further challenges our ability to meet financial obligations.

I would like to share a little of my vision of how this project will solve many of these problems we face as a government entity and citizens. As a community we are working on and have established buyers for our product in Texas and hopefully the west coast. The Crude Oil produced here in the basin has unique characteristics that are ideal for the production of pharmaceuticals, plastics and other consumables, which is highly desirable not only nationwide, but globally. By being able to economically transport our oil and due to its unique and desirable qualities for other uses other than gasoline and diesel production, it would mean a consistent demand regardless of energy consumption. That would equate to a more constant, stable industrial revenue stream to our area, solving to a large degree the large economic swings that we experience.

Once the Railway is established, we would be able to capitalize on other areas of industry immediately starting with agriculture. We ship thousands of

tons of alfalfa all over the country and even as far as china. The rail would enable us to ship that product economically and safely, increasing our ability to grow that market.

As community partners in the Uintah Basin, we are actively working with the Inland Port Board to be considered as a rural rail spur when that project gets underway. Again that would give us world access to market those commodities described above. Manufacturing and other industries would soon follow, and before too long we would have a diversified, thriving, well balanced economy that would bring the ultimate stability desired by so very many in our area. This Rail Project will be the gateway for all of this to transpire.

As eluded to above, and contrary to what some may believe, the Rail will also provide a safer, a more environmentally friendly, and more economic way of transporting our resources. Today I drove 191 from Duchesne to Price Utah and passed 4-5 double crude haulers taking crude to the rail in Carbon County. Traffic, Safety of our roads, wear and tear on infrastructure, and the overall environmental benefits a rail brings are all added bonuses that I can see in addition to the direct economic impacts and opportunities the rail will provide.

I appreciate taking the time to consider my comments.

Best regards,
JR Bird

Roosevelt City Mayor