



The Hon. Patrick J. Fuchs, Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

Re: *Seven County Infrastructure Coalition – Rail Construction & Operation Exemption –In Utah, Carbon, Duchesne, and Uintah Counties, Utah*, STB Docket No. FD 36284

Chairman Fuchs:

We write to urge the Surface Transportation Board to deny the Seven County Infrastructure Coalition's November 13, 2025 motion to reaffirm with only cursory analysis the Board's 2021 decision approving the Uinta Basin Railway. Instead, the Board should engage in a robust evaluation of the Railway project's risks to Colorado's communities, water, land, air, and climate by preparing a supplemental environmental impact statement on remand from the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals. The Board should also revisit the economic basis for the Railway, which is on shakier ground than ever.

The Board's 2021 Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) concluded that the Uinta Basin Railway would cause up to 4.6 billion gallons of crude oil per year to be shipped from Utah through Colorado to the Gulf Coast on as many as five, two-mile-long trains per day. These trains would run for more than 200 miles alongside the headwaters of the Colorado River, a vital water supply for drinking water and for Colorado's agricultural land, an important driver of Colorado's recreation and tourism economies, and critical habitat for fish protected by the Endangered Species Act.

The Board must ensure that the foreseeable impacts of an oil train spill fouling this critical watercourse are disclosed. The D.C. Circuit ruled that the Board failed to take the hard look the law requires at the potential impacts of spills to the Colorado River, a conclusion that the Supreme Court's May 2025 decision did not disturb. The Board's own EIS predicted oil trains leaving the Uinta Basin and travelling on the Union Pacific line to Denver would derail with predictable frequency. Accidents and spills will happen, as the [recent derailment of a coal train into the Gunnison River](#) underscores. A train derailment that spills oil in the headwaters of the River would harm Colorado's water supplies, wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreation assets, and threatens water quality in states downstream as well. Past spills of Uinta Basin crude oil from trucks have forced river managers to reduce streamflows, taken weeks to clean up, cost millions in remediation costs, fouled vegetation, and threatened wildlife. The Board's EIS contains no mitigation measures to address these impacts. A supplemental EIS is necessary to ensure that the threats to the communities and values along the Colorado River are fully disclosed, and not ignored, in the Board's deliberations.

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The Board must also disclose the foreseeable impacts of wildfire caused by the more than doubling of traffic along the Union-Pacific line from Kyune, Utah to Denver, Colorado. Trains regularly cause wildfire ignitions, as railway-ignited fires in Colorado and Utah last summer confirm. Increasing wildfire risk at a time when the West already faces severe drought could have devastating results. Many Colorado communities along the U-P line have suffered in recent years from extreme wildfires, other disasters like severe flash flooding and mudslides, and managing water levels at unprecedented lows. Because the Board's 2021 EIS failed to address these impacts, as the D.C. Circuit held, the Board should prepare a supplemental EIS.

A supplemental EIS is also required to provide legitimacy to the Board's decision. Colorado's communities have for years pressed to have their voices heard and their concerns fairly and carefully evaluated. Numerous local governments, water districts, and other stakeholders along the U-P line where thousands of oil trains will travel each year due to the Railway have pressed the Board and other agencies to fully evaluate the risks the Railway poses, risks the 2021 EIS failed to address.

The Board should also prepare an updated economic analysis to ensure that the Uinta Basin Railway is financially viable, and so can follow through on the project and mitigation measures it commits to. Utah communities should not be left holding the bag on a half-built railroad or stranded asset, and the legacy effects of destabilized soils and slopes, runoff pollution, habitat fragmentation, and damage to public lands. Moreover, the 2023 East Palestine, Ohio disaster has raised alarms that railroads may be cutting costs to the point of risking public health and safety. The Board must consider the project's financial viability before assessing its risks to communities along the line.

The 2021 EIS relied in part on a now seven-year-old economic study and assumptions which are no longer valid. The current over-supply of oil on the world market and the increased cost of steel, for two examples, cast doubt on that analysis. Further, while the Railway stated it intends to rely on taxpayer-subsidized private activity bonds to finance the lion's share of the \$2+ billion project. But the Department of Transportation which administers those bonds has already allocated the entirety of funds Congress made available, meaning that the Railway can't currently make use of such bonds.

For these reasons and many others, we urge the Board to reject the Seven County Infrastructure's motion to effectively ignore the D.C. Circuit's decision and cut the public out of the necessary supplemental environmental review of the Uinta Basin Railway. Instead, the Board should prepare a supplemental EIS to assess the project's impacts on Colorado's waters, lands, and communities and to disclose whether the Railway remains a viable project.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Lamson", is written over the printed name.

Chris Lamson
President
Collegiate Peaks Chapter of Trout Unlimited

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