



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

Office of Environmental Analysis

EO-3066

April 10, 2019

[Name]

[Title]

[Agency]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Re: Docket No. FD 36284, Seven County Infrastructure Coalition—Construction & Operation Exemption—in Utah, Carbon, Duchesne, and Uinta Counties, Utah

Dear [Name]:

I am writing to let you know about and request your preliminary comments on a forthcoming proposal to build an approximately 80-mile line of railroad to transport commodities and products into and out of the Uinta Basin in northeastern Utah. The proponent of the proposed project is the Seven County Infrastructure Coalition (the Coalition), an intergovernmental entity established by the counties of Carbon, Daggett, Duchesne, Emery, San Juan, Sevier, and Uintah in Utah. The Coalition intends to file a petition or an application with the Surface Transportation Board (the Board) seeking authority to construct and operate the proposed rail line. Before granting such authority, the Board must consider the potential environmental impacts of the Coalition's proposal, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related laws.

The Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) intends to begin the process of preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will analyze the potential environmental impacts of the proposed rail line. OEA will develop the EIS in consultation with appropriate federal, state, and local agencies; tribes; other interested stakeholders; and the public. This project is similar to a proposal that the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) considered beginning in 2012, but that previous proposal was not carried forward and the NEPA process was not completed. There have also been prior studies on different variations of this proposal dating to before 2012 that were not carried forward.

The purpose of this letter is to advise you of the proposed rail line project and request preliminary information from your agency regarding the resources under your jurisdiction that could be affected by the proposed rail line construction and operation, as well as any permits and approvals that could be required of the Coalition as part of the proposed project that OEA should consider in undertaking its environmental review.

Project Background

Currently, all freight moving into and out of the Uinta Basin is transported by truck on one of two public highways. The proposed project would provide a new transportation option by connecting industries in the basin to the interstate freight rail network. Based on current market conditions, the Coalition estimates that approximately seven trains would move along the proposed rail line per day, on average, including loaded and unloaded trains. Rail traffic entering the Uinta Basin would likely move such products and commodities as fracturing sand, proppant, tubular steel, and oil industry machinery from the Midwest, Texas, the Southeast, and ports on the Pacific and Gulf coasts. Outbound trains would likely carry crude oil, gilsonite, and other mineral and agricultural products to markets across the U.S., including oil refineries in the Salt Lake City area, the Mississippi River Valley, the Chicago area, the Ohio River Valley, and the Pacific, Gulf, and Atlantic coasts.

The Coalition has evaluated potential routes connecting the Uinta Basin to the national rail network and has identified three alternative routes (Figure 1) that would be both engineeringly and commercially feasible. Those proposed alternatives are the Indian Canyon Route, the Craig Route, and the Wells Draw Route, as described in further detail below:

- The Indian Canyon Route would be approximately 80 miles long and would connect an existing rail line owned by Union Pacific Railway Company (UP) near Kyune, Utah to a terminus point in the Uinta Basin near Leland Bench, approximately 9.5 miles south of Fort Duchesne, Utah (Figure 2). Starting at Leland Bench, this route would proceed westward, past the South Myton Bench area, until intersecting Indian Canyon approximately two miles south of Duchesne, Utah. After entering Indian Canyon, the route would turn southwest and follow Indian Creek upstream toward its headwaters below Indian Creek Pass, paralleling U.S. Highway 191 for approximately 21 miles. The Indian Canyon Route would use a summit tunnel to pass through the West Tavaputs Plateau and, after emerging from the tunnel, would descend the Roan Cliffs to reach Emma Park, an open grassy area at the base of the Roan Cliffs. The route would then run westward through Emma Park and connect to the UP Provo Subdivision near the railroad timetable station at Kyune. The route would cross land owned or managed by the State of Utah, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Ute Indian Tribe. At this time, the Coalition has identified the Indian Canyon Route as its preferred alternative.
- The Craig Route would be approximately 185 miles long and would connect an existing UP rail line near Axial, Colorado to two terminus points in the Uinta Basin near South Myton Bench and Leland Bench (Figure 3). The lines from those two terminus points would meet at a junction approximately four miles north of Leland Bench. From the junction, the Craig Route would proceed generally northward for approximately seven miles, then turn and proceed generally eastward, crossing the Green River approximately

five miles south of Jensen, Utah. The route would then proceed southeasterly, entering Colorado approximately three miles northwest of Dinosaur, Colorado and would connect to the Deseret Power Railroad (DPR) south of Dinosaur. The Craig Route would utilize approximately 13 miles of the DPR to proceed eastward and would depart the DPR approximately two miles west of the Deserado Mine. It would then proceed generally eastward to connect to the UP Craig Subdivision near the railroad timetable station at Axial. This route would cross land owned or managed by the BLM, the State of Colorado, and the State of Utah. It would not cross USFS or tribal land.

- The Wells Draw Route would be approximately 105 miles long and would connect an existing UP rail line near Kyune, Utah to two terminus points in the Uinta Basin near South Myton Bench and Leland Bench (Figure 4). The lines from those two terminus points would meet at a junction approximately 6.5 miles south of South Myton Bench. From the junction, the Wells Draw Route would run southward, generally following Wells Draw towards its headwaters. After reaching the headwaters of Wells Draw, the route would turn westward and enter Argyle Canyon. It would remain on the north wall of Argyle Canyon for approximately 25 miles, eventually reaching the floor of the canyon near the headwaters of Argyle Creek. The route would then enter a summit tunnel through the West Tavaputs Plateau and, after emerging from the tunnel, would descend the Roan Cliffs to reach Emma Park. The route would run westward through Emma Park and connect to the UP Provo Subdivision near the railroad timetable station at Kyune. The Wells Draw Route would cross land owned or managed by the BLM and the State of Utah. It would not cross USFS or tribal land.

Maps of the three proposed alternatives are appended to this letter. Because the Coalition has not yet completed the final engineering design for the three routes, the appended maps depict the centerlines of three study corridors defined by the Coalition that may be wider than the actual rail rights-of-way. OEA will provide copies of more detailed maps of the proposed alternative routes as they become available. OEA will review the proposed alternatives and develop the final set of alternatives to be examined in the EIS in consultation with appropriate federal, state, and local agency; tribes; other interested stakeholders; and the public during the scoping process, which will begin when the Board issues a Notice of Intent to prepare the EIS.

Environmental Review Process

Pursuant to the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality implementing NEPA (40 C.F.R. §§ 1500-1508) and the Board's environmental rules at 49 C.F.R. § 1105, OEA will work as the lead federal agency to prepare an EIS that will evaluate the potential environmental effects of the Coalition's proposal, including reasonable and feasible alternatives, as well as the No-Action alternative. Based on information submitted by the Coalition, OEA's independent investigations, and consultation with other federal, state, and local agencies; tribes; other stakeholders; and members of the public, OEA will prepare a Draft EIS and issue that

document for public review and comment. OEA will then prepare a Final EIS that will respond to public and agency comments on the Draft EIS and set forth OEA's final recommendations to the Board. OEA will be assisted in conducting its environmental review by ICF Jones & Stokes, Inc., an environmental consulting company that will be serving as OEA's third-party environmental contractor in this case.

Request for Comments

We would like to hear from you whether, based on the preliminary information known about the proposed rail line, any resources under your jurisdiction or expertise could potentially be affected by the Coalition's proposal, and whether it could require permitting or approval from your agency. We request your response by May 9, 2019 so that we may begin the process of identifying the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project.

Please send your written comments to Joshua Wayland, OEA's Project Manager for the EIS, by email at Joshua.Wayland@stb.gov or by mail to:

Joshua Wayland
Surface Transportation Board
c/o ICF Jones & Stokes, Inc.
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031

If you have any questions or would like to arrange a meeting or conference call with OEA, please feel free to contact Joshua Wayland by phone at (202) 245-0330 or by email. We greatly appreciate your assistance and look forward to your participation in the Board's environmental review process for this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Victoria Rutson
Director
Office of Environmental Analysis

Enclosures:

Figure 1 - Uinta Basin Railway Proposed Routes
Figure 2 - Indian Canyon Route
Figure 3 - Craig Route
Figure 4 - Wells Draw Route

Agency/Organization	Mailing Address	City	State	Zip
FRA Office of Program Delivery	1200 New Jersey Ave SE, W36-317	Washington	D.C.	20590
BLM Vernal Field Office	170 South 500 East	Vernal	UT	84078
BLM Price Field Office	125 South 600 West	Price	UT	84501
U.S. Forest Service, Ashley National Forest, Duchesne/Roosevelt Ranger District	85 West Main Street	Duchesne	UT	84021
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District	533 West 2600 South, Suite 150	Bountiful	UT	84010-7744
Utah Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office	350 North State Street, 5th Floor, Suite 5110	Salt Lake City	UT	84103
Ute Indian Tribe	P.O. Box 190	Fort Duchesne	UT	84026
Duchesne County	734 North Center Street, P.O. Box 910	Duchesne	UT	84021
Uintah County	152 East 100 North, 2nd Floor West Wing	Vernal	UT	84078
Carbon County	751 East 100 North, Suite 2700	Price	UT	84501
Utah County	100 East Center Street, Suite 2300	Provo	UT	84606
Utah Department of Environmental Quality	195 North 1950 West	Salt Lake City	UT	84116
Utah Department of Transportation	4501 South 2700 West, P.O. Box 141265	Salt Lake City	UT	84114-1265
Utah Department of Transportation, Region 3	658 North 1500 West	Orem	UT	84057
Utah Governor's Office	350 North State Street, Suite 200, P.O. Box 142220	Salt Lake City	UT	84114-2220
Bureau of Indian Affairs, Uintah and Ouray Agency	988 South 7500 East, P.O. Box 130	Fort Duchesne	UT	84026
Bureau of Indian Affairs, Western Region	2600 N. Central Avenue, 4th Floor Mailroom	Phoenix	AZ	85001
U.S. EPA, Region 8	1595 Wynkoop Street	Denver	CO	80202-1129

State of Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration	675 East 500 South, Suite 500	Salt Lake City	UT	84102
Moffat County	221 West Victory Way, Suite 130	Craig	CO	81625
Rio Blanco County	P.O. Box I	Meeker	CO	81641
BLM Little Snake Field Office	455 Emerson Street	Craig	CO	81625
BLM White River Field Office	220 East Market Street	Meeker	CO	81641
Colorado Department of Transportation	2829 West Howard Place	Denver	CO	80204
Colorado Department of Transportation, Region 3	222 South 6th Street, #317	Grand Junction	CO	81501-2769
Colorado Governor's Office	136 State Capitol Building	Denver	CO	80203
Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Northwest Region	73485 Highway 64, P.O. Box 1181	Meeker	CO	81641
Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Headquarters	1313 Sherman Street, 6th Floor	Denver	CO	80203
Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment	4300 Cherry Creek Drive South	Denver	CO	80246
Colorado State Land Board, Northwest District	2667 Copper Ridge Circle, Unit 1	Steamboat Springs	CO	80487
National Park Service, Dinosaur National Monument	4545 East Highway 40	Dinosaur	CO	81610
Utah State Historic Preservation Office	300 South Rio Grande Street	Salt Lake City	UT	84101
Colorado State Historic Preservation Office	1200 Broadway	Denver	CO	80203
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Utah Ecological Services Field Office	2369 West Orton Circle, Suite 50	West Valley City	UT	84119-7603
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Colorado Ecological Services Field Office	Denver Federal Center (MS 65412), P.O. Box 25486	Denver	CO	80225