

Surface Transportation Board

Written comments for Scoping Meeting for Uintah Basin Railway

July 18, 2019

My name is Grant J Earl, 1878 West South Cove Road, Roosevelt, Utah 84066, and I have lived in the Uintah Basin for virtually my entire life. I've been able to work and raise my family here, in part, as a result of the abundance of natural resources that are prevalent here in the Basin and the value these resources create. Some of my children have also elected to stay here for the same reason. However, without a competitive and reasonable process to market the resources produced in this area, it's very likely national and international competition will force producers to transfer assets to other states or countries with their investments. If (or rather, when) that happens, my children, and their children, will be forced to find other employment and will most likely not be able to stay in the Basin.

Some 17 or 18 years ago, an effort was made to consider a railway here in the Basin. I was asked to participate in those discussions and at that time, the cost of a mile of new track was projected to be approximately \$1 million per mile. Today, I understand the cost projected for the proposed 80-mile line is estimated at \$1.2 billion. There are obviously inflationary impacts during this time, but regulations and political challenges have dramatically impacted pricing. Delaying the project will only require more roadblocks for the future.

I serve as General Manager and CEO of Moon Lake Electric, an electrical cooperative serving residential homes and businesses from Daniels Summit in Wasatch County, to some twenty miles east of Rangely, Colorado, including nearly all the Uintah Basin, except the Ashley Valley in and around Vernal. Shipping by truck is the only alternative for Moon Lake to receive needed materials and equipment. We purchase some 700-800 poles annually from Canada along with large transformers, reels of wire conductor and other large equipment from the eastern and southern parts of the United States. Many of our electric cooperative counterparts receive these shipments by rail, at a substantial cost benefit.

As Chairman of Deseret Generation and Transmission, I'm aware that those same shipping cost differentials also apply to equipment and materials procured by Deseret in the Uintah Basin. Further, Deseret Power has multiple bulk haul shipping needs and opportunities that, with a railway available in the Basin, could benefit the electric users in the Basin, as well as other areas in and around Utah, by millions of dollars annually.

When it's determined the Uintah Basin Railway project is sufficiently funded, adequately designed and properly sited, there will be a tremendous value to the Uintah Basin to construct this project.

