

Congress of the United States

Washington D.C. 20515

June 26, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

We write to express our concerns with the proposed Uinta Basin Railway Project (UBR). We believe there are environmental consequences associated with UBR that pose a significant risk to Colorado's natural resources and its citizens. Additionally, we believe that Coloradans were not given full and fair consideration throughout the approval process.

UBR would connect the Uinta Basin in Utah to the national rail network via the construction of an 88-mile rail line. This rail line would transport crude oil from the Basin to markets across the country. In fact, it is estimated that UBR would transport approximately 350,000 barrels of waxy crude oil a day through Colorado.

UBR will follow along the Colorado River, a lifeline for nearly 40 million people, including 30 Native American Tribes, across seven states that all rely on its health and integrity. Today, the exceptional natural resource of the Colorado River is already facing record-low reserves and stands at its driest point on record. We believe transporting crude oil along the Colorado River is a risk we cannot afford to take. A recent mudslide in Glenwood Springs that buried the tracks and led to a train fire highlights the potential environmental consequences of this project.¹

In addition to raising environmental alarms, Coloradans have serious concerns around fairness and inclusion. UBR has been in development since the 1990s, and the railway's construction was approved by the Surface Transportation Board in 2021. The current proposal is a collaborative Public-Private Partnership effort developed among seven Utah counties, the Rio Grande Pacific Corporation, and Drexel Hamilton Infrastructure Partners. Impacted citizens from Utah were justifiably consulted as part of the proposal. However, we feel that Coloradans perspective were not given equal consideration, particularly given the fact that we live within a region that will be significantly impacted by UBR.

Throughout the public comment period, the Surface Transportation Board held six in person public comment meetings. Of those meetings, only one was held in Colorado. While the construction of UBR will take place in a small region of Utah, the impact could be felt throughout all of Colorado, including frontline communities along the Colorado River and in the

¹ <https://coloradosun.com/2023/05/05/eagle-county-uinta-basin-appeals-court/>

Denver metro area. As such, we are concerned about the lack of direct engagement with Coloradans throughout the state.

Due to the fact that some reports indicate that UBR could quadruple rail traffic on the rail line, we believe there may be significant environmental justice concerns with the project. Were a train to derail, it would be frontline communities who bear the brunt of the damage, in the air they breathe and the water they drink. Additionally, following the East Palestine train derailment, our nation has been tragically reminded of the environmental and community devastation wrought in the absence of rail safety. Considering this recent disaster, we reaffirm our belief that we must incorporate the voices and opinions of the most vulnerable. Coloradans deserve an equitable seat at the table in any conversations regarding our health and safety, and our environment.

Thank you for giving your full and fair consideration of these concerns in accordance with all applicable rules, regulations, laws, and guidelines. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Jason Crow
Member of Congress