

Oppose the Book Cliffs Highway

#NoTarSandsHwy, #NoTarSands,
#BookCliffsHwy, #JustTransition

Talking Points:

- 1) This is not a road for "tourism." The road would cut down travel time from Vernal to Moab by a mere 15 minutes (27 miles). There are two existing scenic highways that allow the same access from Dinosaur National Monument, with similar travel times.¹
- 2) The cost is outlandish. On-going maintenance is a concern. Even if the SCIC says they'll pay, their money is coming from the CIB, which would otherwise finance other projects in our rural counties that are more necessary: i.e. care facilities, libraries, recreation centers, bridges, water projects. There is not an infinite pool of CIB money.
- 3) The Seven County Infrastructure Coalition says, "The future production loss due to transportation capacity shortfalls in the Uinta Basin is likely to exceed \$30 billion over 30 years." This is faulty logic on many levels.
 - "Production loss" refers to oil and gas that could be pulled out of the ground immediately if there was a market, and is instead patiently waiting underground. This resource is not being "lost," rather, it is like money in the bank. Measured extraction would stretch out the resource for years and years to come, protecting from a complete "bust."
 - The SCIC also use this same figure to justify the expense of studying, and probably building, the Uinta Basin Rail Line. The rail would more fully meet the needs of the industry than the highway. The CIB is financing the pursuit of both projects with the same monetary justification. The extraction industry does not need both an additional highway and a rail line.
- 4) The highway would increase the mortality for big game and a decrease in the quality of hunting experience in the Book Cliffs. An estimated 138 mule deer, 5 elk, 1 mountain lion, and 1 black bear would be killed each year as a result of the highway.



¹ These are my calculations using Google Maps and the predicted 46 minute travel time from PR Spring to I-70 at Exit 214 discussed in UDOT feasibility Study. The estimation for travel time is rudimentary for the East Canyon Section. It assumes an average of 55 mph and does not take into account vertical grades, acceleration, or deceleration. See the table below for details.

- 5) Archeological Resources up and down the canyon would be impacted, even potentially a Ute burial site.
- 6) We don't need a road that subsidizes the Tar Sands and Oil Shale industries. We need to spend that public money elsewhere. If the oil and gas industry wants that road, they should pay for it and maintain it, not the CIB and Grand County.

Travel Time Comparisons

Travel Routes	Miles*	Minutes of Travel*
Vernal to Moab via Price	227	3h 57m
Vernal to Moab via Rangely	217	3h 41m
Vernal to Moab via East Canyon w /Book Cliffs Highway	190	3h 27m
DIFFERENCE (between Book Cliffs Highway and the fastest existing route through Rangely)	27	14m
Book Cliffs Highway Breakdown		
Vernal to PR Spring	86	1h 44m
East Canyon Segment **	41	46m
Exit 214 - Moab	63	57m
Total Book Cliffs Highway:	190	3h 27m
	*According to Google Maps. Check out this saved map.	**According to UDOT Feasibility Study , page 25

Facts and unresolved issues regarding the Book Cliffs Highway

(From the 1992 EIS on the East/ Brusher Canyon Alternative)

- 44,000 feet of stream channel realignment (taken from the 1992 EIS)
- Existing and potential landslide areas were identified in Brusher and **East Canyons** as part of a geological investigation of the Proposed Route
- The Brusher/ East Canyon Alternative would be located on approximately 11 miles of flood-prone areas along the floor of East Canyon. These areas are managed such that flood prone areas are not disturbed unless other reasonable alternatives to disturbance are not available.
- The proposed highway would increase the potential for future flooding at the ranch (confluence of Hay and East) by increasing flood elevations.
- The Brusher/East Canyon Alternative would result in decreases in habitat use on 17,600 acres of important (high value, critical value) mule deer range, 17,600 acres of important (substantial value, high value, critical value) elk range, 17,600 acres of potential mountain lion range, and 17,600 acres of potential black bear range. The Brusher/East Canyon Alternative would result in an estimated annual road kill mortality of 138 mule deer, 5 elk, 1 mountain lion, and 1 black bear.
- The total value of big game animals lost to road kills annually would be approximately \$269,406.
- 19 known cultural sites occur within the 200-foot-wide study corridor along the Brusher/East Canyon Alternative. These 19 cultural sites include 1 lithic scatter, 3 lithic scatter/campsite combinations, 1 campsite, 4 rock art sites, 6 rock art/rock shelter combinations, 3 rock shelter occupations, and 1 Ute burial site.

More on Money....

- The most likely cost of building the highway is estimated to be \$279 million but could be much higher.²
- The Seven County Infrastructure Coalition claims that State and local tax revenue would increase by about \$87 million over 30 years (based on increased business sales or "output" which I am assuming means full build out of oil and gas, and no action to limit green house gases on federal land).³
- The SCIC predicts the most likely maintenance cost for the highway over 30 years to be about \$78 million (\$2,595,000 and multiply it by 30 years). That leaves an \$11 million net gain in State and local revenue over 30 years. ⁴
- Compare \$11 million in State and local revenue to -\$297 million cost of building the highway and you can see that the numbers don't work out favorably for the State of Utah.
- The SCIC claims \$98 million in travel time savings and \$62 million in vehicle operating cost savings (e.g., reduction in fuel consumption) would occur over 30 years of the project.⁵
 - This saving would go directly to the oil and gas corporations, not county residents, tourists, or even directly to the oil field workers.
 - Even if you factor this savings in, the Book Cliffs Highway would not bring equivalent benefits to the residents of the State of Utah or Grand County. (\$279 million - \$62 million - \$98 million - \$11 million= \$108 Million in the hole)

Declared cost ([SCIC Feasibility Study](#)):

Most likely: \$278,600,000

Minimum: \$195,000,000

Maximum: \$417,900,000

Cost per mile: 42 miles

Most likely: \$6.6 million per mile!

Minimum: \$4.6 million per mile!

Maximum: \$9.95 million per mile!

Annual Maintenance and Operating Costs ([SCIC Feasibility Study](#)):

Most likely: \$2,595,000

Minimum: \$1,815,000

Maximum: \$3,890,000

² <http://scic-utah.org/wp-content/uploads/Eastern-Utah-Regional-Connection.pdf>

³ <http://scic-utah.org/priority-project-eastern-utah-regional-connection/>

^{4 4} <http://scic-utah.org/wp-content/uploads/Eastern-Utah-Regional-Connection.pdf>

⁵⁵ <http://scic-utah.org/priority-project-eastern-utah-regional-connection/>

A Timeline of the 1990s Book Cliffs Highway Controversy:⁶

- Nov. 1988 -After a highly controversial proposal to create a toxic waste incinerator in Cisco, two of the three county commissioners promoting the incinerator were ousted from office by substantial margins.
- Nov. 1988 -A citizens initiative blocked the toxic waste incinerator.
- During the Lame Duck session, the three county commissioners created the Grand County Special Service Road District. The sole purpose of the district was to construct Grand's portion of an 83-mile paved highway through the Book Cliffs. All mineral lease funds that Grand County was to receive for decades to come were committed to the roads district.
- Moab City Council voted to reverse its support of the Book Cliffs Highway
- 1992 : the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources opposed the Book Cliffs road.
- Sept. 1992 - Draft EIS on the project (Ouray to Interstate 70) was released, preferring the alternative that did not widen any existing right-of-ways and simply paved sections as they were. Many unresolved issues were outlined including significant threats of rockslides, significant impacts to stream channels, big game populations, and cultural resources.
- Fueled by the actions that created the Special Service Road District, a voter initiative changed the Grand County Commission from a three-person commission with administrative authority to a seven-member council that is strictly legislative.
- Feb. 1993, the newly elected council immediately dissolved the road board's administrative authority, preventing the board from spending more money.
- After that, another citizen's initiative forced the recall of six of the seven new council members.
- November 1993- all six members were again elected
- The mineral lease funds were redirected to the recreation, the hospital/extended care facility, and the solid waste special service districts.

⁶Timeline taken from "A History of the 1990's Book Cliffs Highway Controversy" by Craig Bigler at the Times Independent. Accessed at <https://moabtimes.com/2009/07/23/3018755-a-history-of-the-1990s-book-cliffs-highway-controversy/>

More Current Events Relating the Book Cliffs Highway

- 2013- 2016 : The Book cliffs Highway was at the center of controversy in Rob Bishops public lands bill, labeled a "public utility Corridor" which ultimately fell apart.⁷
- August, 2014 : Recall petition for Lynn Jackson launched as SCIC / Book Cliffs Highway controversy Mounts.⁸
- October 2014: The Grand County Council joined the Seven County Infrastructure Coalition despite public uproar.
- January, 2015: After the election, the Grand County Council rescinded the previous council's resolution to join the regional Seven County Infrastructure Coalition over concerns involving the Book Cliffs Highway

⁷ <https://www.hcn.org/issues/48.3/the-failed-compromises-of-rep-rob-bishops-public-lands-masterplan>

⁸ http://www.moabsunnews.com/news/article_189fb69c-2e13-11e4-b816-001a4bcf6878.html