

The Uinta Basin Railway - Talking Points

www.stopuintabasinrailway.com

#StoptheUBR

CLIMATE: The railway could unlock a frenzy of new drilling in the Uinta Basin, potentially quadrupling oil extraction in the region. This would accelerate the already dangerous public health and environmental effects of global warming.

POLLUTION: This project would be a trainwreck for the region's air, water, lands and wildlife. Oil and gas extraction are already poisoning the Uinta Basin's air and water, harming people and wildlife. The railway would make things worse.

WASTE: Public money is being misspent to push the Uinta Basin Railway forward.

DESTRUCTION: The Uinta Basin Railway would negatively impact wildlife, families and communities along the route, disrupting areas that are peaceful, quiet, and scenic.

BOOM & BUST: Rather than helping to diversify struggling rural economies, this misguided proposal would make the communities of the Uinta Basin even more captive to the fickle global price of oil, and would drag the region's economy deeper into an unhealthy dependence on fossil fuel extraction.



The Uinta Basin Railway: Project Background

Why a railway?

The purpose of the proposed Uinta Basin Railway (UBR) is to connect the Uinta Basin to the national rail network in order for fossil fuels companies to access out-of-state and overseas markets. This could unlock a frenzy of new oil development in the Uinta Basin, which is not possible with current transportation capacity. This idea has existed for decades, though the project has never moved forward due to the extreme cost and rugged terrain. However, with the oil refineries that process Uinta Basin crude oil in Salt Lake City at capacity, fossil fuel companies and their powerful political allies are looking for more transportation options to get oil out of the basin.

The Players:

In 2018 and 2019, in a questionable and potentially illegal move, the Utah Permanent Community Impact Fund Board (CIB) gave nearly \$28 million in public funds to the Seven County Infrastructure Coalition (SCIC) to launch what would be the largest railroad construction project in the United States in several decades: the Uinta Basin Railway.

The project's backers have continually failed to involve the public, including landowners in the path of the railway, in what should be a public process about how public money is being spent.

Though it remains unclear whether the Uinta Basin Railway is even a feasible project, fueled by nearly \$28 million from the CIB, it is being pushed full steam ahead. By law, CIB funds are required to serve communities by *alleviating* the impacts of mineral extraction on nearby public lands; instead, they are being given in a huge lump sum to help private oil companies extract and transport more oil.

The Seven County Infrastructure Coalition has now entered into a "Public Private Partnership" agreement with Drexel Hamilton Infrastructure Partners to finance and begin construction of the railway. Under this agreement, the private firm will construct the railway and retroactively buy back the work that has already been done on the project—that is, *if* the railway is deemed feasible and actually constructed. In the meantime, the public is taking on the risk of investing in this project, and on top of that, essentially giving an interest free loan to private industry.

