

November 17, 2020

Joshua Wayland
Surface Transportation Board
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031
Joshua.Wayland@stb.gov

Attention: Environmental filing, Docket No. FD 36284

Subject: Request for extension of the public comment period for the Uinta Basin Railway

Dear Mr. Wayland:

We are writing to you on behalf of Center for Biological Diversity, Western Resource Advocates, Mountain Lion Foundation, Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment, WildEarth Guardians, and our organizations' members to request a two-month extension of the public review and comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed Uinta Basin Railway.

The Uinta Basin Railway is the largest railway construction project in the U.S. in several decades, spanning over eighty miles of rugged terrain and sensitive wildlife habitat in the Uinta Basin. The project raises numerous issues of significant public concern, including the harms caused by rail construction and operations and expanded oil drilling on air quality, rare and endangered plant species, the imperiled Greater sage-grouse, streams and wetlands, big game habitat, inventoried roadless areas, recreation, and tribal resources. The DEIS and its appendices total over 2,700 pages, and there are numerous other supporting documents on the EIS website to review. Considering the large geographic scope, complexity, and impact of this proposal, the short comment window of 45 days does not provide the public enough time to review the DEIS and make informed comments.

In addition, Utah and many other parts of the country are experiencing a surge in COVID-19 cases. Many interested people are facing a crisis caused by the pandemic, including increased caretaking demands, working while schooling children from home, and economic hardship. The pre-occupation of the public with COVID-19 response prevents them from meaningfully participating in the process. In light of these significant disruptions, our members and organizations need additional time to participate.

We urge you to extend the DEIS comment period until February 14, 2021, and we request that you hold additional public meetings on the DEIS in January 2021.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Wendy Park

Senior Attorney
Center for Biological Diversity
1212 Broadway #800
Oakland, CA 94612
510-844-7138
wpark@biologicaldiversity.org

Joro Walker
General Counsel
Western Resource Advocates
307 West 200 South Street, Ste 2000
Salt Lake City, UT 84101
801-487-9911
joro.walker@westernresources.org

Denise Peterson
Western Region II Coordinator
Mountain Lion Foundation
dpeterson@mountainlion.org

Jonny Vasic
Executive Director
Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment
423 West 800 South
Suite A108
Salt Lake City, UT 84101
385.707.3677
jvasic@uphe.org

Jeremy Nichols
Climate and Energy Program Director
WildEarth Guardians
3798 Marshall St., Suite 8
Wheat Ridge, CO 80033
(303) 437-7663
jnichols@wildearthguardians.org