



May 11, 2023

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

RE: Reject the Uinta Basin Railway Project Application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and our more than 1.6 million members and supporters nationwide, including approximately thirty-six thousand in Colorado, I write, with urgency, to express opposition to the proposed Uinta Basin Railway (UBR) and to strongly recommend that you reject an expected application from Utah's Seven County Infrastructure Coalition and/or the UBR seeking project construction funding from the Department of Transportation's Build America Program.

Founded in 1919, NPCA is the leading citizen voice for the national parks. Our mission is to protect and enhance America's National Park System for present and future generations. We are a nonpartisan, national nonprofit with headquarters in Washington, DC, and 27 regional and field offices across the country. While I am writing to you from the Colorado Field Office, please appreciate that my colleagues in Utah and throughout the nation are equally concerned about the potentially severe consequences the UBR project could bring to their communities and our national park landscapes at large.

You have undoubtedly heard from communities across Colorado as well as leaders at the national, state, and local levels—U.S. Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper, Congressman Neguse, Colorado Attorney General Weiser, Grand County, Eagle County, the Town of Glenwood Springs, to name a few—firmly opposed to the UBR project. We stand with these communities and leaders because the UBR project is not in the public interest. On the contrary, the risks it poses to people, parks, and our environment at large cannot be overstated, as evidenced by the recent catastrophic train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio.

If approved and funded, the project would connect the fracked oil fields of Utah's Uinta Basin—an already extensively polluted landscape due to decades of oil and gas exploitation—to the national rail network through Colorado to the Gulf Coast, enabling the shipment of up to 4.6 billion gallons of waxy crude oil per

year. Multiple trains could ship upwards of 350,000 barrels of hazardous materials daily, posing significant and long-term danger while also severely degrading the Biden Administration's commitment also severely degrading the Biden Administration's commitment to decrease greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030.

The climate crisis and its dire consequences—air pollution, drought, wildfire, loss of snowpack—is the greatest threat our national parks have ever faced. By connecting the UBR with the Union Pacific Railroad through Glenwood Springs, to Granby, and eventually into more densely populated areas of Boulder County and Denver, the UBR project would threaten to exacerbate this crisis for critically important resources in and around Dinosaur National Monument, Rocky Mountain National Park, and throughout the Upper Colorado River corridor.

Furthermore, oil and gas operations are already the largest source of air and climate pollution in the Uinta Basin, plaguing the Dinosaur National Monument landscape with significant air pollution comparable with densely populated cities like Los Angeles and Denver (on February 13, 2023, air quality in the monument ranked worst in the nation). Rocky Mountain National Park, home of the Colorado River headwaters and sensitive alpine tundra, is one of the most visited parks in the nation. It is also one of the most polluted by ground-level ozone, largely due to oil and gas emissions stemming from in-state operators as well as in surrounding states like Utah. For the past five years, cities close to the park, like Denver and Fort Collins, have consistently topped the American Lung Association's list of rankings for the most polluted cities in America.

The Union Pacific line in Colorado runs directly adjacent to the Colorado River for more than 100 miles. The UBR project will increase the risk of derailments, leaks, fires, and other accidents along the sensitive and already severely depleted Colorado River corridor. It is our understanding that the Surface Transportation Board recently concluded that the project would more than double the accident rate on the stretch of the Union Pacific line between central Utah and Denver. Adding traffic to an already dangerous situation could have dire consequences for nearly 40 million Americans throughout Colorado and six other states, thirty Tribal nations, millions of acres of agricultural land, Colorado's recreation economy, all dependent upon the river as the main water source and already struggling with an historic drought.

The UBR project is not in the public interest and poses a grave risk to landscapes and communities already facing significant challenges. I urge the Department of Transportation to firmly reject federal funds for the project construction. Thank you for taking our concerns into consideration.

Sincerely,



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Cc: Carlos Monje, Under Secretary for Transportation Policy; Christopher Coes, Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy; U.S. Senator Michael Bennet; U.S. Senator John Hickenlooper; U.S. Congressman Joe Neguse