

Wayland, Joshua

From: Darrell Fordham <darrellfordham@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 19, 2019 10:14 PM
To: Wayland, Joshua
Cc: Rutson, Vicki; Gosselin, Danielle
Subject: Uinta Basin Railway - Whitmore Park Alignment

Josh,

As I'm sure you are aware the Seven County Infrastructure Coalition voted in their board meeting today to approve an alternate alignment (dubbed Whitmore Park Alignment) and designated it as the Coalition's new preferred route for the Uinta Basin Railway Project. While they couched it as being the result of listening to landowner concerns and scoping comments, I find it no coincidence that it also replaces the Craig Route which the Coalition indicated is being removed from study and consideration under the EIS process by the OEA, citing as their primary reason the opposition expressed by the Colorado BLM Office. In my opinion the Coalition always intended the Craig Route to be a dummy route, as there is only one Class 1 rail carrier in Craig, and the Craig Route was not the Coalition's preferred route last fall when they were only considering 3 routes that were all headed to Colorado (Rifle was their preferred route with Mack as their second in line). I am concerned and disturbed that Colorado BLM's preference would carry such weight and, in my opinion, prematurely remove the Craig Route from full study and consideration. I feel that this is resulting in a severe public disservice and is a significant manipulation of the NEPA process. It is also no coincidence that this lessens the Coalition's potential financial outlays for BLM cost recovery by a substantial amount (this likely has as much to do with abandoning the Craig Route as anything). It is painfully evident that the Coalition has learned how to manipulate the BLM and other federal government agencies in order to suit their cloaked agendas.

I am very concerned with these recent developments, which essentially seal the fate and destruction of Argyle Canyon and specifically the South Argyle Canyon area. Now, all of the alignments that are under consideration run through Argyle Canyon, such that if the railway is constructed, our properties and community are guaranteed to be destroyed regardless of the alignment chosen, which is extremely disappointing and overwhelmingly disheartening. I no longer feel that a wide range of alternatives is being taken into consideration, rather the focus of study has been drastically narrowed, such that I do not believe that the STB or OEA can say with any measure of confidence that the best, least impactful route will have been identified, studied, and ultimately chosen. Kudos to the Coalition for finding a way to completely circumvent and manipulate the NEPA process for their own benefit.

My question for you and the OEA is, with this new alignment and its designation as the new Coalition-preferred route, what opportunities will be afforded the public to review, evaluate, and provide comments to the STB now that the Scoping Period has ended? I hate to take such a skeptical stance, but it is my feeling that the Coalition and its engineers deliberately withheld the release of this alignment until the Scoping Period had ended in order to stifle and circumvent the public's ability to comment. I would like to know the OEA's and STB's official stance and requisite procedures in moving forward with these delinquent, major changes to the project.

Sincerely,

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