



EI-31257

UTE INDIAN TRIBE

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March 8, 2021

Joshua Wayland, Ph.D.
Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031

**Re: Support for Uintah Basin Railway Project and Energy Development on the
Uintah and Ouray Reservation**

Dear Dr. Wayland:

On behalf of the Ute Indian Tribe Business Committee, I am writing in support of the Uintah Basin Railway Project, Docket No. FD 36284, and the Surface Transportation Board's January 4, 2021, decision on the Seven County Infrastructure Coalition's request for exemption under 49 U.S.C. § 10502.

Oil and gas production on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation is the most significant source of revenue for the Ute Indian Tribe, and the Tribal membership relies on a steady revenue stream derived from energy mineral royalties. The Tribe has established its own Energy and Minerals Department to oversee and administer oil and gas production on the Reservation, as well as a wholly tribally-owned limited liability company to engage in energy development business activities on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation for the benefit of the Tribe and its members.

The Ute Indian Tribe has long been a leader among energy producing tribes. Currently, the Tribe leases approximately 400,000 acres for energy mineral development. However, current infrastructure only allows access to regional refineries, preventing the Tribe from fully availing itself to the economic potential of its vast mineral estate. The Uintah Basin Railway Project would provide much-needed infrastructure to allow the Tribe to expand to energy markets nationwide. Therefore, the Tribe supports this Project and the increase in on-Reservation oil development that may result. The Tribe also supports the STB's January 4, 2021, decision granting the Seven County Infrastructure Coalition's petition for exemption under 49 U.S.C. § 10502 and confirming the transportation merits of the Project.

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The views of the Ute Indian Tribe and its affiliates relating to oil and gas development on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation must take precedence over the views of outside organizations that have no affiliation with the Tribe and no management authority over the Tribe's Reservation.

On Behalf of the Ute Indian Tribe Business Committee:



Luke Duncan
Business Committee Chairman