



March 31, 2023

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: Reject Funding Uinta Basin Railway Project with Tax-Exempt Bonds

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Buttigieg,

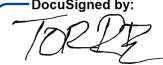
The City of Aspen, located in the headwaters of the Colorado River, wishes to express our deep concern and opposition of the Uinta Basin Railway Project. Our community, like our other headwaters neighbors, feels great responsibility and goes to great extent and expense to preserve, protect, and improve the quality of our air and water – for our residents and for the millions of visitors that journey to experience some of the most beautiful places in our country each year (1.5 million people visit Aspen and 10 million people visit the White River National Forest annually).

As the recent, disastrous train derailment and chemical spill in East Palestine, Ohio shows, rail transportation of hazardous materials poses a real threat to communities, air, and water along the way. The Uinta Basin Railway Project (Railway) proposes to add up to 87 million gallons of waxy crude oil per week, on as many as 180,000 loaded rail cars per year, to the interstate rail system that runs adjacent to I-70, splits the White River National Forest, and travels along the Colorado and Fraser Rivers. That's as many as five, two-mile long trains per day - 500 rail cars carrying 500 gallons of highly toxic, heavy crude oil, each. According to the Federal Railroad Administration, 89 train derailments occurred throughout Colorado between 2019 and 2023, 27% of which were the responsibility of Union Pacific. The potential for, and consequences of, a catastrophic accident are too high for our communities to bare. Drinking water contamination, loss of aquatic life, destruction to wildlife habitat, devastating forest fires, air pollution, and interstate closures, would cripple our environment, economy, and quality of life.

A catastrophic spill could have far-reaching impacts, beyond our community, as well. The project is proposed to follow along 100 miles of the Colorado River, which supplies drinking water and irrigation supply to 40 million people and is already in supply crisis. It increases the risk of wildfire in our drought-stricken watersheds. Closure of the I-70 corridor creates major supply chain issues that impacts everything from food security to construction capabilities. The State of Colorado could suffer billion-dollar losses in recreation and tourism economy from the loss of recreation and tourism assets as well as access to those assets.

For these reasons, we that you stop the project if possible. We recently learned that the project proponents are seeking to fund the railway through a tax-exempt Private Activity Bond (PAB) issued by the US Department of Transportation (DOT). This will effectively amount to tens of millions of dollars in public subsidies every year for a project that has unacceptable environmental and health risks for Coloradans. We respectfully request that you reject the use of PABs from the federal government for the Uinta Basin Railway.

Sincerely,

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Mayor of Aspen