

March 28, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590
Email: DOTExecSec@dot.gov

Re: Please Reject Funding Uinta Basin Oil Train with Tax-Exempt Private Activity Bonds

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the more than 150 groups listed below, and our millions of members and supporters, we write to urge the Department of Transportation to reject the use of tax-exempt “private activity bonds” for the Uinta Basin Railway, a project intended to quadruple oil production in Utah’s Uinta Basin. Supporting this project will directly undermine President Biden’s priority of addressing the climate crisis, and harm communities through which these oil trains will travel and where this oil will be refined.

A federal agency review concluded the proposed new Railway would add up to 87 million gallons of waxy crude per week to the interstate rail system, oil that would not be drilled but for the ability to ship it via the Railway. The oil production and combustion the Railway would create would cause up to an additional 56 million tons of carbon pollution a year – more than the nation’s three dirtiest coal plants combined.

Oil would be transported via as many as 180,000 loaded rail cars per year from the Uinta Basin to the mainline of the Union Pacific where it would travel east adjacent to the Colorado River – the source of water for 40 million people – for more than 100 miles, then through Denver, Colorado, and on to Gulf Coast and Cancer Alley refineries, where communities are already over-burdened with toxic emissions from existing facilities.

Federal analyses predict that if this new railway is built train derailments will more than double to roughly three per year between Kyune, Utah and Denver, Colorado. About once a year, according to federal projections, a fully loaded oil train will derail along the route; and roughly once every four years, that derailment would result in an oil spill.

As the recent, disastrous train derailment and chemical spill in East Palestine, Ohio shows, rail transportation of hazardous materials threatens communities, air, and water along the way. The Department of Transportation should not facilitate a massive increase in the transport of hazardous waxy crude oil on the rail system, thereby increasing the risk of another catastrophic derailment.

In one of his first actions in office, President Biden issued Executive Order 14,008 which directed all departments to “combat the climate crisis, to implement a government-wide approach that reduces climate pollution in every sector of the economy ... [and] delivers environmental justice.” The Uinta Basin Railway – which will dramatically worsen climate pollution, increase hazardous air pollutants in environmental justice communities on the Gulf Coast, and threaten lands and waters with oil spills from derailments – conflicts with these priority goals.

Private activity bonds can be an important tool for enabling the construction of infrastructure projects that benefit the traveling public, some of which will even reduce climate pollution. The vast majority of projects DOT has approved for such bonding do just that by supporting mass transit, building safer bridges, improving highways, or building rail links that reduce vehicle miles traveled. The Uinta Basin Railway will do none of these things. Expending the DOT's limited funds for private activity bonding authority on this oil train would also reduce the amount available for other, more worthy projects.

The Railway's financial backers assert that authorizing the Railway to issue up to \$2 billion in tax-exempt private activity bonds would amount to up to an \$80 million per year subsidy to the company. This will be a good deal for the oil industry, but a bad deal for the climate, for environmental justice communities, clean air and water, and U.S. taxpayers.

We urge you to reject the Uinta Basin Railway's application to issue private activity bonds. If you have questions on this issue, please contact Randi Spivak rspivak@biologicaldiversity.org.

Sincerely,

Action for the Climate Emergency
American Solar Power
American Whitewater
Accelerate Neighborhood Climate Action
Animals Are Sentient Beings Inc.
Athens County's Future Action Network
Between the Waters
Bold Alliance
Breathe Project
Bronx Climate Justice North
Center for Biological Diversity
California Indian Environmental Alliance
Capitol Hill Action Group
Citizens Alliance for a Sustainable Englewood
Chicago Area Peace Action
Chinese Railroad Workers Descendants
Clean Energy Action
Climate Hawks Vote
Climate Health Now
Climate Justice Alliance
Colorado Democratic Party - Energy and
Environmental Initiative
CoPIRG (Colorado Public Interest Research Group)
Collegiate Peaks Chapter of Trout Unlimited
Colorado Backcountry Hunters & Angler
Colorado Coalition for a Livable Climate
Colorado Rising
Colorado River Headwaters Chapter of Trout
Unlimited
Colorado Trout Unlimited

Community for Sustainable Energy
Concerned Health Professionals of Pennsylvania
Conservation Colorado
Democracy Works
Don't Waste Arizona
Earth Ethics, Inc.
Elders Climate Action
Empower Our Future
Environment America
Environmental Action
Environment Colorado
Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
Environmental Protection Information Center- EPIC
Estes Valley Clean Energy Coalition
Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area
Faith Action
Fox Valley Citizens for Peace & Justice
FracTracker Alliance
FreshWater Accountability Project
Fridays for Future Orange County
Fridays for Future US
Friends of Browns Canyon Colorado
Grand Canyon Trust
Grand Junction Area chapter- Great Old Broads for
Wilderness
Great Basin Water Network
Great Salt Lake Audubon
HEAL Utah
High Country Conservation Advocates

Immaculate Heart Community
 Indivisible Colorado
 Kentucky Environmental Foundation
 Kentucky Interfaith Power and Light
 Larimer Alliance for Health, Safety and Environment
 League of Conservation Voters
 Living Rivers & Colorado Riverkeeper
 Long Island Progressive Coalition
 Louisiana Bucket Brigade
 Mothers Out Front
 Movement Training Network
 MoveOn.org Hoboken
 National Parks Conservation Association
 Natural Capitalism Solutions
 Natural Resources Defense Council
 Natural Resources Law
 New York Progressive Action Network
 Nicaragua Center for Community Action
 No Coal in Oakland
 North American Climate, Conservation and Environment
 Northern San Juan Broadband of Great Old Broads for Wilderness
 NYPAN Environmental Committee
 NYPAN Greene
 Occupy Bergen County
 Oil and Gas Action Network
 Oil Change International
 Our Revolution Ocean County, NJ
 Pacific Environment
 Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania
 Progressives for Climate
 Project Eleven Hundred
 PSR Colorado (Physicians for Social Responsibility)
 Public Citizen
 Pueblo Action Alliance
 Putnam Progressives
 Resource Renewal Institute
 Roaring Fork Drawing Club
 Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center
 Rocky Mountain Wild
 Rural Utah Project
 San Francisco Baykeeper
 San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council
 Santa Cruz Climate Action Network
 Santa Fe Forest Coalition
 Scientist Rebellion, Turtle Island
 Seventh Generation
 Sierra Club, Utah Chapter
 Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York
 SoCal 350 Climate Action
 SOMA Action
 Stand.earth
 Stop NY Fracked Gas Pipeline
 Stop the Polluting Port
 Sunflower Alliance
 Sustainable Resilient Longmont
 Terra Advocati
 The Enviro Show
 The Lookout Alliance
 The Phoenix Group
 The Quantum Institute
 Thomas Berry Forum for Ecological Dialogue at Iona University
 Turtle Island Restoration Network
 Tustin Democratic Club
 Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community
 Unite North Metro Denver
 United Women in Faith --United Methodist Church
 Utah Audubon Council
 Utah Clean Infrastructure Coalition
 Utah Citizens Advocating Renewable Energy (UCARE)
 Utah Environmental Caucus
 Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment
 Utah Tar Sands Resistance
 Vote Climate
 Wall of Women
 Washington Conservation Action
 Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility
 Waterkeeper Alliance
 Waterspirit
 Weld Air and Water
 Western Environmental Law Center
 Western Resource Advocates
 Western Watersheds Project
 WildEarth Guardians
 Wilderness Workshop
 Wyoming Wilderness Association

Zero Hour
5 Rivers Trout Unlimited 198 methods
350.org
350 Bay Area
350 Bay Area Action

350 Colorado
350 Sacramento
350 Seattle
350 Seattle Federal Policy Group
350 Triangle
350 Hawaii
1000 Grandmothers for Future Generations

Cc: Carlos Monje, Under Secretary for Transportation Policy (carlos.monje@dot.gov)
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Dr. Morteza Farajian, Executive Director, Build America Bureau (morteza.farajian@dot.gov)
Amit Bose, Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration (amit.bose@dot.gov)
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