

Six-County Infrastructure Coalition Uinta Basin Rail



Frequently Asked Questions

What is Uinta Basin Rail?

Uinta Basin Rail is a potential 100-mile rail line designed to provide freight rail service between the Uinta Basin and two national freight rail lines that pass through Utah. The project is being proposed by the Six-County Infrastructure Coalition to enhance economic development, and is supported by UDOT.

Is this project designed to meet the needs of the Uinta Basin energy industry?

The project is focused on enhancing transportation to support sustainable economic growth and safety in the Uinta Basin. Although the energy industry is a major element of the Basin's economy and would use a rail connection to the national freight lines, the study examines the need for rail access into and out of the Basin for the full spectrum of Uinta Basin entities, businesses and industries.

How much state money is committed to the project?

In early 2013, the Utah State Legislature allocated \$3 million to initiate the EIS study. In 2014, the Utah Transportation Commission apportioned \$5.2 million to continue the study.

How much will it eventually cost to build Uinta Basin Rail?

Early in this project UDOT was asked this question, and a very rough estimate based on national averages was given. Since that time we have learned that Uinta Basin Rail will not be an "average" rail project, with unique terrain as well as cultural and environmental sensitivities to negotiate. We are currently involved in a more detailed analysis that will give us a better preliminary cost estimate for constructing the Uinta Basin Rail. We should have that preliminary estimate by the end of 2014. As the project progresses beyond 2014, UDOT will continue to refine the cost estimate as more detailed engineering designs and other technical studies are completed.

Will the state build the rail line?

At this point, it is too early for any decisions to be made about the financing, construction or ownership of a potential rail line. UDOT and the Coalition are evaluating the feasibility of constructing the rail line and are exploring possible alternative routes, how the rail line would operate, and potential future funding opportunities. Formal decisions about the actual construction, maintenance and operation of the rail line would be made at a later date if it is determined that a feasible route can be approved through NEPA and other permitting processes.

Have you decided on a preferred route?

We have considered 26 possible corridors, most of which have already been eliminated through our technical, operational and environmental screening processes. For example, few freight rail lines in the United States have a slope grade greater than 2.4%, which is at the operational limits of certain large trains. Several corridors were eliminated because they would have had grades steeper than 2.4%.

The Coalition and UDOT are now focusing attention on one corridor that appears to be feasible to construct based on preliminary analysis of engineering and environmental considerations. Because much of this corridor closely follows three existing roadways – U.S. 40, U.S. 191 and Emma Park Road – impacts to the environment are reduced by shadowing transportation corridors already in use. However, as part of the NEPA process that will be conducted by STB, the Coalition and UDOT understand that they might learn about other feasible alignments that haven't been considered. The preferred alternative will officially be selected by STB during the upcoming NEPA process.

Are you locked in to the corridor you show on this website?

The proposed Uinta Basin Rail corridor that you see presented here on this website is the result of about a year of study and analysis of 26 different corridor possibilities. Of the 26 options, the Six-County Coalition has recommended this alternative because it has the least impact to the environment while still maintaining the ability for the freight railroad to meet operational requirements. About 30 percent of this route – the segment that passes through Indian Canyon along the U.S. 191 transportation corridor – is tightly compressed with little room for adjustment within the canyon. But for the remaining 70 percent of the route there could be various alternatives to the proposed route. We are still very early in the environmental study process. At this point nothing is absolutely locked into place. As the Surface Transportation Board moves forward with the EIS, other corridor alternatives could be identified through public input. The Six-County Coalition strongly encourages the public to participate in the EIS public scoping process to help identify other alternatives that will minimize impacts while maintaining the rail operational requirements.

Will the new railroad cut off public access to roads or property?

No. Although we don't have specific engineering plans in place at this early time in the Uinta Basin Rail study process, we are committed to maintaining all property and road access. It is, of course, possible that in some cases those access points may need to be adjusted or moved. But everyone who currently has an access point will still have an access point when Uinta Basin Rail is built.

Are you anticipating a lot of public interest in this project?

We welcome public participation in this process. We understand that, due to the nature of the project, there will be a high level of interest by many of the study's stakeholders. The NEPA process that will be conducted by STB will be a public and transparent process during which citizens and organizations will have many opportunities to learn about the project, discuss the issues and offer their comments and ideas.

This website provides public information related to the Uinta Basin Rail technical studies conducted by UDOT and the Coalition that will inform the formal EIS prepared by STB (www.stb.dot.gov).