The Coalition’s primary role has been to identify infrastructure assets benefiting the region as well as projects which promote growth and development throughout the various regions around the Coalition. Project types include energy development and research, transportation, planning, broadband expansion, rail, water resources, and transmission power.

Its objective was to identify major infrastructure project concepts, evaluate financial feasibility, procure funding, permit, design, secure rights-of-way, and potentially own, operate, and maintain such facilities. Additionally, private sector partnerships would be created, when possible, to bring expertise and capital to various portions of any proposed projects.

The Seven County Infrastructure Coalition appreciates the support of the legislature, Community Impact Fund Board (CIB), and many other agencies and organizations since its inception in 2014. The Coalition continues to be focused on cooperative regional planning, increased economic opportunity and public services, and sustainable implementation.

It is an important player in several of the rural projects identified in Governor Cox’s One Utah Roadmap. Following is a summary of these rural projects and the Coalition’s recommendations regarding the next steps, including ongoing support from Governor Cox, the State of Utah, and other agencies.
Why Build a Railway

The Uinta Basin Railway provides new transportation infrastructure that will solve the long-standing freight transportation challenges in the region by connecting to the national railway network. Through a public-private partnership between the Seven County Infrastructure Coalition, Drexel Hamilton Infrastructure Partners, the Rio Grande Pacific Corporation, and the Ute Tribe, the Uinta Basin Railway will provide a safe and cost-effective solution enabling economic stability, sustainable communities, and enriched quality of life.

Proposed Routes

The Coalition reviewed several routes before narrowing down to four proposed alternatives that reflect the lowest cost to construct and operate, and have the fewest impacts to the environment, residents, communities, agriculture, public lands, endangered species, and water resources. Of the four alternatives, three routes (Whitmore Park, Indian Canyon, and Wells Draw), as well as a No-Action alternative, were selected by the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to be carried forward in the Uinta Basin Railway Environmental Impact Statement.

Environmental Requirements and Project Schedule

The STB is responsible for preparing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The Coalition will support the STB as needed in this process and is committed to minimizing and mitigating impacts where possible to meet all federal, state, and local environmental regulations. The proposed schedule is driven by the STB.

Project Benefits

- Up to $100M in tax and other government revenue
- Job creation
- Broadened economic base
- High demand for Uinta Basin resources
- Important addition to state’s freight transportation system
San Rafael Energy Research Center

The San Rafael Energy Research Center operates a laboratory in a building owned by Emery County being retrofitted for research related to medical isotopes and clean, emissions-free energy.

The research center will be publicly owned and operated. The public nature of this facility is what creates such an interest from universities, private organizations, and other potential users. Having access to such a lab allows organizations to complete critical testing without each organization having to create their own labs. The Coalition would facilitate the testing of energy resources and technologies at an accelerated rate, allowing the energy resources in Castle Country to be put to their best future uses.

Emery County and the Coalition will continue to collaborate to further develop an energy research center of excellence and campus near Orangeville. The campus would include research facilities to develop clean and safe technologies for coal gasification, power generation, medical isotope development, coal to carbon fiber technology, and many other possibilities.

Phase One included a coal combustion facility (completed) and a molten salt lab (nearing completion). Phase One is already funded.

Phase Two includes further renovation and equipping the molten salt lab. Molten salt research is needed for medical isotopes. Funding is requested for this phase.

Inland Port & Rural Satellite Sites

The Coalition represents a large portion of rural Utah. While the State of Utah is pursuing the concept of an inland port, it is important for rural areas to participate in and receive value from such an opportunity. An industrial park in Salina, Sevier County, Utah, is one such opportunity to create a freight transportation hub that may be able to utilize the trade authorizations of the Port to connect to worldwide markets. The plan will identify opportunities to capitalize on the natural resources and transportation connectivity (via highways and rail) in rural Utah to diversify local economies.

The next phase of the study should address additional site-specific opportunities and further analysis throughout the Coalition counties.

NEXT STEPS

Phase Two

- Cost: $300,000 (Planning)

SWOT—Salina Industrial Park and Seven County Region

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<td>What are the core skills or assets that distinguish us from the competition?</td>
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<td>Weaknesses:</td>
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<td>What are the challenges of the core or critical elements to sustainability?</td>
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<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
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<td>What new market, idea, or product can we develop?</td>
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The Coalition, as a regional infrastructure organization, will continue to evaluate feasibility, facilitate discussion among all parties, develop relationships, and ensure that the $220M in funding to be allocated to the effort will be turned into executed projects as efficiently as possible. Ongoing political support and funding considerations from the state of Utah continue to be critical in the effort to drastically improve the quality of life for the Utah Navajo region.

**NEXT STEPS**

The federal government recently passed the Utah Navajo Water Rights Settlement Act to address the lack of water availability. It includes recognition of the Navajo Nation’s water rights to 81,500 acre-feet from the Colorado River basin in Utah. It also provides a pathway to provide $220 million to construct water projects in San Juan County. The primary focus is on providing drinking water to remote portions of the tribal lands.

- **San Juan County Water Project**
  - The Coalition, as a regional infrastructure organization, will continue to evaluate feasibility, facilitate discussion among all parties, develop relationships, and ensure that the $220M in funding to be allocated to the effort will be turned into executed projects as efficiently as possible.
  - Ongoing political support and funding considerations from the state of Utah continue to be critical in the effort to drastically improve the quality of life for the Utah Navajo region.

- **Navajo Mountain Regional Roadway Transportation**
  - Navajo Mountain’s peak (10,348 ft) is located in San Juan County, Utah with its lower southern regions extending into Coconino County, Arizona. The mountain is part of the larger Monument Valley Tribal Park and located south of the confluence of the San Juan River and larger Lake Powell. The Navajo Mountain community is a chapter of the Western Agency and one of five agencies that make up the Navajo Nation.
  - According to 2010 census data, it has a population of 345. This community resides largely at the base of the Navajo Mountain. Currently, the closest location for Navajo Mountain residents to access Utah-based provisions, such as driver license registration, groceries, and medical services, is Blanding, Utah, approximately 180 road miles away. Other Arizona locations such as Tuba City, Kayenta, and Page are closer. Ojato – Monument Valley, located southeast of Navajo Mountain, with an approximate population of 864, must also travel a similar route to have access to the same Utah services.

- **San Juan County Transportation Projects**
  - The Coalition will continue to assist with discussion and technical evaluations of the roadway and rail opportunities. Coordination between the County, the Navajo Nation and NDOT, the Utah Navajo chapters, and other organizations will be a high priority.
  - Funding procurement is most important. The initial critical phase of the Navajo Mountain roadway improvements would cost $50M, with the total cost at $115M. Prior state leadership had offered to split the cost of these improvements with the Navajo Nation.

**San Juan County Water Project**

- **NEXT STEPS**
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**Navajo Mountain Regional Roadway Transportation**

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San Juan County/Four Corners Railway

A rail line between Moab, Utah, and Winslow, Arizona, would add an important north/south connection in the national railway system and would allow natural resources and other freight opportunities to be further developed. The railway would have a significant positive effect on the local, regional, statewide, and national economies.

Endpoints were chosen as connections to the national rail system at each end. At the northern end of this line, the national rail system component is the Union Pacific Railroad’s (UP) Green River Subdivision, part of an east-west line that connects the Denver rail hub with the rail hub at Provo-Salt Lake City-Ogden hub. Lines radiating from Denver and Provo-Salt Lake City-Ogden are high-use, high-capacity lines that afford connectivity with the entire U.S. and North American rail system. At the southern end, the national rail system component is BNSF Railway’s (BNSF) “Transcon,” its primary route between Los Angeles and the Midwest.

Cost: $500,000

NEXT STEPS
Additional studies must be completed to further evaluate the feasibility of such a rail connection. The Coalition is taking an initial look at the overall concept using its own funds. However, a much larger effort will be required to evaluate the specifics of the capital costs along with the local and regional commercialization aspects to achieve sustainability. A planning grant of $500,000 from the state of Utah would allow the Coalition, County, and Navajo Nation to better understand and plan for the opportunity.

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