

If you are looking to start a commuter railroad line in the Southwest, one serious consideration is that of sharing tracks, signals, etc., with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (which owns them) and Amtrak. Anti-rail forces in New Mexico sometimes use this as an excuse for not having any regional passenger rail service, in effect blaming the BNSF for the lack of service.

We contacted officials of both Amtrak and the BNSF, asking them for their “take” on the track sharing issue. The BNSF has replied to our inquiry by sending us their “Commuter Principles.” This document defines their guidelines and restrictions concerning passenger trains using their tracks. The list is long, but remember:

1. You can find almost as many clauses and disclaimers on a rental agreement.
2. These guidelines have not been impossible for Denver, Dallas and Fort Worth to comply with. They are all successfully running commuter and/or light rail lines.

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