

BULLETIN April 2005

We at Rails seem to be on the same side of our favorite issue as is the “establishment” these days; and believe us, we’re enjoying it. We have long held that not only good transportation but modern civilization itself requires a strong passenger rail component; commuter, heavy, light and trolley alike, supported by the air, rubber-tired and pedal-powered modes. Among non-government organizations (NGO), we have been almost alone in this emphasis.

From our “street” perspective, MRCOG, NMDOT, and the City of Albuquerque seem to be doing things right, which is a laudable achievement. HDR, the prime consultant for MRCOG’s commuter rail project, and Parsons Brinkerhoff, the City of Albuquerque’s prime consultant for the Central Avenue project, appear to have been well chosen.

- The Belen-Santa Fe Commuter Rail service (already in the works!).
- A strong light rail and rail trolley network for the Albuquerque area and other population centers in New Mexico. We support the entire Red Chile/Green Chile/String of Pearls concept proposed by the Martin Chavez administration and others.
- Improved feeder services, featuring not only the new articulated buses, but more and smaller vehicles for greater local and neighborhood service. This service should be available to all classes of society.
- Superliner service (a la Amtrak) covering the El Paso/Denver/Points North corridor. As part of this vision, we have fantasized a New Mexico Flyer type of train featuring coach, business and sleeper classes and dining facilities with daily service between Las Cruces and Raton and appropriate connecting services. Such a route might be an excellent investment with regard to tourism, economic development, urban and rural redevelopment and the abatement of some of our many auto-related problems.
- The energy for all this provided by bio-diesel, ethanol, wind, solar and/or other renewable forms. We could do this right now in New Mexico. For a presently successful example of the marriage of Rail and renewable energy contact

Calgary Transit in Alberta, Canada. If any of the above sounds like science fiction, bear in mind that commuter and light rail for New Mexico occupied the same category in most minds as recently as six years ago when Rails, Inc. was born. Getting more practical, the following suggestions are highly recommended:

1. Attractive station stops strategically placed which would provide true shelter from wind and precipitation, a situation already being achieved in some locations through downtown and railroad station redevelopment efforts. These efforts must be endorsed, encouraged, expanded and well-funded as needed.
2. Good security. In other words, real transit cops, not just civilian security.
3. Paved park-and-ride lots with good drainage and natural landscaping. And clean them often.
4. A corps of docents, or trained volunteers, to help acquaint new riders, ie, everybody, with the rail runner and its feeder services. These people would wear badges and jackets or vests, would carry printer flyers and would earn free passes for their trouble. We hereby volunteer.

And there is the ever-present concern of safety. To promote this, we recommend strict human and electronic surveillance of the tracks. As far as is possible, train drivers need to know about obstructions, or the imminence of same, in plenty of time to stop the train.

We Americans abandoned rail as our primary mode of passenger transportation less than 50 years ago, and we're in serious trouble already. However, auto/highway conditions are not yet so bad that people will ride crummy or skimpy transit. Let's give them a choice they can fall in love with and find useful and practical.

To those of you involved in bringing back passenger rail in any form — THANK YOU.

[Contact us](#) for more information.

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