July 2, 2002

I think a route north from El Paso to Great Falls and then to Glacier National Park would change passenger rail in this country. It would create an additional north-south route that would bisect four east-west routes. It would create a circuitous route that would make for unlimited travel possibilities. It would create a vacation pathway that could change the way America vacations. It could alter the way America visits the national parks. It would connect Rocky National Park, Yellowstone, and Glacier National Park. It could be extended north to Calgary and Banff National Park. A north-south route bisecting all our east-west routes along the Rocky Mountains has enormous possibilities. People on vacation would pay a good price to be taken where they want to go at a slower pace. I think this route is the key to a successful national passenger rail system.

Jon Van Buskirk

Rails' comments

Mr. Buskirk has nailed one of the big transportation deficiencies in the American West – the missing North-South route. As he points out, this route intersects four important rail routes.

Studies and common sense both point to the fact that the big reason more people don't ride trains in the USA is simply that there are not nearly enough of them and that they don't cover the country like they used to. This situation, of course, creates a self-fulfilling prophecy for anti-rail special interests.

There is a passenger rail renaissance in the USA, happening mostly at the local and regional levels, and many people in New Mexico are ready to join it. For New Mexico, the best place to start is on the existing tracks, especially between El Paso and Denver.

Our priority list:

- Commuter rail for the Socorro/Santa Fe corridor.
- Commencment of light rail service, especially in the Albuquerque and Santa Fe metro areas.
- Restoration of service along the El Paso / Denver route.
- Appropriate connecting services, including true express bus lines.

Mr. Buskirk's excellent proposals, and ours, would be well served by Amtrak Superliner service, with room both for the trips he talks about and for more "everyday" work and entertainment trips between stations along the route.

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