1994, revised 2002

A great addition to the cultural and historical landscape of New Mexico would be another railroad attraction somewhat along the lines of the Cumbres/Toltec RR, but featuring several major differences.

- These trains would go anywhere in the state that the tracks go, or could be made to go again, especially to places that are not your regular tourist destinations
- While the ambiance of the Cumbres/Toltec is that of yesterday, this network will be about tomorrow, both in technology and in attitude.
- There would be research and educational aspects to the system, analogous to those of a museum or bio-park, complete with literature, tapes, videos, and (most definitely) guides or docents. And add on the train crews, also.

These trains would consist of one or several cars as needed. They could at first be retrofitted double-ended commuter cars, but as time goes by the rolling stock would be modern, even futuristic, featuring space age materials (ideally, designed and built in New Mexico). These units would be powered by renewable energy, with clean traditional backup systems. There are several possibilities for propulsion components:

- Solar photvoltaic panels on the car roofs.
- Batteries charged from solar and/or wind systems.
- Standard overhead wires energized from renewable sources.
- Innovations like the stored-energy flywheel that has been tried on buses in San Francisco.
- Natural gas or propane for backup.

And this isn’t just theory. Some of the systems are already in use!

There would be several classes of comfort and amenities, with a fare structure to match. Some cars would be rolling classrooms, some would be coaches, some could

even be sleepers. There would also be rest rooms, refreshments, and bicycle and handicapped access.

The docents, or guides, would be drawn form the ranks of any responsible persons with general or specialized knowledge of the area to be travelled through – teachers, farmer, ranchers, builders, naturalists, local historians, old geezers, colorful charaters – who could travel with the train or be invited aboard at stopping points.

Excursions could last for hours or days, and would make an excellent field trip for students at any level.

This project would not be expected to pay for itself through fares, but as a public investment, that is, a combination of educational institution, tourist attraction, and research facility.

Besides the self-evident attactions to those who would ride the system, there are other benefits to New Mexico:

- The design, manufacture, maintenance, and operation of this system would generate considerable employment within our state – plowshares, not swords.
- It would be a great way for New Mexico to catch up, and even get ahead, in several industries which must inevitably grow with the coming decades, industries such as public transportation, renewable energy, education, tourism, historical preservation, and environmental restoration.
- It would be good clean fun.

This thing could be started now – no major technological breakthroughs or land acquisitions are required, not even all that much money compared to, say, the Big I or just about any other major road project. There is much work to be done before this service becomes a reality. We will need inter-governmental cooperation, coordination with existing railroads, and, most importantly, vision to pull together as a state for our own long-term benefit. Given our history and present condition,

this is a tall order. But we can do it.

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