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Over the 40 years since Amtrak was born, national transportation funding looks something like this:

Rail (Amtrak) \$ 31 Billion

Air Infrastructure \$ 427 Billion

Highways / Roads \$ 3.6 Trillion (yes, Trillion)

Given the advantages in fuel / energy economy, long infrastructure life, long vehicle life, safety, thrifty use of land and materials, and the many other benefits afforded by Rail, this table points out a serious imbalance in our transportation investment strategy.

Amtrak in general recovers about 85% of its operating costs at the "farebox", and about 10% more through concessions, etc. Considering long-term true costs and benefits, this rate of return on investment is far higher than those of the air and highway modes.

The Hutchinson, Kansas-Albuquerque segment of the SW Chief (670 miles) needs about \$94 million the first year and about \$11 million per year thereafter to bring it back to 80 mph standards. This is an excellent investment, especially considering **the many uses these tracks could be put to** besides hosting those essential Amtrak trains.

The loss of the Southwest Chief in Western Kansas, SE Colorado and Northern New Mexico would constitute a serious environmental and economic blow to the region, by forcing upon it the much-increased expense, waste and danger of highway-only land transportation.

According to recent calculations by Rails Inc, the SW Chief gets roughly 66 passenger-miles per gallon of diesel — even hauling roomy coach cars, sleepers, a diner and an observation car.

A train is safer and more reliable than a car or bus in all kinds of inclement weather. More comfortable too.

People really like trains.

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