23 January 2011

(Another Brain Bomb From Rails Inc)

Written 1994
Revised 2006
Revised 2011

The "Tomorrow Train Railroad" (TTRR) would be a popular service like the Cumbres-Toltec RR, except not much like it at all:

1) The TTRR would go anywhere in the state that railroad tracks presently go, or could be made to go again, including to places not considered tourist destinations;

2) The Cumbres-Toltec is Yesterday. The TTRR is Tomorrow; in technology and attitude;

3) The TTRR would be a rolling lab and classroom, complete with research experiments, teachers, docents and take-home materials; not unlike a museum or bio-park.

These trains would consist of one or several cars as needed. Rides would last from hours to days. There are excellent refurbished railcars available on the market for a fraction of new cost, all safe and very fuel efficient, some self-propelled. Over time, we would like to see futuristic experimental rolling stock, hopefully built in New Mexico. Motive power (fuel or energy) would be renewable only.

Power sources, employed singly or in combination, would include:

— Photovoltaic (PV) panels on the car roofs;

— Battery arrays charged from solar, wind or other renewable sources at the service sheds, making those sheds another attraction in their own right;

— Up to date fuel-efficient diesel units burning Bio-diesel.

Future propulsion plans would be more ambitious and innovative: stored-energy flywheels, even magnetic levitation (we've heard that mag-lev retrofits are being developed to work with existing tracks, and if they're not, then New Mexico should get in on the inventive action).

A note on the stations and maintenance sheds: They, and the parking lots, should be shaded with PV panel arrays, for plugging in electric cars, for concessions, etc.

As to education, this would comprise both formal learning; ie, credit courses for every age group of student, staffed with "official" faculty; and the more informal education associated with museums, bio parks, and continuing education.

The informal functions would be staffed accordingly—docents, volunteers and knowledgeable people, of all walks of life, drawn from the areas the trains would travel through. The volunteer "faculty" would travel with the train or be invited aboard at selected stops (Amtrak does a little of this already with their hop-on-board guides). Courses and presentations would span all of human knowledge, from engineering to geology to history to traditional crafts to soil, plant and animal science.

Besides the obvious benefits common to all modern Rail, there are others, such as:

— An economic shot in the arm to many ailing or dying communities;

— Considerable employment, paid and volunteer;

— A framework for NM to catch up, and even lead the way, in industries which must

inevitably grow with the coming decades; public transportation, renewable energy, tourism, innovative education, historic preservation, cultural exchange, etc;

— Good clean fun.

This service cannot be brought about by tomorrow morning. But with our state's plentiful "stock" of thinkers, innovators, artists and odd characters, plus 2-300 miles of little-used railroad tracks in excellent condition, we have a running start if we jump at it. Let's come up with something other states and countries will want to emulate, for a change, instead of being the runt of several of our national litters.

This whole thing is a part of our bigger dream picture in which America's Rail network would be extensive, pervasive and publicly owned — **just like our highways and airports.**

Share this:

- Share on X (Opens in new window) X
- Share on Facebook (Opens in new window) Facebook
- Email a link to a friend (Opens in new window) Email
- Share on LinkedIn (Opens in new window) LinkedIn
- Share on Reddit (Opens in new window) Reddit
- Share on Tumblr (Opens in new window) Tumblr
- Share on Pinterest (Opens in new window) Pinterest
- Share on Telegram (Opens in new window) Telegram
- Share on WhatsApp (Opens in new window) WhatsApp