23 January 2011

The Tracks From Lamy To Raton Pass Part II

*A*s stated in Part I of this bulletin, Rails Inc believes that our state should embrace the purchase of the BNSF tracks between Lamy and the Colorado border (Raton Pass). While the already-state-owned segment between Belén and Lamy / La Bajáda is reasonably busy with Amtrak's SW Chief, the Rail Runner, and special excursion trains, the Lamy-Raton Pass segment is much less so. Very little freight, for example.

So reasonable people might well ask why our state should take on ownership of the longer segment, especially in tough economic times. **We think this is too good a deal to pass up, and here are some reasons:**

1) Continuation of the SW Chief, whose benefits to New Mexico are much greater than many realize.

2) Hosting future rail service from El Paso to Denver and points North.

3) Facilitating the expansion of the Rail Runner South to Socorro and Las Cruces and North to Las Vegas and Raton (as far as we're concerned, the state should also own the tracks from Belén to the border near El Paso).

4) Restoration of Rail freight and express (fuel, tire and asphalt prices are not dropping). Private haulers might feel more inclined to take a risk like this if they don't have to own and operate the Right of Way as well as everything else they have to worry about. Trucking companies don't have to own the roads they run on.

5) Running excursion trains; modern and vintage. Besides their educational value, these can be real money-makers.

6) The variety of track conditions along this line make it an excellent test track for trains and rail components, including new safety products.

7) Hosting BNSF trains again, if anything should happen to the Transcon.

8) **The “Tomorrow Train”**.

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

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