

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Since the New Mexico legislative session is under way, please write to them and burn up their phone lines (e-mail too), as per the following. Even if there are no bills in the works on this subject, they should still know what you think.

1) The Southwest Chief

There is some hopeful news coming out of Colorado and Kansas.

You likely recall the financial plan in the works to save and upgrade the railroad tracks from Newton KS to Lamy NM, for the purpose of keeping the Chief running where it is at desirable speeds (up to 80 mph). This plan proposes approx. \$40 million over 10 years from each of the stakeholders; Amtrak, the BNSF Railway, and the states of KS, CO and NM.

Well, Colorado has been working hard on this, and for various reasons, Colorado's \$40 million has dropped to \$8.9 million, a figure almost too good to be true. These "various reasons" include a "TIGER" grant, Amtrak's highballing of cost estimates, and some intelligent political support from various Colorado leaders. And Kansas is also making progress in raising their share. The problems here are:

1) whether that \$40 million price tag can be reduced in all three states as it has been in Colorado, and

2) whether New Mexico will show some vision and, well, statesmanship and work as hard for the Chief as Colorado and Kansas have.

What you can do is to contact your state Senator and Representative, the Governor, your Congress People, Amtrak and any media you can think of and let them know that you support the SW Chief and why. Our Web site, <https://nmrails.org> , is full of useful information to assist your efforts. Please feel free to mine it.

Bear in mind that, although we consider the SW Chief reason enough to save and upgrade our track segment, we believe those tracks can be made a lot busier than just hosting the Chief. Click the left header box called “The Southwest Chief And Its Tracks”, third article.

2) Transit In The Albuquerque Area:

You’ve probably also heard about the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) effort under way along East Central, with its two dedicated bus lanes. We insist that this line will disrupt East Central as much as any Streetcar or Light Rail line would, without the major benefits any modern Rail provides. Consider, for example, the effects of lots of displaced traffic on the streets adjacent to Central. We think transit should be anchored by modern Rail, supported by lots of smaller busses and vans that go within a few blocks of any place. We also think that several routes would be preferable to East Central for these trains.

The only ways BRT makes any long-term sense are 1) by serving long steep grades like “Hill 528” to Rio Rancho, and 2) by being designed for easy future conversion to Rail transit. To see why at a glance, go to our Web site, click Graphics, then click “Bus-Rail Transit Comparison”.

And please let the Mayor, your City Councilor and your County Commissioner what you think. Hopefully, you think like we do. If not —it’s still good to be an active citizen.

3) Attention Young People:

A large majority of advocates on behalf of modern passenger Rail are Old White Men. We would like to see a lot more activists who are not any or all of these. Please contact us. We can help you start your own group, or you can join us. We especially need help getting involved with the “social” media.

4) A Worthwhile Rail Conference:

On March 27 and 28, the Rail Users Network (RUN) will be holding their annual

conference in LA. The RUN, like us, is oriented toward modern passenger Rail, local, regional and long distance, only they're an honest nationwide group. Contact us or <http://www.railusers.net>.

5) A Tool For Activists:

Once again we'd like to call your attention to "Our Stations, Our Project", in which interested people monitor and evaluate their local rail stations and pass their findings (good and bad) to the appropriate authorities. There's no need to join a group or pay dues to get involved in this. Contact us, or <http://www.OurTrainStations.net> .

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