

The Southwest Chief:

Amtrak is no longer threatening to terminate the Chief at the end of 2015, when its track maintenance contract with the BNSF Railway expires. This is not an exoneration; more like a stay of execution, to buy time for the various interested entities to cough up the needed funds to improve the Newton KS-Lamy NM track segment to passenger rail speed standards.

Much more recently, the news came out that there's a dispute between Amtrak and the BNSF about who's going to pay for Positive Train Control (PTC), an electronic system that's supposed to stop a train if it detects certain dangers like excess speed on a given track segment.

The following is excerpted from a recent Passenger Rail Oklahoma bulletin:

The hard-line stand by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) could affect Amtrak's Southwest Chief and Missouri River Runners. However, there will also be freight implications if Congress does not act by December 31 to delay Positive Train Control (PTC) implementation. The clock is ticking.

Most railroads are not ready for a 100% effective PTC deployment. Systems for the most part are installed, but PTC is not a set-it-and-forget-it system. Programming the system and adapting it locally to work properly is difficult and time consuming.

Most dire regionally is the situation in Missouri. A dispute over who pays for a \$32 million system on the Kansas City Terminal Railroad threatens both the Chicago-Los Angeles Southwest Chief and the state supplemental Missouri River Runners.

Amtrak's D.J. Stadtler recently testified before a US Senate Commerce Committee that the Southwest Chief and Missouri River Runners could be rerouted or even terminated.

What may happen to the planned deployment of the Eastern Flyer between Tulsa and Oklahoma City is unknown. The Eastern Flyer is a proposed commuter rail

route between Tulsa and Oklahoma City.

(End Of Excerpt)

Rail Transit For Albuquerque:

To refresh your memories, our JW and City Councilor Benton, with the expert assistance of Mobility Planning Associates of Austin, Texas, have put together a preliminary proposal for the YardBird, which would be a modern starter streetcar shuttle between the Alvarado Center and the Rail Yards (we like the old Blacksmith Building).

One of the best un-built Rail transit notions for Albuquerque is the String Of Pearls, promoted by Mayor Marty Chavez during his time. The String would be a Modern Streetcar route connecting the Alvarado, the Rail Yards, the Hispanic Cultural Center, the Zoo, the Old Town / Museum / Bio Park areas, the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, and back to the Alvarado. Hopefully, the Bird would be the first leg of this.

Besides the YardBird, there's some chatter about a possible Rail transit link between Downtown and the Old Town / Museum area. Not a one-ton truck chassis with a cute streetcar body bolted on, but something with steel wheels running on steel rails.

Said chatter emanates from Chamber of Commerce / booster circles. This is exciting because we (and some others) tried for years to get these entities interested in Urban Rail, to no avail. Albuquerque's absence of any streetcar or light Rail transit component is, to us, a national embarrassment; one more to add to the many we live with.

Bike paths and better bus service are good things, but without Rail in the transit mix, you just don't have an economical, efficient, and long-lasting network. Don't take our word for it: ask just about any other major city in the North American West.

Please contact the Mayor, the City Council, the County Commission, the Chamber Of Commerce, the Visitors' Bureau, and anybody else you can think of and tell them

you support the above.

It's also worth noting that, with Rail transit, redevelopment of our many vacant lots and abandoned properties becomes much more attractive (and potentially profitable) to developers, which in turn is good for the whole region. These local eyesores are already connected to streets and utilities, plus, the renovation of these places would help to preserve our surrounding open land from the likes of, say, Santolina.

Other Great Rail Advocates Besides Us:

Again, we call attention to the Rail Users Network (RUN), an honest national train group. Our JW is on their board, which demonstrates both good taste on JW's part, and remarkable tolerance on theirs.

RUN is looking for people or businesses who will help to sponsor a portion of their quality 16-page quarterly national Newsletter or of their yearly conferences. We endorse this effort. Various Thank Yous and inducements are available. Contact:

Richard at: rrudolph1022@gmail.com

OR

JW at : rails@nmrails.org .

RUN's Web site is: <http://www.railusers.net> . Check 'em out, folks.

Also, there's an initiative (not really a group) called Our Train Stations; Our Project. Their purpose is to regularly monitor local train stations, noting both good and bad things, and to report these to the appropriate local authorities and to the Project itself.

The beauty of this effort is that anybody can get involved without joining a group, going to meetings, or paying dues. You just need to pick a station near you

(especially if you use it) and take notes. If you're interested, and please be interested, contact JW.

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