

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Southwest Chief: After HM 50, Now What?

Our House Memorial (HM 50) directs the NM Economic Development Dept (NMEDD) to pursue a market research program laying out the public good (and revenue) possibilities for the Lamy-Raton Pass railroad track segment. We have listed some on our Web site, the third article under “Hot Topics”. But they’re ours (with some expert help), not “officially” sanctioned.

We recently met with the head of the NMEDD and its general Counsel. They’re positive on this, but as usual, money is the problem. They gave us a copy of a 2007 Rail economic development study. The idea is to find a worthy graduate or near-graduate student (or team) at UNM who could update this study under the umbrella of a suitable professor or department. Can you help?

We believe that it will always be tough to permanently fund a set of railroad tracks hosting only two trains a day. We might think it’s a good investment, but a lot of reasonable people (including politicians) won’t. If we can convincingly present the tracks as the multi-purpose hard-working asset that they could be, their future is more secure. We also think the state should revive the dead track-purchase deal with the BNSF Railway, and look into public-private partnerships with a regional operator, or possibly even the BNSF itself.

Some advocates in the Texas-Kansas-Oklahoma area have pretty much written off the Chief staying where it is, and are talking to the leaders of Amarillo, Wichita, and the other cities along the possible new route. So are we, but we’d rather see the Chief stay where it is. If the Chief were to be re-routed via Wichita, Woodward, OK, Amarillo, Clovis and Belen (see map), Albuquerque would be enough off the beaten path to require a slow back-up maneuver to get here (kind of like a K-turn). The Chief would probably lose more Albuquerque business that it would gain from Wichita, Amarillo and the rest.

As usual, we urge you to contact your friends and political leaders in support of the Chief.

Another Great Rail Group (Besides Us)

There is a smart and honest national rail group called the Rail Users Network (RUN), devoted to All Things modern passenger rail. They do what we do, only much more and on a bigger scale. Our JW is a recently-elected board member of RUN, and he's pretty particular.

To learn more, or to consider joining, go to: <http://www.railusers.net> . You won't be sorry.

Rail Transit For Albuquerque:

We're still pursuing the Yard Bird, our fantasy Modern Streetcar line running from the Alvarado Center to the Blacksmith Building in the old Rail Yards. This would, in our dreams, be part of the Rail Yard redevelopment project. Rails Inc and City Councilor Benton have begun building a proposal and cost estimate for this line, with the expert assistance of Lyndon Henry of Urban Rail Today and Light Rail Now, based in Austin Texas.

If the Bird ever becomes a reality, it would not be a dead end. It could become part of a future Rail transit system for Albuquerque. Better bus service is important, but we need more trains than just the Rail Runner.

To learn all we know, go to <https://nmrails.org>, and read the last article under Publications / Articles and Editorials.

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