

Ladies And Gentlemen, this time we have two topics of major interest:

### **1) Albuquerque Itself:**

The city of Albuquerque has finally bought the old Santa Fe Rail Yard property and has signed up a highly regarded developer called Samitaur Constructs to re-develop same. There will be provision for “work force” housing on the site, along with the Wheels Museum and various uses yet to be worked out. A series of public meetings has begun. Contact: pmorris@cabq.gov or 924-3897 for more information on these.

These are exciting developments, except: So far no Rail transit in these plans.

As you likely recall, about 5 years ago several Modern Streetcar proposals were floated for Albuquerque. The “official” pro-Rail forces went for Central between Downtown and Nob Hill, about 3 miles to the East. This proposal was shot down, in part because most people (and Councilors) in Albuquerque couldn’t see what that project would do for them.

Although any Rail transit is a good deal, we think a couple of alternate proposals would have made for a better local Urban Rail debut. One is called the “String Of Pearls”, a circulator beginning and ending at the (adjacent) Rail Runner and Amtrak stations and picking up many important local destinations: Old Town, the Bio Park, museums, the major cultural centers, etc.

We are attempting to tie the “String Of Pearls” to the redevelopment of the Rail Yard, through contact with local leaders and through public outreach. We’ll be pushing big rocks uphill here, since Albuquerque transit is bus-only, and the Planners don’t appear to be looking further.

Please attend and speak out at the public meetings, and contact the Mayor, your City Councilor, your County Commissioner and your friends and neighbors and tell them bus-only transit is not good enough. We need busses, but we need Light Rail and Modern Streetcar service too. Call, write or e-mail them. Here’s the information:

Mayor Berry: PO Box 1293, Albuquerque 87103

768-3000

mayorberry@cabq.gov

City Council: Go to <http://www.cabq.gov/council> for contact information

County Commission: Go to <http://www.bernco.gov> for contact information.

## **2) The SW Chief And Its Tracks:**

This is the picture we see as this is written:

When Amtrak's present contract with the BNSF Railway expires in 2015, the Southwest Chief will likely be re-routed through Wichita KS, Woodward OK, Amarillo TX, and Clovis NM. We had thought that the new stop for Albuquerque would be Belén (via the Rail Runner), but an Amtrak employee tells us that the Chief will still call at our Downtown station.

We've come around to this change, since it serves several hundred thousand more people than our favorite route. But its existence depends on the new host cities realizing just how damn lucky they're about to get, and upon the BNSF making room on this major freight line. If you know anybody in those cities, please talk to them or forward this bulletin.

Which leaves Newton KS-Lamy NM out of luck.

The SW Chief Coalition, based in La Junta CO (with a branch out of Santa Fe), is valiantly working through political channels to keep the Chief where it is (as are we), and we hope they pull off this near-miracle. But we can't imagine who in Congress (Amtrak's boss) would want to shell out many millions for the present route when they could open up a big new passenger market for (we think) somewhat less.

Rails Inc wants to see BOTH routes served. Newton-Lamy must be saved, for reasons listed in our recent bulletins. The BNSF Railway still runs significant freight on the Kansas and Colorado parts of the route, which also serves them as a relief route if something happens to one of their major "Transcon" lines.

Which leaves passenger service. If Amtrak dumps Newton-Lamy, we think the route should

be open to operation by a regional railroad. At least one has expressed interest in filling the gap. Amtrak enjoys a passenger-service monopoly where they actually run; hopefully this would not apply on a route they abandon.

We suggest that, after the elections, you contact your Senator and Congress Member and declare your support for passenger Rail on both these routes. Use the Post Office and your phone as well as your-e-mail.

JW  
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