1) Positive Train Control:

For those not already familiar with PTC, it's a GPS-based technology for monitoring trains and for stopping them automatically if necessary. It would likely have prevented this year's deadly Amtrak crash in Philadelphia, and probably others. It costs roughly $1 million per mile of track. Some railroads, including California's Metrolink system, have been going all out with this. There are technical problems not yet solved, such as various PTC systems belonging to different railroads not "talking" with one another.

There's a Congressionally mandated deadline of December 31, 2015 to implement PTC, which has been extended, as some railroads are running behind in setting this up. This deadline also applies to the Rail Runner.

Here's where we part company with this PTC program:

There's a price tag of about $50 million for installing PTC on the part of the Rail Runner route where it's called for. Given these factors:

—— There's just not much rail traffic on the route,

—— The Rail Runner is already equipped with "dead man switches", Automatic Train Stop, and Centralized Train Control,

—— PTC is not effective with respect to the most serious dangers faced by the Rail Runner. It can't spot a vehicle driving in front of the train or a washout (or sabotage) on the tracks,

—— The Congressional Budget Office itself doesn't consider PTC all that cost-effective.

We are very reliably informed that the Rail Runner is well protected by the above-listed safeguards, and that PTC is just not worth the huge expense involved.

To us, the true missing links in passenger train protection are:

—— A reliable technology for seeing any danger far enough in front of the train to be able to bring it to a safe stop short of the danger spot.
—— Physical protection (like a giant bumper or “cow catcher”) on the front of the Cab Car for when the train is running in “push mode” (“Push mode” is where the train appears to run backwards, with the engine in back and the engineer working from the duplicate controls in the Cab Car).

NOTE: The Rail Runner runs South with the engine in front (affording great protection) and North with the more vulnerable Cab Car leading.

We believe that an exemption to the PTC requirement is in order for the Rail Runner, until such time as one of the dreams of Rails Inc is realized; that dream being a much busier set of North-South tracks in New Mexico.

As this is written, Congress (such as it is) has passed a three-year extension of the aforementioned deadline for implementation of PTC. This is the same Congress that has never allocated the wireless wave lengths necessary to make their mandated PTC work to begin with.

Since we don’t think PTC is so wonderful for the price anyhow, we certainly have no problem with their stalling it for three years. This might buy some time to organize a set of safety techniques more suited to each individual railroad and segment of right-of-way.

2) Face Book:

Rails Inc is in the process of getting on Face Book. We hope this will help us reach out to a wider—-especially younger—-audience.

3) The Rail Users Network (RUN):

We urge you to consider joining this group. They're national, they're honest, they're independent, and they put up with your JW. www.railusers.net.

4) Mooch Notice:

Rails Inc does not fund-raise a lot. We don't have to. We're very thrifty. Those of you who send checks without a reminder, take a break, with our gratitude. The rest of you, please drop us a few bucks whenever you can. We're not hurting right now, but we like to keep solvent in our small way. Thank you. PO Box 4268, Albuquerque, 87196.

5) Want To Be An Independent Activist?

We recommend this effort: "Our Train Stations—Our Project." You monitor a train station and report both good and bad conditions to the appropriate people. OTS—OP has already instigated improvements in several stations around the West. You can help add to these.

Contact: www. OurTrainStations.net Or: rails@nmrails.org Attn. JW .

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