

The Albuquerque Journal published an op ed on December 26, by our JW, related to the redevelopment of the Rail Yards and the role of Rail transit in this process. In said article we propose a modern Rail shuttle between the Alvarado Center (First and Central) and the old Blacksmith Building in the Yards. We're calling it the "Yard Bird". The Blacksmith shop looks like a future Union Station if we ever saw one.

The sets of tracks leading North toward Downtown from this building and the rest of the Rail Yard have deteriorated and several rails are missing, but they are still more or less there. One old diagonal used to connect several spurs Northbound from the Rail Yard to a point near First Street and the Coal Ave bridge. This looks like a promising route, but we've got much more to learn.

Consult [The Albuquerque Rail Yards](#).

Besides our little Bird, there's another modern Rail possibility for the Yards: City Councilor Benton has recommended putting the Rail Runner maintenance facility in the Yards, making said Yards serve in a small way the function they filled in the old days. Another of the above-mentioned track sets might well serve this purpose. As above, we have a lot to learn about this, and are planning meetings with appropriate experts.

Old Fashioned Civics Lesson: Get active. If you like what we're trying to do (hell, even if you don't), contact your friends and various associates and your local and national political leaders. They do pay attention if they hear from enough people for long enough. If you are connected with any of the "social networks", please spread the word through these. We can compose the messages, or you can. Passenger Rail is a big issue, in part because it fortifies so many others.

If you're interested in Rail Yard matters, or want to weigh in on Rail transit in connection with this, contact Petra Morris at: pmorris@cabq.gov.

There is a new group forming, concentrating on urban Rail (transit) for Albuquerque. We like the idea of more than one independent outfit working more or less together, like a team of cats. Contact Herschel Wilson at: albuquerquestreetcar@mail.com.

The Southwest Chief And Its Tracks:

We secured a proclamation of support last October from the Albuquerque City Council supporting Amtrak's Southwest Chief (signed by all nine Councilors). More recently, a "resolution" to this effect passed by the same margin at the City Council (a resolution ranks higher than a proclamation). And on March 12, the Bernalillo County Commission issued a "Certificate Of Recognition" supporting the Chief, complete with a pat on the back for Rails Inc.

Our thanks to Councilor Benton and Commissioner Hart-Stebbins.

For those of you handy with math, this will be easy. For those who are not, it'll still be easy:

- *** Upgrade the tracks from Newton KS to Lamy NM: \$100 million (over 10 years)
- *** Track maintenance to 80 mph standards, per year: \$ 10 million (per year)
- *** All costs to be shared by New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, Amtrak and the BNSF Railway.

Doing said math, Preserving and upgrading this 636-mile right of way would cost each of the five "stakeholders" approximately \$4 million per year. Seen in the multi-billion dollar context of highway and airport investment, this looks like a pretty good deal. It's an even better deal when you consider all the other potential uses of these tracks.

Consult: <https://nmrails.org> , the third article under "Hot Topics".

Late Breaking News (Relatively):

During the last part of February, two pieces of legislation ("memorials") related to the SW Chief made it through the NM House of Representatives.

One, under the auspices of the New Mexico branch of the SW Chief Coalition (NM-SWCC), is a basic statement of support for the Chief, with many good reasons why.

This memorial has passed unanimously in both the NM House and the NM Senate.

The Other, instigated by us, tries to take this several steps further by calling for a study or market research program toward developing revenue uses for the tracks themselves—uses beyond the important one of hosting the Chief twice a day. We want to see those tracks put to work full-time. We did not expect unanimity, or even an easy passage, but—we cleared the House Business and Industry Committee 8-3 and the full House 45-22 (including 10 Republicans). We're happy, but this is just a beginning. We did not have time to work the Senate.

All this good news is of course contingent on the resolution of the long-standing track ownership impasse between the BNSF Railway and the Martinez administration.

Conference Notice:

The Rail Users Network, a smart and honest national passenger Rail group (our JW is a recently-elected board member) is holding a conference in Chicago on April 26-27. If you're there, or care to be, this might be most interesting. For more information, contact:

<http://www.railusers.net> OR 1-207-776-4961.

Regional Transportation Planning Meetings

The Mid Region Council Of Governments (MRCOG) is putting together the latest of their Transportation Improvement Plans (TIP). There will be a series of public meetings in connection with this. The good news is that they've figured out that transportation goes way beyond cars cars cars, roads roads roads. the other good news is that they're acting like the Rail Runner is here to stay. The bad news is that they are not looking at any other Rail transit for the region. Just more and better busses.

This is better than nothing, but not enough. For more information and for meeting dates / places;

consult: <http://www.mrcog-nm.gov/transportation>, or write: tsylvester@mrcog-nm.gov.

Note: If you want to be on our e-mail list instead of our p-mail list, let us know.

Our Traveling Show

We have put together a presentation “to go”, complete with computer slides (Mac). If anybody is putting up a meeting and would like a speaker with illustrative material, we’re available.

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