

## ***Amtrak's Southwest Chief***

### **Fact Sheet**

#### **Today's *Southwest Chief* is an important transportation resource for New Mexico residents and visitors to our state**

- The *Southwest Chief* operates daily between Chicago and Los Angeles, with stops in Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and California. The *Chief* brings in a significant number of tourists to our state and provides access for New Mexicans to Amtrak's nationwide system of short- and long-distance trains as well as Thruway Bus services.
- According to Amtrak, 90% of the passengers on the *Chief* board or detrain at the 31 intermediate stops along the 2,265 miles of track, "many in small towns."(1)
- In New Mexico, boardings and detraining from the *Chief* in FY 2014 were: Albuquerque – 77,021; Gallup – 16,140; Lamy (Santa Fe) – 11,655; Las Vegas – 5,047; Raton – 15,875; Total – 125,738. (2) Of the total boardings and detraining in Raton, approximately 8,900 annually are Boy Scouts and leaders attending the Philmont Scout Ranch (Colfax County's largest employer).
- The average trip for passengers boarding or detraining in New Mexico is 783 miles. (3) 28% of the *Chief's* riders board or detrain in New Mexico.
- 1,457,221 New Mexico residents live within 50 miles of an Amtrak station. (3)
- In New Mexico, through ticketing is available from the *Chief* to Denver from Raton, and Lamy to Santa Fe.

#### **The *Chief* makes a significant contribution to New Mexico's economy**

- Estimated total annual visitor spending in New Mexico: \$20,617,560. Annual fiscal impact of visitor spending for local and state hotel and gross receipts taxes: \$2,254,053. (4)
- Total employment in New Mexico supported by visitor spending (lodging, food services and retail) (direct, indirect and induced): 368.1; Wages from visitor spending: \$9.0 million.(4) In addition, Amtrak employs 57 New Mexico residents with annual wages of \$5,247,448.(2)
- BNSF and Amtrak pay the RailRunner \$1.8 million/year for use of the tracks between Lamy and Isleta.

#### **Why the current status of the *Southwest Chief* is threatened**

- BNSF and Amtrak have a signed 20-year contract to operate the *Chief* on its current route through the end of 2015.
- BNSF has not operated freight trains on the line over Raton Pass to Lamy since 2007, leaving the *Chief* as the only user of the rails between La Junta, CO, and Lamy, NM.
- BNSF has told Amtrak that the full cost associated with maintaining the line between La Junta and Lamy to passenger train standards must be borne by Amtrak after December, 2015.
- Amtrak announced in April, 2011 that additional funding must be found to maintain the infrastructure of the route through Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico.

- Lacking any additional funding, the *Chief* in its current form may be truncated or cancelled altogether. The costs of moving the *Chief* to BNSF's southern transcontinental line through Clovis and Belen are prohibitive.
- If the *Chief* is discontinued, BNSF will have the option to downgrade, mothball or abandon the line altogether with a significant impact on current and future economic development possibilities for the region with the loss of \$1.1 million in tax revenue directly from BNSF to Colfax, Mora, San Miguel and Santa Fe counties. (5)

**What you can do to help save the *Chief***

- Contact your elected state leaders, local economic development offices and chambers of commerce. This is particularly important if you live in counties outside of the route of the *Chief*.
- Contact Governor Susana Martinez through her on-line feedback link at: [http://www.governor.state.nm.us/Contact\\_the\\_Governor.aspx](http://www.governor.state.nm.us/Contact_the_Governor.aspx)
- Contact the New Mexico Congressional Delegation: Sen. Martin Heinrich (202-224-5521), [www.heinrich.senate.gov](http://www.heinrich.senate.gov); Sen. Tom Udall (202-224-6621), [www.tomudall.senate.gov](http://www.tomudall.senate.gov); Rep. Ben Ray Lujan (202-225-6190), [www.lujan.house.gov](http://www.lujan.house.gov); Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham (202-225-4975), [www.lujangrisham.house.gov](http://www.lujangrisham.house.gov)) and Rep. Steve Pearce (202-225-2365), [www.pearce.house.gov](http://www.pearce.house.gov). (Note: All mail sent to Congressional offices via the US Postal Service must be screened for security purposes and will take up to two weeks.)
- In all conversations, describe the importance of your personal and visitors' travels on the *Chief*; the importance of the train for the mobility of our residents, tourism and economic activity; and always thank your elected leaders for their support.
- For the latest updates on the *Chief*, join the Coalition's mailing list by sending an e-mail request to: [swccnm1@gmail.com](mailto:swccnm1@gmail.com) and visit the Coalition's website at [www.swccoalitionnm.weebly.com](http://www.swccoalitionnm.weebly.com).

***Thank you for advocating for the Southwest Chief in New Mexico!***

1. "Long Distance Train Facts," Amtrak
2. "Amtrak Fact Sheet, Fiscal Year 2014 – State of New Mexico," Amtrak
3. "Fact sheet: Amtrak in New Mexico 2007 – 2013," National Association of Railroad Passengers
4. "A Report of the Annual Economic Impact of Amtrak's Southwest Chief in New Mexico," Impact Data Source, November 11, 2013
5. "Analysis of Amtrak Southwest Chief Maintenance Costs and Economic Impacts," New Mexico Department of Transportation, November 6, 2014

**For more information, contact the Southwest Chief Coalition–New Mexico Section at [swccnm1@gmail.com](mailto:swccnm1@gmail.com) or visit the Coalition's web-site at <http://swccoalitionnm.weebly.com>.**

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