

SOUTHWEST CHIEF COALITION-NM SECTION UPDATE

June 28, 2014

Southwest Chief Coalition Legislative Committee Formed

Five Coalition members -- Ford Robbins, Jon Messier, Adrian Gurule, Chuck Larrabee and Bill Sauble -- have now formed a task team to develop a strategy for the organization as we move into these next critical months for the future of the Chief. The Legislative Committee will work to identify and engage key decision-makers; ensure Coalition participation and input at important meetings and hearings; and ensure timely, concise communications to Coalition members on a regular basis.

Look for news on the Committee's activities -- as well as information on how you can help -- in future editions of the Southwest Chief Coalition Update.

Recent and Upcoming Meetings and Resolutions

Committees and organizations will be meeting during the summer and early fall to set the agenda for the next New Mexico legislative session that begins January 15, 2015. As an example, the Association of New Mexico Counties met in Deming on June 29, and adopted a resolution presented by Bill Sauble and drafted by Ford Robbins to support continuation of the Southwest Chief on the current line. The resolution will next be considered to be included in the NMAC legislative program. Ford has been assisting the Santa Fe City-County Metropolitan Planning Board to adopt a supporting resolution. Hopefully, that will be adopted at the agency's next meeting, July 24, 2014. Interim meetings of Legislative committees have begun. The Southwest Chief issue is currently scheduled for November 5, 2014. That date is subject to change.

We will be scheduling a number of meetings with legislators and candidates over the remaining summer months.

Update on Progress in Colorado and Kansas

A great deal of misinformation is being passed around re: the commitment of Colorado and Kansas to the future of the train. Future Coalition Updates will include more information as it becomes available. However, the key points are (as of today):

- The Colorado and Kansas legislatures have not committed any funds to the infrastructure or operation of the Southwest Chief.
- Colorado is funding a commission to review the possible re-route of the Chief through Pueblo.
- Kansas has not addressed the issue legislatively.
- Several Kansas and southern Colorado towns and counties have committed funding to achieve the 20% matching obligation for a TIGER grant application they have filed with the federal Department of Transportation earlier this year to repair some of the track.

Southwest Chief in the News

In an editorial in The New Mexican on June 22, Fred Friedman, former chief of the rail division, NMDOT, argued that committing funding for the Southwest Chief at this time is premature as the BNSF is likely to apply to abandon the northern route anyway. Within 24 hours, Ford Robbins sent a clarification to the paper emphasizing that if under an agreement with the three states and Amtrak, BNSF

is unlikely to then try to abandon the line altogether, giving the route a "lease on life" while other economic opportunities are pursued. Ford also emphasized the contribution the train is making today to the communities along the route. (See suggested talking points, below.)

New E-Mail Address for Coalition Business

In order to move away from using private e-mail addresses for Coalition business, a new e-mail address has now been established. Please use swccnm1@gmail.com for all inquiries and suggestions regarding Southwest Chief Coalition activities.

Key Talking Points

When discussing the future of the Southwest Chief and future support with your neighbors, family, business leaders, or elected leaders, here is a summary of the key points the Coalition is now focused on:

- 1) The economic impact the Southwest Chief brings to New Mexico today is substantial. Nearly 67,000 people are predicted to board or get off the train in the Raton-Gallup corridor in 2014, bringing with them visitor spending in the millions of dollars for hotels, rental cars, restaurants as well as tax revenue. To invest \$4 million each year to get back almost \$70 million in annual benefits to the Santa Fe - Raton area, to us, seems to be an outstanding return on investment.
- 2) In addition, the future of the rail line through northeast New Mexico -- with its accompanying potential for economic development in that area of the state -- will be in jeopardy if the train goes away.
- 3) Mobility. In an era of decreased transportation options, the Southwest Chief is more than just a train through northern New Mexico. The Chief provides a link for the residents of Albuquerque and smaller communities in New Mexico and to Los Angeles in the west, to Kansas City and Chicago in the midwest, and to Amtrak's nation-wide system.
- 4) In summary: The Southwest Chief is the key to saving a railroad line that is important to the economic life today and in the future for our state.

What's Next?

Expect to see more communications on what is happening as we move towards the upcoming legislative session. The establishment of the Legislative Committee is important to ensure that the Coalition's efforts are most effectively focused.

Your support for the future of the Southwest Chief is greatly appreciated and important for the future of New Mexico! Thanks for all that you do.