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SENATE MEMORIAL 18

54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2019

INTRODUCED BY

Pete Campos

A MEMORIAL

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF AMTRAK, THE NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER CORPORATION, AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO NEW MEXICO'S MOBILITY AND ECONOMY; ACKNOWLEDGING THE THREAT TO THE VIABILITY OF THE SOUTHWEST CHIEF TRAIN; REQUESTING THAT THE NEW MEXICO CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION AND THE GOVERNOR SUPPORT THE CONTINUED OPERATION OF THE SOUTHWEST CHIEF.

WHEREAS, Amtrak, the national railroad passenger corporation and a federally chartered corporation, provides intercity transportation service to millions of Americans each year and operates two long-distance routes through New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak's southwest chief train runs between Chicago and Los Angeles, with stops in New Mexico at Raton, Las Vegas, Lamy, Albuquerque and Gallup; and

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1 WHEREAS, the southwest chief serves cities and rural
2 areas, carries passengers through scenic landscapes not visible
3 from highways and provides a safe, comfortable and energy-
4 efficient form of transportation; and

5 WHEREAS, many New Mexico residents who ride the southwest
6 chief depend on it as the only form of public transportation
7 between Raton and Albuquerque; and

8 WHEREAS, the southwest chief provides interstate
9 transportation for New Mexico residents and travelers visiting
10 New Mexico; and

11 WHEREAS, in federal fiscal year 2017, passengers boarded
12 and disembarked the southwest chief in New Mexico at
13 Albuquerque, Gallup, Lamy, Las Vegas and Raton more than one
14 hundred twenty-two thousand times; and

15 WHEREAS, each year, approximately four thousand four
16 hundred boy scouts who camp at the Philmont scout ranch travel
17 on the southwest chief, using the Raton station; and

18 WHEREAS, the southwest chief's presence in the region
19 enhances the state and local economies by attracting tourists
20 and employing New Mexicans; and

21 WHEREAS, the southwest chief's presence in the region
22 supports local businesses through the purchase of goods and
23 services; and

24 WHEREAS, Amtrak spent nine hundred thirty-seven thousand
25 seven hundred fifty-eight dollars (\$937,758) on goods and

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1 services in New Mexico in federal fiscal year 2017; and

2 WHEREAS, the BNSF railway company owns and leases to
3 Amtrak most of the line on which the southwest chief carries
4 passengers in New Mexico; and

5 WHEREAS, many New Mexico counties, including Bernalillo,
6 Colfax, Mora, San Miguel, Sandoval, Santa Fe, Cibola, Valencia
7 and McKinley, depend on property tax revenues paid by the BNSF
8 railway company; and

9 WHEREAS, capital funding is needed to modernize the
10 southwest chief line running from Hutchinson, Kansas, to
11 Albuquerque so that the line meets required passenger-rail
12 standards; and

13 WHEREAS, at a 2011 meeting of the southwest chief
14 coalition, a group of concerned citizens and elected officials
15 from Colorado, Kansas and New Mexico, BNSF railway company and
16 Amtrak identified the need for one hundred million dollars
17 (\$100,000,000) in repairs and capital improvements in Kansas,
18 Colorado and New Mexico to keep the southwest chief
19 operational; and

20 WHEREAS, in September 2014, through the transportation
21 investment generating economic recovery 6 program, the United
22 States department of transportation awarded Garden City,
23 Kansas, twelve million five hundred thousand dollars
24 (\$12,500,000) to begin modernizing the BNSF railway company's
25 La Junta subdivision used by the southwest chief; and

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1 WHEREAS, combined with matching funds, almost twenty-two
2 million dollars (\$22,000,000) was allocated toward rail
3 infrastructure upgrades in Kansas and Colorado; and

4 WHEREAS, in 2015, the United States department of
5 transportation awarded an additional fifteen-million-two
6 hundred-thousand-dollar (\$15,200,000) grant through the
7 transportation investment generating economic recovery 7
8 program to the city of La Junta, Colorado, to continue the
9 rehabilitation of the southwest chief line; and

10 WHEREAS, combined with matching funds, over twenty-four
11 million dollars (\$24,000,000) was allocated to upgrades and
12 repairs in Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico; and

13 WHEREAS, in 2018, Colfax county, New Mexico, was awarded a
14 transportation investment generating economic recovery 9 grant;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, with matching funds, twenty-five million dollars
17 (\$25,000,000) is allocated for continued upgrades in Kansas,
18 Colorado and New Mexico; and

19 WHEREAS, successful completion of the transportation
20 investment generating economic recovery 9 grant will mean that
21 seventy-one million dollars (\$71,000,000) of the original one-
22 hundred-million-dollar (\$100,000,000) estimate of repairs and
23 infrastructure upgrades will have been spent on upgrades; and

24 WHEREAS, Amtrak has pledged three million dollars
25 (\$3,000,000) in matching funds upon the condition that there be

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1 a plan in place to guarantee that the remaining upgrades and
2 repairs are funded and that the annual maintenance costs for
3 the portion of the line from the Colorado state line to Lamy,
4 New Mexico, be funded by a third party; and

5 WHEREAS, these additional requests jeopardize the
6 successful completion of Colfax county's transportation
7 investment generating economic recovery 9 grant; and

8 WHEREAS, New Mexico governmental entities, including
9 Colfax, Mora, San Miguel and Santa Fe counties, the city of
10 Raton, the town of Springer, the villages of Cimarron and
11 Maxwell and the department of transportation, have pledged
12 matching funds to support the southwest chief coalition's
13 efforts;

14 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE
15 OF NEW MEXICO that the New Mexico congressional delegation and
16 the governor be called upon to support the continued viability
17 of the southwest chief; and

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
19 transmitted to the members of the New Mexico congressional
20 delegation, the governor, the state transportation commission,
21 the legislatures and the governors of Colorado and Kansas, the
22 chief executive officer of Amtrak, the board of directors of
23 the national railroad passenger corporation and the federal
24 railroad administration.

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