

CITY of ALBUQUERQUE

TWENTY THIRD COUNCIL

COUNCIL BILL NO. R-18-54 ENACTMENT NO. _____

SPONSORED BY: Isaac Benton

1 **RESOLUTION**
2 **SUPPORTING THE CONTINUATION OF SERVICE ON THE CURRENT ROUTE**
3 **OF AMTRAK'S SOUTHWEST CHIEF BY RAIL THROUGH NORTHERN NEW**
4 **MEXICO ON ITS PRESENT ROUTE ALIGNMENT, AND SUPPORTING FEDERAL**
5 **FUNDING IN SUPPORT OF MAINTENANCE AND SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS**
6 **ALONG THE ROUTE.**

7 **WHEREAS, Amtrak, the national railroad passenger corporation, a**
8 **federally chartered corporation, provides train service to millions of**
9 **Americans each year and operates two long-distance routes through New**
10 **Mexico; and**

11 **WHEREAS, Amtrak's Southwest Chief serves New Mexico through its daily**
12 **Chicago-Los Angeles route; and**

13 **WHEREAS, the Southwest Chief and its famous predecessors have served**
14 **this route since the late 1880's; and**

15 **WHEREAS, the Southwest Chief is a key economic contributor to northern**
16 **New Mexico and Albuquerque, through employment, procurement, contracts,**
17 **and tourism; and**

18 **WHEREAS, Amtrak provides a transportation link to the residents of**
19 **northern New Mexico that provides an alternative to driving and flying; and**

20 **WHEREAS, the Southwest Chief carries passengers through scenic**
21 **landscapes not visible from highways and provides a highly energy-efficient,**
22 **safe form of transportation; and**

23 **WHEREAS, many New Mexico residents who ride the Southwest Chief**
24 **depend on it as the only form of public transportation between Raton and**
25 **Albuquerque; and**

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1 WHEREAS, in federal fiscal year 2017, passengers boarded and alighted
2 from the Southwest Chief in New Mexico at Albuquerque, Lamy, Las Vegas
3 and Raton more than one hundred four thousand times; and

4 WHEREAS, each year, about four thousand four hundred Boy Scouts who
5 camp at the Philmont scout ranch travel on the Southwest Chief, using the
6 Raton station; and

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

10 WHEREAS, the BNSF railway company, formerly the Burlington Northern
11 and Santa Fe railway company, owns and leases to Amtrak most of the line on
12 which the Southwest Chief carries passengers in New Mexico; and

13 WHEREAS, capital funding is needed to modernize and improve safety on
14 the Southwest Chief line running from Trinidad, Colorado to Albuquerque so
15 that it meets required passenger-rail standards; and

16 WHEREAS, the United States Congress has not provided for a permanent
17 funding stream to cover the costs of Amtrak's infrastructure needs; and

18 WHEREAS, Amtrak's inability to secure adequate capital funding for
19 improvements has led to a proposal by Amtrak leadership to replace its
20 passenger rail service between Trinidad and Albuquerque with motor bus
21 service, thereby forcing passengers to leave the safest form of surface
22 transportation in the country and travel by bus on an interstate highway
23 system with a significantly higher safety risk than the current Amtrak
24 operation, significantly and negatively affecting the quality, safety and
25 convenience of the service for most users, or, to possibly discontinue service;
26 and

27 WHEREAS, although Colfax County was awarded a \$16 million grant from
28 the federal Department of Transportation's Transportation Investment
29 Generating Economic Recovery program to keep the Southwest Chief in
30 operation through the county on a stretch of private rails owned by BNSF,
31 Amtrak has indicated that it will not release the previously agreed upon
32 matching funds, threatening hundreds of millions of dollars of matching

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1 investments by other government and private entities in recent years to
2 improve the rail facilities and safety; and

3 WHEREAS, the Rio Metro Transit District, which operates commuter rail
4 service between Santa Fe and Albuquerque, has secured funding to
5 implement positive train control (PTC) on its segment of the same route
6 owned by the State of New Mexico, thereby increasing the safety of an already
7 extremely safe mode of travel; and

8 WHEREAS, this stretch of rail service is part of the larger Cerrillos to Raton
9 BNSF railbed that the previous state government administration agreed to
10 purchase from BNSF to keep the Southwest Chief serving a northern route
11 through New Mexico but which the current state administration reneged upon
12 when it came into office; and

13 WHEREAS, in light of the commitment of the Colorado and Kansas
14 legislatures to continue funding Southwest Chief passenger rail service
15 through their states, it is imperative that New Mexico continue to support the
16 Chief's northern route through our state; and

17 WHEREAS, on May 31, 2018 the entire New Mexico delegation to the United
18 States Congress joined other southwest area senators, imploring Amtrak to
19 release available funds from federal transportation grants to modernize and
20 improve safety on this segment of the route of the Southwest Chief, and to
21 maintain its current service.

22 WHERAS, on July 25, 2018 the U.S. Senate adopted an amendment to an
23 appropriations bill affirming the body's support for long-distance train service
24 in the U.S., including the Southwest Chief.

25 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL, THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF
26 ALBUQUERQUE:

27 Section 1. The City of Albuquerque recognizes the importance of Amtrak,
28 the national railroad passenger corporation, and its many contributions to
29 New Mexico.

30 Section 2. The City calls upon Amtrak and the Federal Railroad
31 Administration to maintain the current passenger rail service upon the current
32 route and railbed, and to abide by previous commitments to release funds to
33 Colfax County;

1 Section 3. The City opposes any actions that would adversely affect the
2 viability of the operation of the Southwest Chief in northern and central New
3 Mexico.

4 Section 4. The City calls upon the New Mexico State legislature and the
5 next state administration to fund and support purchase by the State of the
6 remainder of the railbed used by the Southwest Chief north of Santa Fe to the
7 state line.

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