CITY of ALBUQUERQUE
TWENTY THIRD COUNCIL

COUNCIL BILL NO. R-18-54 ENACTMENT NO. R-2018-049

SPONSORED BY: Isaac Benton

RESOLUTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 6th DAY OF August, 2018
BY A VOTE OF: 9 FOR 0 AGAINST.

Ken Sanchez, President
City Council

APPROVED THIS 20 DAY OF August, 2018

Bill No. R-18-54

Timothy M. Keller, Mayor
City of Albuquerque

ATTEST:

Trina Gurule, Acting City Clerk

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