



Legislation Text

File #: R-13-153, Version: 2

CITY of ALBUQUERQUE
TWENTIETH COUNCIL

COUNCIL BILL NO. R-13-153 ENACTMENT NO. _____

SPONSORED BY: Isaac Benton

RESOLUTION

Supporting The Continuation Of The Current Route Of Amtrak's Southwest Chief Through Northern New Mexico And Calling On The Metro Region's State Legislative Delegation, The Governor, And The New Mexico Congressional Delegation To Support The Continued Operation Of The Southwest Chief On Its Present Route Alignment (Benton)

SUPPORTING THE CONTINUATION OF THE CURRENT ROUTE OF AMTRAK'S SOUTHWEST CHIEF THROUGH NORTHERN NEW MEXICO AND CALLING ON THE METRO REGION'S STATE LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION, THE GOVERNOR, AND THE NEW MEXICO CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO SUPPORT THE CONTINUED OPERATION OF THE SOUTHWEST CHIEF ON ITS PRESENT ROUTE ALIGNMENT.

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, including Albuquerque, through employment, procurement, contracts, and tourism; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak provides a transportation link to the residents of northern New

Mexico that is of growing importance as rising energy prices reduce the attractiveness of driving and flying; and

WHEREAS, the Southwest Chief carries passengers through scenic landscapes not visible from highways and provides an energy-efficient 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

WHEREAS, in federal fiscal year 2012, passengers boarded and alighted from the Southwest Chief in New Mexico at Albuquerque, Lamy, Las Vegas and Raton more than one hundred twelve 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 the Southwest Chief line running from Hutchinson, Kansas, to Albuquerque so that it meets required passenger-rail standards; and

WHEREAS, the BNSF railway management has said that it will not renew Amtrak's lease, which expires in January 2014, unless Amtrak pays to upgrade that line; 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 imminently threatens the viability of the Southwest Chief line from Raton to Albuquerque; and

WHEREAS, the Southwest Chief Coalition, a group of concerned citizens and elected officials from Colorado, Kansas and New Mexico, has assembled in an effort to preserve the Southwest Chief; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico governmental entities, including Colfax County, Mora County, San Miguel County, Santa Fe County, the City of Las Vegas, the City of Raton, the City of Santa Fe, and the Town of Wagon Mound along with the New Mexico Municipal League

have resolved to support the Southwest Chief Coalition's efforts; and

WHEREAS, the City Council, on October 15, 2012, issued a proclamation recognizing the Southwest Chief for its many contributions to New Mexico and Albuquerque and encouraged citizens, agencies and organizations to actively endorse the continuation of the current route through northern New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, memorials have been introduced in the New Mexico Senate and House of Representatives recognizing the importance of Amtrak and its contribution to New Mexico's economy; acknowledging the threat to viability of the Southwest Chief train; requesting that the New Mexico congressional delegation and the Governor support the continued operation of 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 Council calls upon the metro region's State legislative delegation, the Governor, and the New Mexico Congressional delegation to (a) support the continued operation of the Southwest Chief on its present route alignment, and (b) oppose any actions that would adversely affect the viability of the operation of the Southwest Chief in northern and central New Mexico.

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