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HOUSE MEMORIAL 7

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

INTRODUCED BY

Tomás E. Salazar

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 HOUSE OF  
15 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the New Mexico  
16 congressional delegation and the governor be called upon to  
17 support the continued viability 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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