

**American Short Line and  
Regional Railroad Association**



# WHAT ARE SHORT LINE RAILROADS?

- Local railroads with annual revenues of \$28 million and all switching and terminal railroads regardless of operating revenues (also known as Class III railroads)
- Governed by the federal Surface Transportation Board
- Usually light density lines leased or purchased from the large (Class I) carriers such as UP or BNSF
- The ASLRRA represents the industry before Congress and regulatory agencies and provides a myriad of services to its members

# OVERVIEW OF THE SHORT LINE INDUSTRY

- Over 550 short lines operate in 49 states
- Short lines operate over 50,000 miles of railroad track, nearly 30% of the nation's total railroad mileage
- Short lines are a feeder system for the large Class I railroads, picking up or delivering one out of every four rail cars moving on the national rail network
- Short lines employ nearly 20,000 people, serve over 13,000 facilities and haul over 14 million carloads per year

# SHORT LINES PROVIDE BENEFITS

- Short lines provide fuel savings and environmentally friendly shipping for small businesses and communities around the country
  - One rail freight car can carry the equivalent of four truck loads
  - One rail car can carry a ton of cargo 436 miles on one gallon of fuel
  - Railroads are working to reduce emissions of particulate matter by 90% and nitrogen oxide by 80%
- Short lines take the equivalent of nearly 33 million truck loads off the highways saving the country over \$1.4 billion annually in highway repair costs, and improving highway safety and congestion
- Short lines keep America's rural communities connected to the national railroad network and to the economic benefits that flow from that network

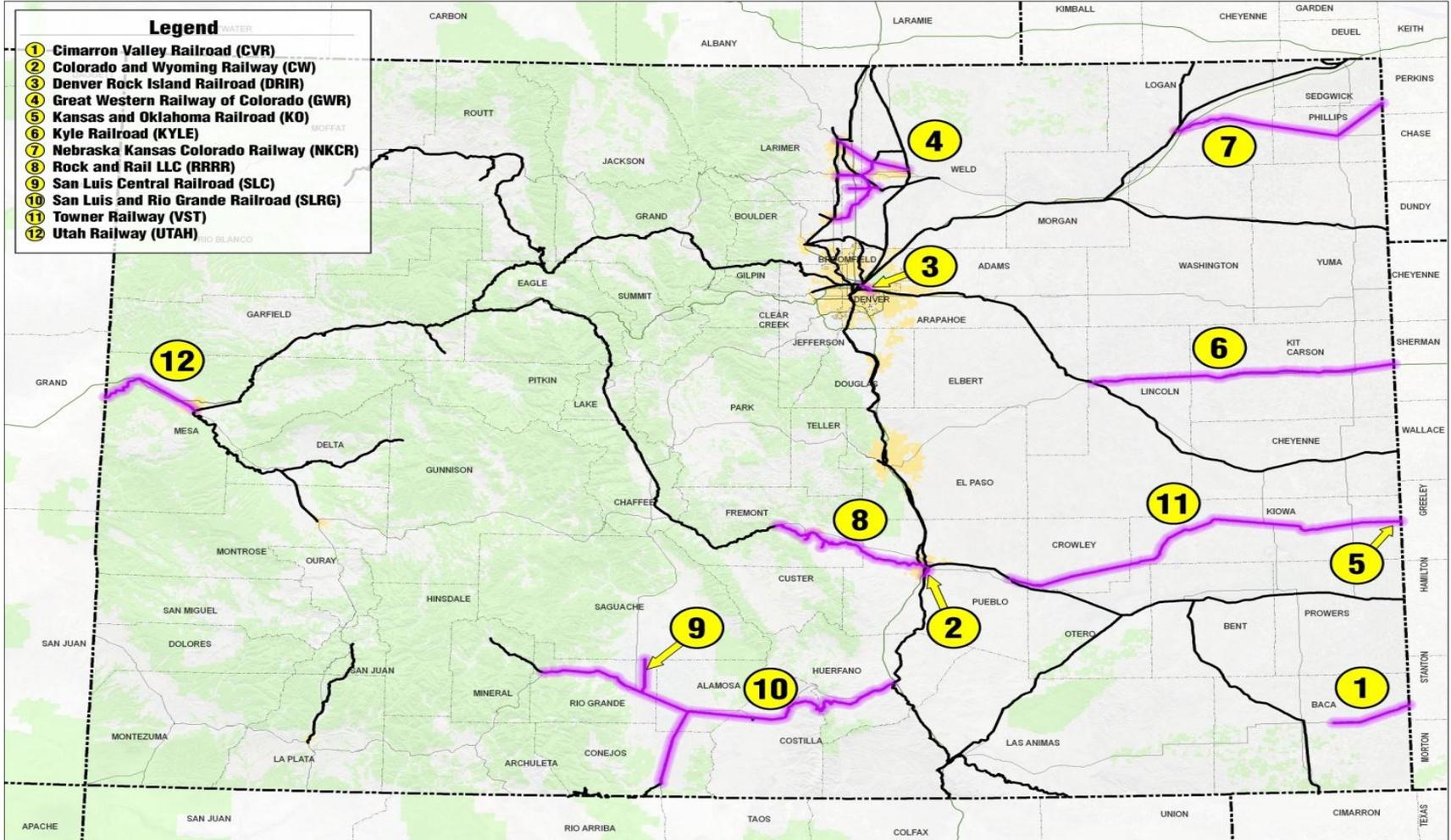
# COLORADO SHORT LINE RAILROADS



Colorado State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan (SFPRP)

DRAFT  
In Progress

## Short Line Railroads



# TRUCK SIZE & WEIGHT ISSUES: SAFETY

- Independent studies have concluded that heavier trucks make roads less safe.
- Large trucks are already dangerous with a fatal crash involvement rate 40% higher than the rate for passenger cars. *Traffic Safety Facts 2008*, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, p. 17, 2008.
- Increasing truck weights is likely to lead to brake maintenance problems and longer stopping distances. The US DOT expressed specified concern about the ability to maintain those extra brakes. *Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study*, US Department of Transportation, Volume 3, p. VIII-10, 2000.
- Adding weight to a truck *makes it more likely that the truck's equipment will wear out sooner including such* truck components as brakes, suspension and tires. In a study on truck crash involvement in Washington State, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that 77% of tractor-trailers involved in crashes had defective equipment.

# TRUCK SIZE & WEIGHT ISSUES: BRIDGES

- Nearly half of the bridges in the United States are more than 40 years old. *National Bridge Inventory*, Federal Highway Administration, 2008.
- One of every four bridges in the US is structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. *National Bridge Inventory*, Federal Highway Administration, 2010.
- The additional cost of repairing bridge damage caused by raising truck weights from 80,000 pounds to 97,000 pounds could be as much as \$65 billion. *Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study*, US Department of Transportation, Volume 3, p. VI-11, 2000.
- Proposed legislation increases the Heavy Vehicle Use Tax to \$800 from \$550. At most, this would generate approximately \$500 million in additional revenue, an insignificant contribution to the existing bridge backlog or the additional damage that would be done to bridges by bigger trucks.
- While adding a sixth axle to a 97,000 pound truck may mitigate pavement damage, it will increase bridge damage.

# TRUCK SIZE & WEIGHT ISSUES: UNDERPAYMENT

- The federal government already subsidizes heavy truck operations \$1.9 billion annually. The subsidy of state and local governments is nearly double that. This is because the most common truck on the road today (a five-axle 80,000 pound single) pays only 80% of its costs and 97,000-pound six-axle singles pay only half of their costs. *Addendum to the 1997 Federal Highway Cost Allocation Study Final Report*, US Department of Transportation, 2000.
- To cover the full federal cost responsibility of 97,000-pound six-axle trucks, operators of such trucks would need to pay an additional \$1.17 (in 2007 dollars) per gallon fuel tax. Even this additional amount would not recover the state and local share of truck underpayment nor the additional bridge costs attributable to these trucks. Calculations based on disaggregate tables from *Addendum to the 1997 Federal Highway Cost Allocation Study*, 2000.
- According to the Federal Highway Administration, 80,000 pound trucks only pay for 80% of the damage they cause highways and bridges. 97,000 pound trucks would only cover 50% of those costs.

# TRUCK SIZE & WEIGHT ISSUES: RAIL DIVERSION

- Increases in truck size and weight have never led to fewer trucks on the road. For example, truck trailer lengths increased from 40 feet to 53 feet between 1980 and 1995. During this same period of time, rail merchandise traffic declined 29% while truck VMT grew by 56% (33% faster than GDP) – despite claims that truck VMT would decline as truck sizes increased.
- An increase in truck weight from the current 80,000-pound limit to 97,000 pounds could reduce overall short line traffic by 17%. *Estimating the Competitive Effects of Larger Trucks on Rail Freight Traffic*, Carl Martland, (Senior Research Associate, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology), 2007.
- Increasing truck weights to 97,000 pounds would divert nearly 19% of Class I traffic. This diversion would result in nearly 8 million more truckloads of freight on our highways. *Estimating the Competitive Effects of Larger Trucks on Rail Freight Traffic*, Carl Martland, (Research Affiliate, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology), 2010.
- The US Department of Transportation concluded that it is unlikely railroads would be able to increase their rates to make up for the resulting rail diversion and would be forced to choose between shrinking their systems and deferring maintenance, which would negatively impact rail service. *Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study*, US Department of Transportation, Vol. 3, pp. XI-13 and XI-19, 2000.

# TRUCK SIZE & WEIGHT ISSUES: PUBLIC OPINION

- A 2011 nationwide poll found that 72% of registered voters oppose allowing increased weights to 97,000 pounds. *National Telephone Survey of 804 Registered Voters*; Hart Research Associates; 2011.
- A 2003 nationwide public opinion poll found that 89% of the general public “strongly opposes larger trucks.” As explained by the pollster, “I can think of no other issue...in which so many American are united in their intensity either for or against a particular issue.” *Survey of 1,000 Registered Voters Across the United States*; Cole, Hargrave, Snodgrass, and Associates; 2011.
- A large and diverse group of organizations representing millions of Americans oppose increases including the National Troopers Coalition, the National Sheriffs’ Association, the National Association of Police Organizations, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Western States Sheriffs’ Association, AAA the National Association of Counties, the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and the Consumer Federation of America

# **TRUCK SIZE & WEIGHT ISSUES: INTERMODAL**

- Increasing size and weight would adversely affect intermodal efficiency as today's intermodal cars are designed for double stack operations. Increased weights would mean 25 to 33% of existing cars would be rendered obsolete.
- If truck weights are increased, many containers would be too heavy to double stack.
- Inability to double stack will lead to intermodal inefficiencies, higher costs for shippers, and increased fuel usage and emissions