

4201 E. Arkansas Ave., Rm. 227  
Denver, CO 80222

**DATE:** May 21, 2015

**TO:** Transportation Commission

**FROM:** Mark Imhoff, Director, Division of Transit & Rail

**SUBJECT:** La Junta Southwest Chief TIGER VII Application/\$1M Matching Funds

#### Purpose

To seek approval for a commitment of \$1M from the SB228 Transit funds for matching funds to the La Junta TIGER VII application for infrastructure repair along the Southwest Chief route through Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico.

#### Action

Approve a resolution committing \$1M in FY 2016 SB228 funds for the purpose above.

#### Background

The Southwest Chief is an Amtrak long distance route operating one trip/day each way from Chicago to Los Angeles. It traverses southeast Colorado with stations in Lamar, La Junta and Trinidad. The BN/Amtrak operating agreement expires at the end of 2015. The BN will maintain the track to a level commensurate with the freight demand, which is low through Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico; the resulting Amtrak operating speeds are not up to long distance passenger rail standards. Amtrak has looked at relocating the SWC, but has settled on an approach to work in partnership with the three states, local communities and BN to retain the current route. To this end, last year, Garden City, Kansas applied for and received a \$12.5M TIGER VI grant (total project \$24.3M); match funds included KDOT for \$3M, Amtrak for \$4M, BN for \$3M, Kansas communities for \$50k, and Colorado communities for \$250k. The project will repair the worst of the worst trackage mostly in Kansas, but also into eastern Colorado.

#### Details

The Colorado State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan (adopted by the TC in March, 2012) identifies, in the Short-Range Investment Program, "Enhancing existing Amtrak services and stations and preserve existing Amtrak trains in Colorado". The SWC also is identified as a need in the Statewide Transit Plan. Although limited ridership in Colorado (approximately 13,000 boardings and alightings/year), the SWC is part of the Amtrak long distance route network which provides mobility and transportation connections to rural communities across the country.

A \$1M CDOT match for the La Junta TIGER VII application will potentially leverage, if awarded, \$4M from Amtrak, \$2M from the Burlington Northern Railway, \$1M from KDOT, and \$176K from local communities across Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico. The total match funding (\$8.176M) will be applied to a TIGER VII request of \$16M in federal funds (\$24M total project). The improvements will be apportioned across Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico based on the local match contributions; approximately 52% of the improvements would be in Colorado.

With SB 228 funds nearly certain for FY 2016, and approximately \$10M for transit, DTR will recommend that those funds be used for:

- Bustang capital improvements (Park-and-Rides and additional buses) for service expansion.
- Rural regional bus service start-up capital needs (buses and Park-and-Rides), to be operated by CDOT, and connecting rural communities to urban centers for "essential services"; medical, business, shopping and other trip purposes. Federal 5311(f) funds would be the primary source for operations and maintenance; supplemented by the remaining FASTER Transit Statewide operating pool.

If the Transportation Commission approves \$1M of the FY 2016 SB 228 funds as match for the La Junta SW Chief TIGER VII application, \$9M would remain for the projects listed above; and the full \$10M if La Junta is unsuccessful in their TIGER VII application.



Key Benefits (if applicable)

A \$1M CDOT match for the La Junta TIGER VII application will potentially leverage, if awarded, \$4M from Amtrak, \$2M from the Burlington Northern Railway, \$1M from KDOT, \$176K from local communities across Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico, and up to \$16M in federal funds.

Options and Recommendations (if applicable)

It is recommended that the Transportation Commission approve the use of \$1M in FY 2016 SB228 Transit funds as match for the La Junta Southwest Chief TIGER VII application. If La Junta is unsuccessful, the funds will remain in the SB228 Transit pool.

If the Transportation Commission declines the use of SB228 funds for the La Junta TIGER VII application, the funds will remain in the SB228 Transit pool for other strategic projects.

Next Steps (if applicable)

The TIGER VII Pre-Application was submitted on May 4, 2015. The final Application will be submitted on June 5, 2015.

Attachments

Resolution



**Resolution Number TC –**

Instructing the Department to commit \$1M in FY 2016 SB228 Transit funds to the City of La Junta for their TIGER VII Southwest Chief application as matching funds.

**WHEREAS**, the State Freight & Passenger Rail Plan, adopted by the Transportation Commission in March, 2012, identifies, in the Short-Range Investment Program, preserving existing Amtrak trains in Colorado; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2014 the State Legislature passed HB 1161 creating the Southwest Chief Rail Line Economic Development, Rural Tourism, and Infrastructure Repair and Maintenance Commission in the Department of Transportation; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2014 the City of Garden City, Kansas was awarded a TIGER VI grant to repair the Southwest Chief track mainly in Kansas and into eastern Colorado; and

**WHEREAS**, a Notice of Funding Availability was issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) on April 2 for the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery Discretionary Grant Program (also known as TIGER VII); and

**WHEREAS**, pre-applications for the TIGER VII discretionary grant program were due to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation on May 4, 2015 and final applications are due on June 5, 2015; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of La Junta is applying for a TIGER VII discretionary grant for the repair of track on the Amtrak Southwest Chief route through Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico; \$24M total project with \$8.176 in local match (including CDOT for \$1M); and

**WHEREAS**, the City of La Junta has matching fund commitments from Amtrak for \$4M, the Burlington Northern Railway for \$2M, the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) for \$1M, and local communities across Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico for \$186K collectively.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, the Department will commit \$1M in FY 2016 SB228 Transit funds to the City of La Junta for their TIGER VII Southwest Chief application as matching funds; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, if the City of La Junta is unsuccessful in securing a TIGER VII grant, the CDOT funds remain in the FY 2016 SB228 Transit pool.