

## **Alamosa Workshop/ Open House Meeting Notes – September 1, 2011**

**Please provide us with your comments by October 14, 2011. Comments received at the Open Houses and Workshops, and via email and letters will be considered and used to help refine goals, objectives and priorities. CDOT does not intend to address each comment individually but all comments will be considered, included in the appendix of the report with a response provided as to how information was considered in the course of the study.**

### **Questions:**

- Would re-opening freight rail service into the Leadville area eliminate future truck traffic from the proposed re-opening of the Climax mine for the proposed mining of gold and silver?
- Will the State Rail Plan discuss the future of the Tennessee Pass rail line that has been out of service since 1998?
- Will the State Rail Plan prioritize rural projects differently than urban projects?

### **Comments:**

- Short Line railroads are a very important sector of the San Luis Valley's economy. If the Short Lines lose business, the entire Valley suffers. Short Line railroads provide 400 jobs in the San Luis Valley.
- The State Rail Plan should propose programs that strengthen short line railroads whenever possible. Stronger Short Lines railroads attract even better businesses to the San Luis Valley.
- The connection between the San Luis and Rio Grande Railroad and the UP Railroad at Walsenburg needs to be improved.
- The shipments of potatoes, grain and perlite make money for the Short Line railroads. Increased freight volume is what will keep the Short Lines viable. The tourism services create considerable goodwill but are not profitable.
- There is considerable excess capacity into the San Luis Valley for additional business.
- The State Rail Plan should oppose the removal of the Amtrak Southwest Chief from Colorado as a significant number of jobs in La Junta and Trinidad would be lost. Amtrak has estimated that it may take \$200 million for that route (Newton, KS; La Junta; Trinidad; and Albuquerque) to be upgraded and saved as an Amtrak route. A three-state meeting with Amtrak is anticipated to be held in the near future.
- If the Towner Line is sold and scrapped, the revenues should be utilized for programs to improve other Short Lines in the state.
- The Sand Dunes National Park and the San Luis and Rio Grande Railroad should create a steam engine narrow gauge train providing access to the Park. This would be a great economic development effort that would benefit the San Luis Valley.
- A "dinner train" between Alamosa and Creede would generate additional tourism in the San Luis Valley.

- Re-instating regularly scheduled rail passenger service between Alamosa and Pueblo would benefit the San Luis Valley.
- The San Luis Central Railroad would benefit greatly if they could improve their refrigerated car fleet. New state-of-the-art refrigerated rail cars, owned by the UP and BNSF, cost approximately \$250,000 each.
- One semi-truck causes damage to roads and bridges equal to 5,000 passenger vehicles.
- Railroads are more energy efficient than trucks. A round trip San Luis and Rio Grande freight train between Alamosa and Walsenburg uses only 400 gallons of diesel fuel. Trucks moving the equivalent amount of freight would use considerably more fuel.
- The City of Alamosa should consider sharing the railroad right-of-way through Alamosa for widening US 160 through the city. Different concepts related to improving this highway have been evaluated for the last 20 + years.
- The State Rail Plan needs to be flexible enough to respond to “good ideas” that may come along.
- There should be ways in which citizens can contribute to transportation improvements if they believe in the projects.
- The San Luis Valley is discussing building a “Super Shed”. This concept would be similar to the Yakima Valley in Washington where the agricultural harvest is hauled/stored and consolidated in one area to provide more efficient transportation. It would be critical that such a concept in the San Luis Valley have access to the Short Line rail network.
- The State Rail Plan should be a corridor-based plan, not just a project-focused plan.
- There is potential for new mining operations in the vicinity of Creede which could enhance Short Line business.