



Stakeholder Coalition Meeting 1

An Introduction: Southwest Chief Thru-Car Alternatives Analysis

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Southwest Chief Alternatives Analysis is an ongoing project to understand a range of potential service options for passenger rail in Southeast Colorado. The options being considered are known as alternatives and will include operational strategies as well as capital investments—or the changes to physical infrastructure—needed to support expanded service.

This passenger rail service would offer direct connections—or thru-car service—between the cities of La Junta, Pueblo, and Colorado Springs, connecting these communities with Amtrak’s existing Southwest Chief service between Chicago and Los Angeles.

GOALS

The major goals of the Project include:

- Understanding potential environmental impacts of these investments (by completing pre-National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and documentation),
- Identifying a preliminary Purpose and Need Statement to guide decision-making,
- Developing a preliminary range of alternatives in line with the Purpose and Need, and
- Preparing for additional documentation that would be required for federal funding under NEPA.

SCHEDULE

The team kicked off the Project in the spring of 2021 and is scheduled to complete the analysis in the autumn of 2022. A detailed schedule below highlights the different phases of the Project:

1. Are the project overview, goals, and schedule of the clear?

Yes No

2. What else would you like to learn more about?






























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Introductions: Stakeholder Coalition Members

Welcome Coalition Members

Organizations that have been invited to the SW Chief AA Stakeholder Coalition are listed below. Take a look and see which organizations are participating, and which locations and sectors are represented.

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|
|  Action 22 Geography Southern Colorado Focus Public Policy |  Amtrak Geography U.S. Focus Passenger Rail Service |  US Air Force Academy Geography Pueblo Focus Military |  BNSF Geography U.S. Focus Freight Railroad |  CDOT Geography Colorado Focus Transportation |
|  Colorado Springs Geography Colorado Springs Focus Local Government |  CO Springs Chamber & EDC Geography Colorado Springs Focus Economic Development |  ColoRail Geography Colorado Focus Passenger Rail & Transit |  CO Springs Downtown Geography Colorado Springs Focus Community Development |  CSU Pueblo Geography Pueblo Focus Education |
|  El Paso County Geography El Paso County Focus Local Government |  Fort Carson Geography Colorado Springs Focus Military |  Fountain Geography Fountain Focus Local Government |  Federal Rail Administration Geography U.S. Focus Rail |  City of La Junta Geography La Junta Focus Local Government |
|  La Junta Chamber Geography La Junta Focus Economic Development |  La Junta Transit Geography La Junta Focus Transit Service |  Mountain Metro Geography Colorado Springs Focus Transit Service |  Otero Junior College Geography La Junta Focus Education |  Pikes Peak Area COG Geography Pikes Peak Area Focus Public Policy |
|  City of Pueblo Geography Pueblo Focus Local Government |  Greater Pueblo Chamber Geography Pueblo Focus Economic Development |  Pueblo County Geography Pueblo County Focus Local Government |  Pueblo Memorial Airport Geography South Colorado Focus Airport |  Pueblo Transit Geography Pueblo Focus Transit |
|  University of Colorado Colorado Springs Geography Colorado Springs Focus Education |  Union Pacific Geography U.S. Focus Freight Railroad | | | |

3. Are there other organizations you think should participate in the Stakeholder Coalition?



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Roles and Responsibilities of the Stakeholder Coalition

Stakeholder Coalition's Who, What + Why

The SW Chief Stakeholder Coalition consists of experts, advocates, and community members that are charged with providing input on the project's processes and outcomes. Input from the Stakeholder Coalition will be included in the overall project documentation and are a key consideration for decision-making by the project team.

Role of Coalition Members

The primary responsibilities of coalition members are to provide input on project-related issues and serve as liaisons between the SW Chief AA project and members of your community.

Stakeholder Coalition Members' Responsibilities

- Share information about the project with your community members
- Provide locally-focused input on the project
- Support locally-based community engagement activities
- Attend coalition meetings and participate with "touchpoints" such as virtual surveys and activities through the project (approximately four virtual or in-person meetings and two touchpoints)
- Select one representative from your organization who will be able to speak for your organization and lead coalition activities during and between meetings

4. Do you agree with the Stakeholder Coalition's Roles and Responsibilities?

Yes No

5. Do you have any additional questions?



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Purpose & Need, Pt. 1

Using Purpose & Need in the Project

One of the first deliverables to comply with the future NEPA process is the development of a Purpose & Need Statement (P&N). The P&N describes the purpose of the project and the needs the project seeks to address. All decisions moving forward will need to meet the P&N.

Purpose of the Proposed Project

The purpose of the Southwest Chief Thru-Car Alternatives Analysis Project is to identify the necessary operational and infrastructure requirements to provide passenger rail service along the BNSF Pueblo and Union Pacific (UP) Colorado Springs Subdivisions (the “corridor”) between La Junta and Pueblo and Colorado Springs, by connecting to the Amtrak Southwest Chief service (Amtrak Trains 3 and 4) at the La Junta station, with an eventual connection to future passenger rail service along the entire Colorado Front Range.

Need for the Proposed Project

Five overall needs have been identified for the Southwest Chief Thru-Car Alternatives Analysis Project. Two are seen as primary needs and three are seen as secondary needs:

Primary Needs

Need to provide transit service to additional travel markets along the southern Colorado Front Range to enhance regional and intercity connectivity:

Amtrak’s Southwest Chief route operates daily service between Chicago and Los Angeles. While overall ridership on the route has declined in recent years from about 355,000 total passengers in 2012 to about 331,000 in 2018, boardings have increased at the La Junta station from approximately 6,500 in 2012 to about 7,300 in 2018. The increase in boardings in La Junta (as well as a similar increase in Trinidad) demonstrates that demand exists from residents in southern Colorado to travel via Amtrak. Connecting Pueblo and Colorado Springs to Amtrak’s national passenger rail network will help meet travel demand for long-distance travelers in southern Colorado as well as passengers from other cities along the Southwest Chief route to Pueblo and Colorado Springs.

Need to provide additional safe, reliable, and efficient travel choices in the southern Colorado Front Range (along I-25 and US 50), particularly with projected changes in population and employment:

Relying only on existing roadways creates risk and uncertainty due to increasing congestion, periodic road closures, natural disasters, and weather events. Providing an

additional, reliable travel alternative to existing roadways would support resident access to jobs, shopping, recreation, and health care facilities. The Colorado State Demography Office projects that El Paso County (Colorado Springs) and Pueblo County (Pueblo) will grow in population in 2020 from about: 731,000 and 168,000 residents today to 950,000 and 197,000, respectively, by 2040. Employment is also projected to grow from 381,000 and 72,000 jobs in 2020, to 483,000 and 86,000 jobs, respectively, by 2040. Meanwhile, Otero County (La Junta) is projected to lose population from about 18,000 in 2020 to 16,000 in 2040 and employment from 7,900 jobs in 2020 to 7,300 in 2040. The nearest major medical facilities for smaller rural communities such as La Junta are in Pueblo and Colorado Springs. These medical facilities and hospitals include Parkview Hospital (Pueblo), UCHealth Memorial Hospitals (Central and North), the St. Francis Medical Center, and Children's Hospital (Colorado Springs).



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Purpose & Need, Pt. 2

Secondary Needs

Need to support tourism and economic development goals of local jurisdictions through attracting out of state visitors and transit station development and/or enhancement: Sitting at the base of Pikes Peak, Colorado Springs is home to some of the state's most popular tourist destinations including Garden of the Gods, the Broadmoor Hotel, the Colorado Springs Olympic Training Center, and the U.S. Air Force Academy. Pueblo is home to the Pueblo Riverwalk, the Union Avenue Historic Commercial District, many outdoor recreational opportunities, and the Colorado State Fair. Tourism in the Pikes Peak region brought 23 million visitors to the area in 2018 (10 million of which were overnight visitors, spending 3.2 nights on average and generating \$1.7 billion for the local economy). Approximately one-quarter of the existing Southwest Chief riders at the three existing Colorado stations (La Junta, Lamar, and Trinidad) are out-of-state leisure visitors. Providing a fixed connection to the tourist attractions of Pueblo and Colorado Springs for these travelers and others with similar trip purposes could boost ridership and revenues for Amtrak as well as tourist dollars for these local communities. Bringing rail passengers to Pueblo and Colorado Springs will add tourist dollars and encourage more development around stations as the state and Amtrak look at future passenger rail opportunities along the Front Range.

Need to Advance a longer-term passenger rail vision throughout Colorado:

The Amtrak Vision for Improving Transportation Across America, part of its Amtrak

Connects US initiative released in May 2021, shows that the company hopes to introduce passenger rail service along the Front Range between Pueblo and Fort Collins and potentially to Cheyenne, Wyoming. With potential increases in service frequency and ridership throughout a well-connected statewide rail system, the state could make progress in reaching its goal of significant greenhouse reductions. The Connects Us initiative also helps the state advance its legislative charge to deliver passenger rail along the Front Range with the passage of SB21-238 to create the Front Range Passenger Rail District (to plan, design, finance, construct, operate, and maintain a passenger rail system along the Front Range). In addition, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) is coordinating with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) on a Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Grant to develop a service development plan for potential future Front Range Passenger Rail as a next step in corridor development.

Need to provide safety improvements and modifications to the rail corridor for the introduction of passenger rail services between La Junta, Pueblo and Colorado Springs:

Currently, positive train control (PTC) does not exist along the La Junta to Pueblo segment. Also, several existing at-grade railroad crossings between La Junta and Colorado Springs do not meet the standards necessary for implementing passenger rail. Substandard signaling also exists along portions of the corridor throughout the study area. Additionally, addressing these deficiencies would also provide safety benefits to the existing freight rail service as well. Finally, freight rail capacity and flexibility will need to be maintained while also introducing passenger rail service in this corridor.

6. Is the use of the P&N in this project clear?

- Yes
- No
- Sort of

7. Do you support the Draft Purpose & Need?

- Yes
- No
- Some of it, but I'd like to discuss it further