



Jill Gaebler, Chair
Southwest Chief & Front Range
Passenger Rail Commission

December 18, 2020

To: Town of Johnstown

Re: **Call to Action**

To Whom It May Concern,

We know people are excited about the prospect of passenger rail along the Front Range! We want to keep our important local partners informed on how the Rail Commission intends to move forward with planning around the Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission's (Rail Commission) effort to complete its 2017 charge from the State Legislature to facilitate the development of Front Range Passenger Rail (FRPR).

The Legislature provided \$2.5 million in funding in July 2018 for the Rail Commission to initiate a planning effort that included a stakeholder engagement process, conducting preliminary alternatives analysis, and investigating potential governance options for Front Range Passenger Rail moving into the future. The first stage of these planning efforts will be complete by year's end.

The Rail Commission has engaged with the general public utilizing surveys, polls and an online public meeting over the course of the past 14 months. All three of these have indicated a willingness from Front Range residents to help/partner/support the funding for the future of passenger rail!

A significant accomplishment for the Rail Commission was receiving two Consolidated Railroad Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) grants from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). The first CRISI grant, focuses on analyzing ways to expand the current Southwest Chief service to Pueblo and Colorado Springs and will be underway in early 2021. The second grant, a 2020 CRISI grant, is for rail traffic modeling and further defining a potential rail service plan which could begin in the second half of 2021.

Additionally, there is cautious optimism around Amtrak's portion of the re-authorization of the federal transportation funding bill. Amtrak's proposal would create a new \$25 billion Corridor Development Program. Amtrak indicated publicly that the Colorado Front Range Corridor between Pueblo and Fort Collins is their #1 priority nationally. We will continue to track this when the new Congress reconvenes.

The FRPR project is planning on submitting a Notice of Intent to enter into NEPA in the future, and CDOT is helping to move the planning process into that NEPA phase.

Today, we are proposing two things for your consideration:

- The first, speak with your legislative lobbyist or keep in touch with your elected officials about passenger rail. Ask them to keep their ears open to future legislative proposals on passenger rail and work with the Rail Commission, CDOT, and all our stakeholders to make sure the message continues to be heard.
- Second, the Rail Commission asks for your consideration of future matching funds for an upcoming ask to the USDOT for future CRISI funding for the FRPR project's future NEPA process. Such commitments from local matching partners can be a determining factor when evaluating competing grant applications.

Thank you on behalf of the entire Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill Gaebler".

Jill Gaebler, Chair
Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail
Commission