ABOUT COLORAIL

• FOUNDED IN 1989 BY DENVER SAVE OUR STATION TEAM
• ACTIVE IN T-REX, FAST TRACKS, AMTRAK
• CURRENT CAMPAIGNS
  • SUSTAIN AND IMPROVE AMTRAK’S SW CHIEF
  • RESTORE, SUSTAIN AND IMPROVE SKI TRAIN SERVICE TO WINTER PARK
  • SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF FRONT RANGE PASSENGER RAIL
What Does ColoRail Do?

• Identifies and defines issues facing rail and transit passengers in Colorado
• Develops strategies and creates campaigns to go after and resolve the issues
• Enlists leaders to lead the campaigns
• Sustains the campaigns over time and celebrates accomplishments
Successful Campaign: Winter Park Express

- Issue – Restore Ski Train (ended in 2009)
- Develop Business Case and Plan
- Get Champions on Board
- WP / ColoRail hosted Amtrak brass and bus trip to Denver
- Gain Political Support
- Planning and Communication
- Support Operations
Save the Chief!
SAVE THE CHIEF!

NOTES FROM A LONG, HARD CAMPAIGN

RAILROAD PASSENGER CAR ALLIANCE

JANUARY 18, 2020
REROUTING OR DISCONTINUANCE OF THE AMTRAK SOUTHWEST CHIEF

• 632 miles of track between Newton, KS, and Lamy, NM, in disrepair, particularly in western Kansas and southeastern Colorado

• Amtrak contract for BNSF Railway maintenance to Class 4 standard expires in January, 2016

• BNSF traffic over the route has declined steeply since the original contract was executed

• Amtrak and BNSF pegged the increased Amtrak share for repairs and maintenance at $200 million over ten years

AT ISSUE
Current (blue) and Possible Alternative (yellow) Route
OK, SO HOW DO WE SAVE THE CHIEF?

COMMON SENSE

PERSISTENTLY APPLIED!
We got the lay of the land

We gathered the facts of the matter or what’s at stake
- Ridership – local and out of state
- Employment and payroll
- Economic impact
- Opportunities

We identified people with a stake in the matter, pro and con
- Who cares and why?
- Who doesn’t care and why not?
- Who should care and why?
We set goals and developed strategy including communications ideas.

**Given what’s at stake, what do we have to do?**

- In spite of the slogan, it’s not just “Save the Train”
  - Protect current economic value – employment, tourists, mobility
  - Save the route
  - Provide future opportunities such as tourism and freight
- History and romance of the train and route, the “magic”
- Rural mobility and stories
- Economic impacts and forecasts
We organized

- Formed or identified advocacy team(s) in each state
- Built initial local and grassroots support along the line Spring and Summer 2011
- Created local level *Southwest Chief Coalition* at La Junta November, 2011
  - Set goals, identified key players, pro and con, developed first strategy iteration
  - Set initial ground rules on leadership and funding

Committed to a continuous campaign
SOUTHWEST CHIEF COALITION

A sustained process convened and led at the community level to keep the Southwest Chief on its current route.

Specific assignments, timelines and accountability will be developed.
We executed the strategy

Briefed local leaders, obtained more resolutions and recruited more local “champions”

City council meetings
County commission meetings

Created a more robust business model

Enlisted support from tourism venue operators
Contacted Amtrak Vacations and private rail car owners
We executed the strategy - continued

Briefed local media

Created “messages” for key constituencies
- History and nostalgia - “Train of the Stars,” Over a century
- Economic contributions and opportunities such as excursion models

Joined private rail excursion to test ideas and examples
We executed the strategy - continued

- Identified and recruited the next level of “champions” as the issue evolved
  - Took local leaders on inspection trips on the train with luncheons at Las Vegas depot next to the historic La Castaneda
- Established a close working relationship with Amtrak as we developed trust, worked to develop same with BNSF
- Kept in close contact with our congressional delegations
- Received Amtrak proposal in April, 2012
- Kansas tried for 2013 TIGER Grant Funding but failed
Enlisting support and Champions is key. For example: SW Chief Leadership Excursions
We revised the strategy in 2013

Key congressional meetings led to “new reality” due to the unique situation: *its simple, do you want to save the train or not?*

Identified and recruited a higher level of “champions” as the new strategy evolved – Colorado effort:

- Legislative on inspection trips on the SW Chief
- Identified models for a state approach to the issue
- Created a strong relationship with leaders in both caucuses and helped draft bi-partisan legislation

Kicked off the new campaign at a *Save the Chief* meeting in Pueblo with our new legislative, local government and public supporters.
We revised the strategy in 2013

- Campaigned strongly for new legislation
  - Big turnouts at hearings
  - ColoRail Facebook and Website updates, NARP updates
  - Bounce system to recruit and alert supporters – greater than 3500!
  - Swamped key votes to turn a 9-9 tie into a 12 – 6 victory!

- Joined 2014 TIGER VI Grant application with Kansas to reduce the state out-year burden, raised over $250,000 over the Easter weekend Grant was approved!
TIGER 6

Requested: $14,969,963
Awarded: Grant $12,469,963, Matching $9,300,000
TOTAL: $21,769,963

Program Progress
- 46.9 miles of rail relay (completed)
- 12 grade crossings (in progress)
- 23 turnouts (in progress)
- 14.4 miles of track raised from 60 mph to 79 mph
- Remainder of track to receive speed increase after surfacing, crossings, and turnouts complete
TIME FOR LEGISLATION!

• Needed official recognition for our efforts
• 2014 Southwest Chief Commission enacted and receives local funding
• 2017 Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission enacted with roll over funding
• 2018 State appropriates funding for Commission
What have we accomplished?

- 3 State Coalition including 6 U.S. Senators (CO, KS, NM)
- 31 Resolutions of Support
- 3 TIGER Grants - $75 + million
- CRISI Grant - $9.5 million
- 3 Pieces of Legislation passed in Colorado: 2012, 2014 and 2017 creating and expanding a Commission

But we are only halfway there…
Crisis Identified at 2018 NARP (RPA) Reception in Washington, DC and Chicago Meetings

Pivotal Personal Meeting with U.S. Senator yields Congressional champion, other Senators enlisted

Submit Draft Congressional letter for consideration
Battle with Amtrak is Joined

- Bustitution Plan is unveiled and ridiculed in social media and Congressional campaign
- "Three State Letter" sent to Amtrak by U.S. Senators
- RPA joins the lead with ColoRail and Commission to execute a THUD strategy
- Is Amtrak trying to undermine New Mexico situation?
Impressive in the desert

Few places in American railroading can claim to be unique. In a day when standardization is paramount, a railroad, a locomotive, or a route that is truly one of a kind is unheard of. But one exists in northern New Mexico on the BNSF Railway route across Raton Pass.

As Chip and Leslie Soyer describe on page 54, Raton Pass is a three capsule of railroading that is impressive in the desert and thrilling in the mountains between Albuquerque, N.M., and Trinidad, Colo.

The shoot for a short film of Amtrak's Southwest Chief rolling on joint rail near Las Vegas. The struggle on a 3.5-percent grade to reach the summit at Raton. The ultra-narrow passes and searchlight signals. They're in the heart of railroading that is at least 60 years out of date.

But time is restless, especially on the railroad, and it is time for Amtrak to decide whether to spend sufficient to upgrade this route with the help of other government agencies or install a new bridge to replace the Raton and Glacier pass segments of this Chicago-Los Angeles route. To take the cheap and easy way out is disrespectful to this historic portion of the original Arcadian, Topa & Santa Fe main line. If there's a passenger to be ran this way between Chicago and L.A., it needs to be by train. And all the diggers in "all the way — with a bus in the middle of some of the best scenery around?" It's "all the way with Santa Fe!"

As pointed out in my blog post earlier this year at www.Trainblogging.com, Amtrak needs to decide whether the Southwest Chief and its other long distance trains are cruise trains or transportation. If they're just cruising, they need plenty of amenities. If they're for transportation, they need to serve local communities that have no other public mobility choices.

I hope that Raton gets rebuilt and the Chief survives intact. They are great parts of American railroading that we all should treasure, no matter what the signal system, the rail type, or grade.

Westbound Southwest Chief splits the semaphore signals near Springer, N.M., in March 2018. How much longer this scene will be repeated is not certain.

JM Winin
WHAT ROLE CAN RPCA PLAY?

Contact political and economic leaders

Expert advice from users of the route

Your better ideas!?
QUESTIONS?