

NM, KS and CO Senators Honored for Bipartisan Work in Saving SWC

America's Passengers Recognize Senators Bennet, Gardner, Heinrich, Moran, Roberts and Udall for Role in Keeping Train Running

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Washington, D.C.—America's rail passengers honored a bipartisan coalition of six senators with the Golden Spike Award today for the crucial role they played in saving the *Southwest Chief* train, and for their service to the tens of millions of Americans who depend upon a national train network. A Rail Passengers Association study found that the Senators' actions preserves \$180 million in economic activity in Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico each year.

"The nation's rail passengers are exceptionally grateful to Senators Bennet, Gardner, Heinrich, Moran, Roberts and Udall for their actions to save the *Southwest Chief*, particularly those who live and work in Kansas, New Mexico and Colorado," said Rail Passengers President Jim Mathews. "Thanks to their decisive work, we've seen a complete defeat of the proposal to replace the train with a bus bridge, and the communities that depend on the *Southwest Chief* can rest easy knowing the train's future is on solid ground."

"I'm so proud that we came together in bipartisan fashion in the Senate to keep the *Southwest Chief* chugging along, and I'm grateful for this recognition from the Rail Passengers Association. This victory is a testament to what we can accomplish

when we reach across the aisle and work together to advance our common interests," **said Sen. Udall.** "Long distance passenger rail lines are absolutely critical to connecting towns and cities across the American West, especially in New Mexico. For many in New Mexico and beyond, the Southwest Chief is more than a railroad line; it's a journey through time—through the historic West—and a vital link between rural communities from Raton to Gallup. By ensuring a strong and stable future for this historic route, we'll create jobs, promote tourism, and boost economic development. As a member of the Senate Commerce and Appropriations Committees, I'll keep fighting for strong investments in transportation infrastructure that bolster the economy and link communities across the country."

"I am pleased to be awarded the Golden Spike award, along with my colleagues, for saving the Southwest Chief," **said Sen. Roberts.** "Preserving access to long-distance Amtrak routes and improving rail service is vital for those living in rural Kansas. I will continue working to ensure this route remains a priority for Amtrak."

"The Southwest Chief is a critical link for the many Kansans who rely on passenger rail to reach destinations around the country," **said Sen. Moran.** "I wish to extend my appreciation to members of the Rail Passengers Association for their steadfast advocacy to protect not only the Southwest Chief, but all rail transportation which plays such an important role in our economy and local communities. I look forward to continuing this close partnership, both with America's rail passengers and our bipartisan group of senators, to ensure a bright future for the Southwest Chief route."

"I'm proud to have helped lead the bipartisan coalition in the Senate to save the Southwest Chief. Every summer, the Southwest Chief brings thousands of Scouts from around the country to New Mexico's Philmont Scout Ranch and generates economic activity in communities throughout our state," **said Sen. Heinrich.** "I will continue fighting to protect this essential long-distance passenger rail service for our communities and ensure the long-term viability of the route."

"I'm honored to be recognized for my advocacy on behalf of the Southwest Chief, which is so important to rural communities in Southeastern Colorado," **said Sen. Gardner.** "I have been proud to work with my colleagues in the Senate and our

state and local partners to support the Southwest Chief over the past several years. Going forward, I'll continue my efforts to preserve the line and support Colorado's transportation priorities at the federal level."

"At our first Southwest Chief meeting years ago in La Junta, Colorado, we joined a coalition of community leaders and pledged to find the funding to keep the line running," **said Sen. Bennet**. "Amtrak's decision to uphold its commitment to match the TIGER grant is because of the dedication of these leaders and validates the importance of the Southwest Chief. This is a hard-fought win for rural communities whose economies rely on this route, and we'll continue working to make the investments in rural infrastructure that our kids and grandkids deserve."

As a result of the work of the Southwest Chief Senate coalition, the recently passed Fiscal Year 2019 budget included a set-aside for preservation work on the corridor, and Amtrak reversed their decision to withhold matching funding for a construction grant that will bring an additional \$26 million in upgrades. Taken together, this ensures a sustainable future for the service, which will continue to connect urban and rural communities together throughout the region.

Quick Facts on the Southwest Chief's Economic Benefits for Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico:

- **Generates \$180 million in annual economic activity**, including:
 - \$116.4 million in "Permanent Direct Economic Gains" each year, which includes spending on operations, tourists and the income from those visitors, and lower travel costs for families that live along the Southwest Chief route;
 - \$63.7 million in "Permanent Indirect Gains" each year, which includes reduced pollution, fewer highway fatalities, reduced highway maintenance and increased levels of tourism.
- **Will generate \$135 million in "Temporary Direct Economic Gains"** resulting from construction related to Positive Train Control (PTC), a safety technology mandated by the federal government that can remotely monitor and control of train's speed.
- The overall socio-economic benefits include:
 - **32 universities** that will keep their train service;
 - **47 hospitals** that will keep their train service
 - **130,000 fewer auto trips**, which would have been diverted onto roads that are four times more dangerous than the national average; and

- Retention of rail service along a stretch of the *Southwest Chief* route which has the lowest median income (\$35K) of the entire corridor.

About the Rail Passengers Association

The Rail Passengers Association, previously known as the National Association of Railroad Passengers, is the oldest and largest national organization speaking for the nearly 40 million users of passenger trains and rail transit. We have worked since 1967 to expand the quality and quantity of passenger rail in the U.S. Our mission is to work towards a modern, customer-focused national passenger train network that provides a travel choice Americans want. Our work is supported by more than 28,000 individual members nationwide.

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