



AMENDED

**CITY OF TRINIDAD
TRINIDAD, COLORADO**

The City Council of the City of Trinidad, Colorado,
will hold its regular Work Session on Tuesday, April 22, 2014
at 1:30 P.M.
in City Council Chambers at City Hall, Third Floor, City Hall

AGENDA

1. Petitions and Communications, Oral or Written
2. Doug Dowler and Edie McClish from SCEDD (Southern Colorado Economic Development District) to address Council regarding services SCEDD can offer to the City
3. Consideration of a Resolution modifying the restriction for use of the Trinidad landfill by Las Animas County businesses and residents
4. Consideration of financial support for the Rural Philanthropy Days event
5. Discussion regarding financial support and/or for the Garden City, KS, TIGER grant application for railroad track improvements for the Amtrak Southwest Chief route
6. Discussion regarding implementation date of the ordinance adjusting the City of Trinidad landfill fees
7. Discussion of other agenda items



CITY OF TRINIDAD, COLORADO
1876

Council Communication

City Council Meeting: April 22, 2014
Prepared: April 21, 2014
Dept. Head Signature: 
of Attachments: 2

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SUBJECT: Discussion and potential action regarding support for the Garden City, KS TIGER Grant application for rail road track improvements for the Amtrak SW Chief route.

Presenter: Tom Acre, City Manager

Recommended City Council Action: Staff recommends City Council approve the Resolution in support of the TIGER Grant application and authorize the Mayor to sign the letter of support committing funding in future budgets if the grant should be awarded.

Summary Statement: Garden City, KS is submitting an application for a TIGER Grant to fund rail improvements for a portion of the line utilized by Amtrak's SW Chief. The funding request is through the United States Department of Transportation and is specific to rural areas. Supporters of the SW Chief in Colorado have been working with Garden City, KS and the grant writer on how the SE Colorado Communities can provide support for the TIGER Grant.

In response the SE Colorado's effort to support the TIGER Grant application, Garden City, KS has asked us to become partners in the TIGER Grant application by committing to financial participate in the TIGER Grant project if it should be awarded. It is believed this will make the grant application stronger. This effort is being led by Pueblo County Commissioner Sal Pace and Jim Souby with Colorado Rail who have been reaching out to various elected officials and staff since an initial conference call on this past Friday. The goal is to come up with a commitment to the project of at least \$250,000 from Colorado to match Amtrak (\$4M), BNSF (\$2M), and Kansas DOT (\$3M). Efforts are being made requesting the State of Colorado to commit to funding as well. Commitments and commitments thus far include \$100,000 from Pueblo, a request from Mayor Reorda that Trinidad consider \$25,000, and pending commitments from of \$10,000 from La Junta, Lamar, Bent and Otero Counties. Staff has contacted Las Animas County to see of their interest in supporting this effort.

Expenditure Required: \$25,000

Source of Funds: 2015-2016 General Fund Budget

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Policy Issue: Support for the SW Chief TIGER Grant application and committing a portion of the 2015-2016 budget.

Alternative: City Council could elect to not support the TIGER Grant application and/or not to provide funds or determine a different level of funding.

Background Information: See attached information.



RESOLUTION NO.

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF TRINIDAD, COLORADO, ENDORSING EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN AMTRAK'S *SOUTHWEST CHIEF* PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE THROUGH THE CITY OF TRINIDAD, COLORADO

WHEREAS, the *Southwest Chief*, one of Amtrak's premier passenger rail services, serves southeastern Colorado, western Kansas, and northern New Mexico as it travels between Chicago and Los Angeles on a host railroad line of BNSF Railway ; and

WHEREAS, eastbound and westbound *Southwest Chief* trains stop in the City of Trinidad daily and serve approximately 13,000 Colorado passengers each year; and

WHEREAS, the *Southwest Chief* and its famous predecessors (such as the Santa Fe Railroad's fabled *Super Chief*) have served this route since the late 1880s; and

WHEREAS, the train is a key economic contributor to southeastern Colorado and to the City of Trinidad, providing a transportation link that is of growing importance and will likely become critical as our citizens age and rising energy prices curtail the attractiveness of driving and flying; and

WHEREAS, the route of the *Southwest Chief* through Colorado is threatened inasmuch as an alternative route is under consideration that would re-route trains south from Newton, Kansas, through the Texas Panhandle to New Mexico, entirely bypassing Colorado; and

WHEREAS, the ownership of the track in northern New Mexico is under dispute between that state and BNSF Railway; consequently BNSF Railway freight traffic on this route has declined, reducing maintenance and forcing Amtrak to run the *Southwest Chief* at lower speeds; and

WHEREAS, the *Southwest Chief's* overall trip time has increased from 41 hours in 1991 to approximately 55 hours today; and

WHEREAS, BNSF wants Amtrak to pay the costs of improvement and the maintenance costs for the route if the train is to resume its normal speed; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak estimates this could amount to \$200 million over ten (10) years, including \$94 million at the front-end to bring the line back up to standards across Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak has indicated that it would like to undertake this improvement because the route is scenic and well-traveled, but current fiscal circumstances may impact its ability to do so; and

WHEREAS, there are local developments (e.g., the New Elk Coal Mine) that hold promise of increasing BNSF Railway freight traffic over the next several years, thereby changing the maintenance equation from Trinidad to Las Animas and perhaps through Raton Pass.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TRINIDAD, COLORADO:

1. The City Council calls upon local and County government in southeastern Colorado to strongly endorse continuation of the Amtrak *Southwest Chief* route through Colorado.
2. The City Council calls upon the Governor of the State of Colorado to strongly endorse continuation of Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* route through Colorado.
3. The City Council calls upon the members of the legislature of the State of Colorado to strongly endorse continuation of Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* route through Colorado.
4. The City Council calls upon all local governments within the County of Las Animas to strongly endorse continuation of Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* route through Colorado.
5. The City Council calls upon the Board of Commissioners of Las Animas County to strongly endorse continuation of Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* route through Colorado.
6. The City Council calls upon representatives of Amtrak to strongly endorse continuation of Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* route through Colorado.
7. The City Council recommends that all community and civic leaders in southeastern Colorado connect with each other and their colleagues in western Kansas and northern New Mexico so that the three states can coordinate their efforts to protect the route of the Southwest Chief.

INTRODUCED, READ, AND ADOPTED this 22nd day of April, 2014.

CAROL BOLTON, Mayor Pro-Tem

ATTEST:

AUDRA GARRETT, City Clerk



City of Trinidad
Office of the City Manager
P.O. Box 880
Trinidad, Colorado 81082
Telephone (719) 846-9843
Fax (719) 846-4140
www.trinidad.co.gov

April 21, 2014

Mr. Anthony Foxx
Secretary of Transportation
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590
Re: Letter of Support – Southwest Chief Route Refurbishment TIGER VI Application

Dear Secretary Foxx:

Amtrak's Southwest Chief is a key transcontinental passenger train serving major cities and rural communities along its route from Chicago to Los Angeles. In many communities such as ours, the train is the only alternative to lengthy, often dangerous automobile trips. Furthermore, the train is a key contributor to our economy and an untapped resource for our growing tourism efforts. We envision many more tourists stopping to visit southern Colorado's many attractions, including scenic rail lines, bird watching opportunities and historical sites along the Santa Fe Trail such as Bent's Old Fort and Mesa Verde National Park. The line also serves as an important freight corridor across southeastern Colorado and western Kansas.

We need to get the tracks repaired and/or replaced and retain passenger rail service in this region because many of our communities are very isolated and it is several hours' trip by car to regional airports. Amtrak is part of the lifeblood of our communities. After all, families in these areas have relied on the Southwest Chief all their lives.

The repairs and improvements to this rail line funded by this grant will permit the continuation of the Southwest Chief in Southeastern Colorado as well as western Kansas and Northern New Mexico. Without track repairs, the train will have to be rerouted or more likely, abandoned. This would be a terrible blow to the communities on the entire route, not to mention the national network.

The track to be repaired will be segments most in need of repair as determined by the BNSF Railway, in consultation with Amtrak and the community applicants. It is anticipated that over 50 miles of track will be serviced by this grant, significantly improving the suitability of the route

for passenger rail. The small portion if this track in Colorado will set the stage for future support. Of great importance, upon completion of repairs BNSF railway has committed to maintain the route for FRA Class IV service for 20 years. This commitment is a change from their previous commitments and is of tremendous importance to Amtrak and our community. It more than compensates for the grant expenditures.

The safety and energy/sustainability advantages of passenger rail service are well documented and will apply to each community along the route. The mobility advantages are likewise critical.

With this in mind, please accept this letter of support and commitment for funding for the referenced TIGER VI in the amount of \$25,000. We urge the USDOT to fund this request because we strongly believe this project not only meets but directly matches the TIGER VI primary selection criteria and goals of this federal grant opportunity by addressing safety, multi-modal transportation and congestion issues along this heavily congested corridor.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Reorda
Mayor, City of Trinidad

cc: Members of Trinidad City Council
Tom Acre, City Manager