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Lake County Board of County Commissioners
Lake County, Colorado
505 Harrison Avenue
PO Box 964
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Dear Lake County Board of County Commissioners:

As a private citizen, I write you today to convey my enthusiastic support for the proposed reactivation of the historic Tennessee Pass Subdivision rail corridor owned by Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), that links the existing BNSF/UPRR Joint Line in Pueblo, Colorado with the UPRR mainline in Dotsero, Colorado. Although freight trains have not regularly ran over the Tennessee Pass railroad right-of-way in 23 years, it remains an active rail corridor, never having been granted abandoned status by the Surface Transportation Board. This historic railroad right-of-way has been active for at least 140 years, dating to the original Denver & Rio Grande Railroad having laid track along the length of the Arkansas River up from Pueblo in the late 1870's/early 1880's to the myriad mines and smelters of the famous and incredibly productive Leadville Mining District.

It is a common and longstanding goal of the Colorado Transportation Commission, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Colorado Legislature, and the Governor of Colorado to eventually acquire and rehabilitate the Tennessee Pass line for the operation of both freight and passenger service. This goal has been identified as a statewide priority for over 20 years, dating back at least to the June 2000 Colorado Transportation Commission Policy Directive 1607, and subsequently appearing in numerous statewide and regional multimodal transportation planning documents in the public record.

From page fifty (50) of the 2018 Colorado Freight & Passenger Rail Plan: *"In 2000, the Colorado Transportation Commission approved a Rail Corridor Preservation Policy, also known as Policy Directive 1607. Policy Directive 1607, updated in 2014, enumerates rationale and support for rail corridor preservation and establishes criteria to identify state significant rail corridors. CDOT maintains a list of State Significant Rail Corridors, provides updates to the Colorado Transportation Commission, and tracks corridors at risk of potential abandonment. Currently, several lines are considered of statewide significance, with CDOT monitoring these for potential acquisition or preservation... The Tennessee Pass Line is identified as a State Significant Rail Corridor because of its*

potential to carry both passengers and freight and because it is the only existing trans-mountain alternative in Colorado to the Moffat Tunnel Line, which often runs near capacity... The Tennessee Pass Line may be used as an alternate route as trans-mountain rail demand grows due to increased development on the Western Slope or if the Moffat Tunnel were damaged or closed for any reason. The line provides critical network redundancy and opportunities for alternative uses."

Furthermore, page 110 of the same 2018 Colorado Freight & Passenger Rail Plan states "In June 2000, the Colorado Transportation Commission first approved a Rail Corridor Preservation Policy, also known as Policy Directive 1607. Based on this Policy Directive, CDOT identified two State Significant Rail Corridors for preservation: the Tennessee Pass Line and the Fort Collins Branch Line. These corridors are noted in an annual report by CDOT to the Transportation Legislative Review Committee. No specific projects are identified and no funds are currently allocated for the preservation of either the Tennessee Pass Line or the Fort Collins Branch Line... CDOT will continue to monitor activities related to rail corridors and rail assets for the foreseeable future."

(<https://www.codot.gov/programs/transitandrail/plans-studies-reports/statewidetransitplan/2018-colorado-freight-and-passenger-rail-plan.pdf>)

The most recent (September 2020) CDOT Senate Bill 37 Report, the REPORT TO THE TRANSPORTATION LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE ON RAIL ABANDONMENTS AND THE POTENTIAL FOR RAIL LINE ACQUISITIONS states on page seven (7): "In June 2000, the Colorado Transportation Commission first approved a Rail Corridor Preservation Policy, also known as Policy Directive 1607. The policy directive was updated, and approved by the CDOT Transportation Commission in August 2014. The updated policy directive states the reasons why rail transportation is important to Colorado. In order to facilitate a more comprehensive examination of which rail corridors are of interest to the State, the Transportation Commission directed CDOT staff to identify State Significant Rail Corridors. In November 2000, CDOT prepared a list of State Significant Rail Corridors, which were adopted by the Transportation Commission as part of the Statewide Transportation Plan. The criteria used to identify these State Significant Rail Corridors included existing and potential future demand for passenger and freight services and local/regional support for the preservation of the corridor."

Additionally, page thirteen (13) of the September 2020 CDOT SB 37 report states: "If either of these lines is abandoned the State should consider purchasing them to preserve them for freight and/or passenger service in the future." One of the two railroad rights-of-way this preceding excerpt refers to is the Tennessee Pass line. (https://www.codot.gov/programs/transitandrail/plans-studies-reports/report-to-the-transportation-legislation-review-committee-on-rail-abandonments-and-the-potential-for-rail-line-acquisitions/sb37_report2020.pdf).

Many of the communities found along the historic Tennessee Pass line also find themselves with a US Highway functioning as their main street, providing access to their respective downtown

business districts. While in each town's case, the US Highway facilitates the easy tourist access and accompanying economic benefits, children, pedestrians of all abilities, and bicyclists must also navigate crossing these busy highway main streets through numerous trucks and other heavy duty commercial vehicles. Resuming rail operations along the historic Tennessee Pass railroad right-of-way can shift these countless, disruptive through-freight and other heavy truck movements from Leadville's quaint Harrison Avenue to the rail corridor, thereby also greatly reducing the significant impacts to local roadway infrastructure, not to mention making crossing Harrison Avenue a much easier prospect for our children, elderly, and people of varying abilities.

Extensive transportation fuel consumption data proves that moving freight via railroad is more efficient than by truck – doing so consumes less energy per ton-mile. According to US Department of Transportation (USDOT) studies, rail transportation achieves a fuel efficiency from 1.4 to 9 times more ton-miles per gallon than by truck. USDOT studies show that rail fuel efficiency ranges from 196 to 1,179 ton-miles per gallon while truck fuel efficiency ranges from 84 to 167 ton-miles per gallon.

(https://railroads.dot.gov/sites/fra.dot.gov/files/fra_net/16332/1991_RAIL%20VS%20TRUCK%20FUEL%20EFFICIENCY%20-%20THE%20RELATIVE%20F%282%29.PDF)

According to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Transportation Energy Data Book: Edition 35 table 2.17, *"Energy intensity is the amount of energy used to produce a given level of output or activity which is measured by vehicle-miles, freight-car-miles, or ton-miles."* Within this report, 2014 US Department of Transportation data shows that moving freight by rail is **32.63% less** energy-intensive than by truck. (<http://cta.ornl.gov/data/index.shtml>)

The Association of American Railroads Sustainability Fact Sheet states *"...analysis of federal data finds: If 25% of the truck traffic moving at least 750 miles went by rail instead, annual greenhouse gas emissions would fall by approximately 13.1 million tons; If 50% of the truck traffic moving at least 750 miles went by rail instead, greenhouse gas emissions would fall by approximately 26.2 million tons."* Furthermore, *"Railroads help reduce the huge economic costs of highway congestion. According to the Texas Transportation Institute's 2019 Urban Mobility Report, highway congestion cost Americans \$166 billion in wasted time (8.8 billion hours) and wasted fuel (3.3 billion gallons) in 2017. Lost productivity, cargo delays and other costs add tens of billions of dollars to this tab. A single freight train, though, can replace several hundred trucks, freeing up space on the highway for other motorists. Shifting freight from trucks to rail also reduces highway wear and tear and the pressure to build costly new highways. On average, railroads are three to four times more fuel efficient than trucks. That means moving freight by rail instead of truck lowers greenhouse gas emissions by up to 75%, on average."* (<https://www.aar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AAR-Sustainability-Fact-Sheet.pdf>)

Finally, there are numerous examples of Colorado tourist railroads, either diesel or steam powered, successfully operating for decades now- this includes the 30+ year old, world famous Leadville, Colorado & Southern Railroad. Year after year, these tourist railroads around Colorado collectively attract rail enthusiasts from around the world, providing a significant economic boost to their respective communities, with their passengers spending millions of dollars annually at local lodging, dining, and retail centers. A quick-reading one page case study of the economic benefits of a tourist railroad to a rural economy in the White Mountains of New Hampshire can be found here:

<https://www.visitwhitemountains.com/press/economic-study-reveals-importance-of-local-tourist-railroad-to-regional-economy>. If you have the time, I encourage you to dive deeper into the economic impacts of rural transportation with the Federal Transit Administration Transit Cooperative Research Program Report 34, Assessment of the Economic Impacts of Rural Public Transportation, found here: http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_34.pdf.

The communities along the Tennessee Pass line all stand to benefit for many decades to come if this line is reactivated and passenger service resumes. Imagine the possibilities of visitors riding the train to each town, staying in these communities, and enjoying the countless year-round outdoor recreation opportunities found in and around each. Also imagine the potential of regularly scheduled rail passenger service between your communities, allowing local commuters and visitors alike an affordable, safe, clean, and well-regulated means of transportation that also reduces traffic congestion between your communities and on your main streets.

In conclusion, I encourage you all to embrace the reactivation of rail operations along the historic Tennessee Pass rail corridor- for the economic benefit of your communities, for the potential reduction of commercial and private vehicle congestion within your towns, for the proven reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from moving freight by rail versus truck, and for the fantastic opportunities that stand to present themselves by the resumption of passenger rail service along this historic, world famous, and superlatively scenic rail line through the most beautiful country ever known.

Sincerely yours,

Geoff Guthrie

CC: Parties of Record