



Chaffee County Board of Commissioners

P.O. Box 699/104 Crestone Ave.

Salida, CO 81201

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September 21, 2026

Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

ENTERED
Office of Chief Counsel
September 21, 2026
Part of
Public Record

Comment on FD 36873 - Proposed Merger of Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern Railroads

Chaffee County respectfully requests that the Surface Transportation Board elevate the potential Heart of the Rockies Rail to Trail project in its public interest review of the proposed merger of the Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern Corporations (Docket FD 36873).

Outdoor recreation is the lifeblood of many of our Colorado communities, including Chaffee County. According to the Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office, outdoor recreation contributes over \$36 billion dollars to the state's gross domestic product and supports over 12% of the entire labor force in Colorado. Outdoor recreation opportunities contribute to a higher quality of life for our residents and visitors, making our communities happier and healthier. In light of the significant impact that outdoor recreation has on our community, Chaffee County asks that the Surface Transportation Board recognize the extraordinary potential for securing new outdoor recreation opportunities that arise out of the Union Pacific - Norfolk Southern merger.

Chaffee County's support for the merger is tied to Union Pacific engaging in good faith discussions with the State of Colorado, Eagle County, Lake County, Chaffee County, and other corridor communities before taking any action that could foreclose future trail use, railbanking, public access, or long term public corridor opportunities. We request that Union Pacific enter into a renewed letter of intent with the State of Colorado and corridor communities to revisit the Heart of the Rockies Rail to Trail project, update the 1996 feasibility study, reestablish a corridor working group, and identify a path forward for railbanking, trail conversion, public access, and long term corridor preservation.

Colorado supported Union Pacific's 1996 merger with Southern Pacific in part because Union Pacific agreed to work with the State on the Heart of the Rockies Rail to Trail concept. Chaffee County asks Union Pacific to honor the spirit of that earlier commitment by returning to the table, updating the feasibility work, preserving future public corridor opportunities, and helping advance a vision that would benefit our community for generations.

Sincerely,



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