

Chairman Francis

House Transportation Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to share a very unique treasure from Abilene with you.

For many decades a reminder of a by gone era stood somewhat proudly in the Abilene City Park. Old steam engine 3415 was crawled on by generations of kids and had countless birds roost on its formerly functional stacks.

A man named Joe Minnick loved the railroad and decided he could use his skills as a machinist to put this magnificent old engine back on the tracks.

Today we can enjoy the benefits of his work as the steam engine pulls an excursion train between Abilene and Enterprise Kansas.

I can't begin to enumerate the number of hours of volunteer work that has happened to make the Abilene and Smoky Valley Railroad a reality, but I can tell you the love of history and railroads drive those individuals to pass some history on to the next generation.

The uniqueness of a steam engine like this can not be over stated. It may be the only one of its kind in workable condition. This unique and wonderful experience of riding the rails in a passenger coach pulled by a steam engine is bringing tourists into Abilene from all over the world. It is a huge draw that not only draws to itself but also supports companion tourism experiences like the Eisenhower presidential library and museum.

A recognition of the amazing historic railroad that operates between Abilene and Enterprise will not only give validation to those involved in it, but also continue to spread the word of treasures that exist here in the middle of Kansas.

Please support these bills and in so doing support the railroad that gives us a reminder of a time not so long ago when the mournful steam whistle gave rural Kansas a promise of a connection to the outside world.

Thank you

Representative Scott Hill, Abilene