



Southwest Chief Routing

**Special Committee on Transportation
October 29, 2012
Topeka, Kansas**

Ray Lang



Situation



8-2

- BNSF has shifted through freight traffic from the current route of the *Southwest Chief* to its parallel “Transcon” route
- Local freight, coal, and commuter traffic remain on some portions of the current route
- Although BNSF traffic patterns are subject to change, there are no prospects for routine through freight traffic to resume on the *Chief’s* current route
- BNSF requires lesser track speeds and ride quality on the line for its remaining purposes
- This will make the current 700-mile Newton-Albuquerque route unsuitable for through passenger service



Situation



8-3

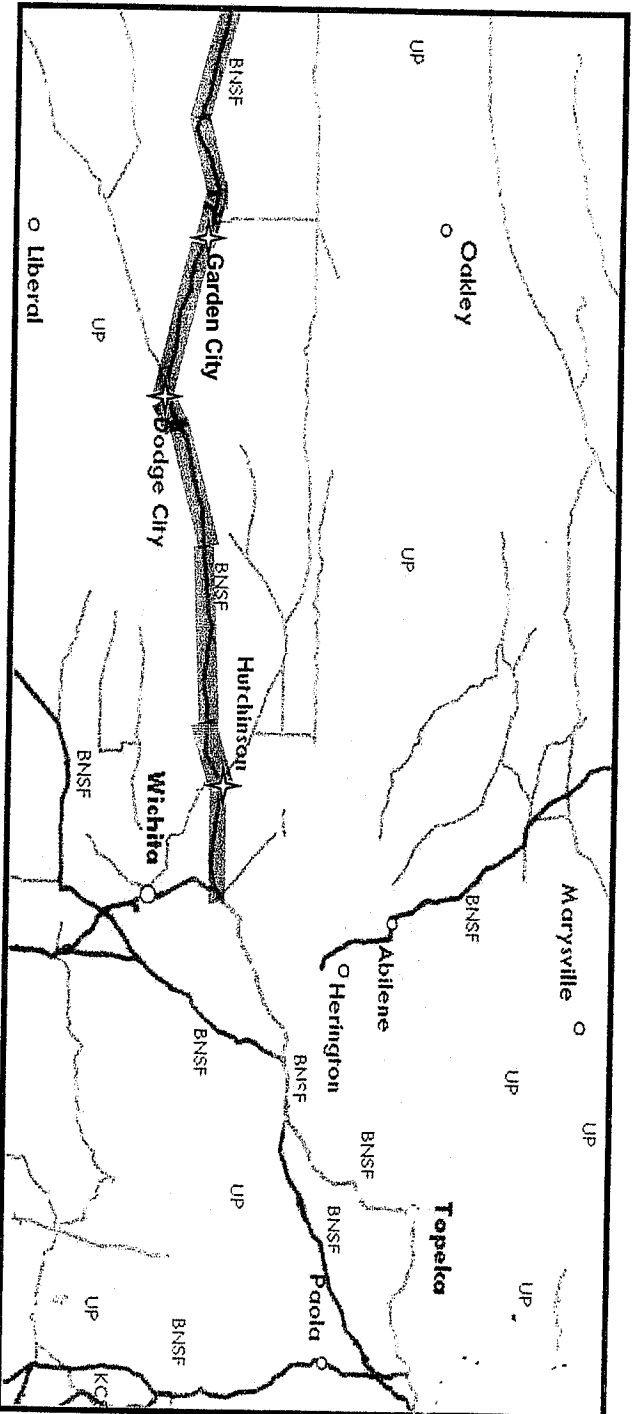
- Alternatives include funding maintenance on the current route, or re-routing the *Chief* to the “Transcon” main line
- Both Amtrak and BNSF railroads are committed to work with the affected communities to find a solution to the issue, with Amtrak and BNSF saying the current route is the best for the *Southwest Chief*.
- Many communities and others have made investments in their stations and in otherwise supporting the service – and those efforts are recognized and appreciated.




Current Southwest Chief Route - Kansas



8-4



Current Route in Question 

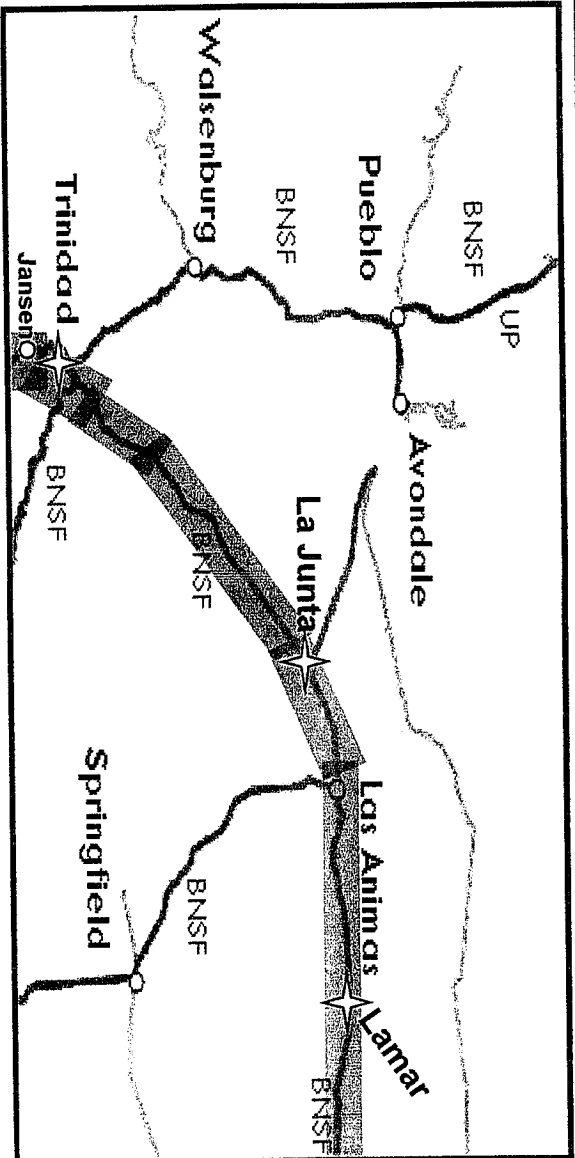
<u>Affected Communities</u>	<u>FY11 Boardings & Alightings</u>
Hutchinson	5,185
Dodge City	5,149
Garden City	7,511



Current Southwest Chief Route - Colorado



8-5



Current Route in Question

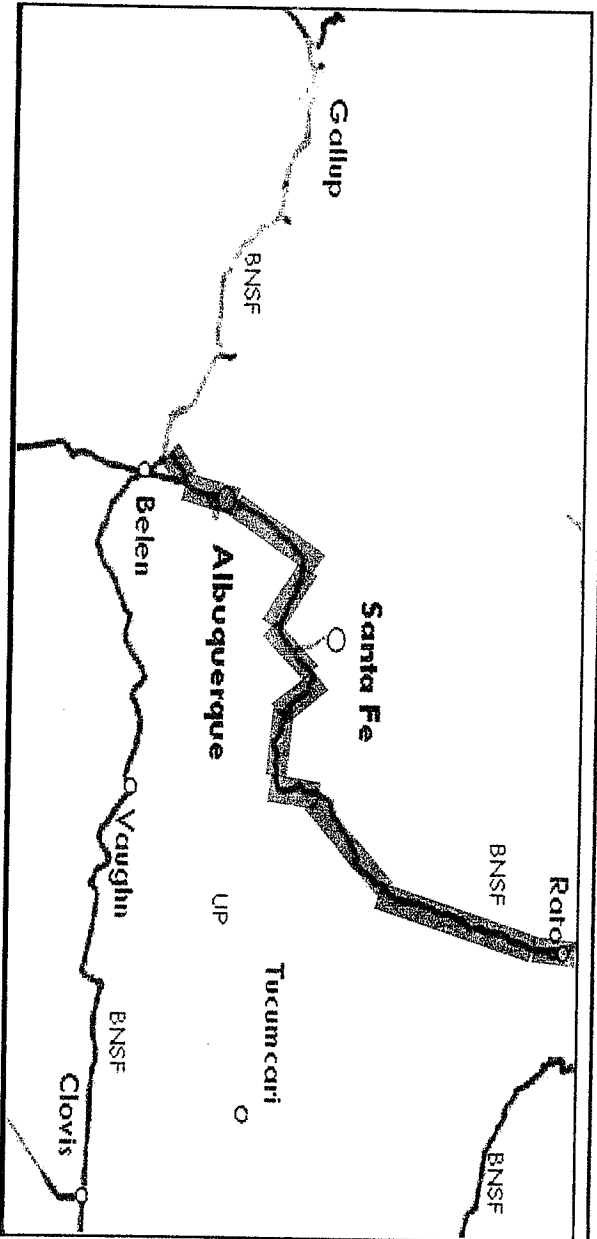
<u>Affected Communities</u>	<u>FY11 Boardings & Alightings</u>
Lamar	1,840
La Junta	6,653
Trinidad	4,535



Current Southwest Chief Route – New Mexico



8-6



Current Route in Question

<u>Affected Communities</u>	<u>FY11 Boardings & Alightings</u>
Raton	16,749
Las Vegas	4,952
Lamy	12,579



Preserving the Current Route



8-7

- Maintaining passenger service on the current route will involve annual maintenance and capital costs, plus one-time major capital needs
 - Annual maintenance costs are estimated at \$10 million and must be funded starting January 2016 at the latest
 - One-time capital needs are in the \$100 million range and must be funded within the next 10 years
 - If capital costs are not funded through a one-time grant, they must be funded over time through increases in the annual cost
- Cost estimates are based on Amtrak analysis of data provided by BNSF



Preserving the Current Route



8-8

- As Amtrak cannot absorb these costs on its own, one solution is equal cost-sharing among the five affected parties: Amtrak, BNSF, Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico
 - About \$2 million per party per year, with a 20-year commitment
 - Plus \$100 million in one-time capital within 10 years



Preserving the Current Route



8-9

Other funding possibilities

- Existing federal grant programs
 - Address the one-time capital costs
 - Passenger capital grants may require a non-federal match and a 20-year commitment to operate the passenger service
 - Highly competitive and subject to future federal appropriations
- Legislation in Congress
 - In March, the Senate passed S. 1813 (known as "MAP-21")
 - Section 35107 of the bill would create a Federal grant program that could be used for the capital costs of preserving long-distance Amtrak routes, including the *Southwest Chief*
 - Amtrak or states could apply for the grants, which would not require a match
 - Would be subject to future federal appropriations
 - No House action, would need to be re-filed in next Congress



Conclusion



8-10

- Decisions and financial commitments will be needed by the end of 2014. Costs must be funded starting January 2016 at the latest.
- If they are not in place, steps will need to be taken to operate the train via a different route between Newton and Albuquerque by 2016.

