

**REPORT TO THE TRANSPORTATION LEGISLATION REVIEW  
COMMITTEE ON RAIL ABANDONMENTS  
AND THE POTENTIAL FOR RAIL LINE ACQUISITIONS**

**PREPARED BY  
THE COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**



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# Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide the Transportation Legislation Review Committee (TLRC) with the Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT) report on rail abandonments and recommendations relative to possible rail line acquisitions. This is the 24th report submitted by the Executive Director of CDOT to the TLRC on rail abandonment pursuant to 43-1-1303 (3) C.R.S.

Over the course of the past year, there have been a few notable developments pertaining to rail abandonments or potential rail line acquisitions within Colorado.

As reported in previous SB 37 Reports, Union Pacific (UP) Railroad's Burnham Yard in central Denver holds great potential opportunities in the yard, adjacent tracks, and surrounding right-of-way and property, prompting CDOT and the Colorado High Performance Transportation Enterprise (HPTE) to purchase the property in May 2021. The primary purpose of the acquisition is to enable expansion of Central Interstate 25 (I-25). Such an expansion requires the relocation of the Consolidated Main Line (CML). Additional benefits of this relocation include increased capacity for Regional Transportation District's (RTD) light rail lines, future development opportunities for the City and County of Denver, and preservation of right-of-way for future Front Range Passenger Rail.

The Tennessee Pass Line, also owned by UP, is included in this report. UP has not expressed any intentions of abandoning the line, despite the fact that it has not operated freight trains on the line in many years. However, several groups, both private and public, have inquired about utilizing the line for tourist train operations and bicycle trails. One group, who has entered into a commercial agreement with UP, is currently in the process of reviewing their rejected application by the U.S. Surface Transportation Board over environmental and safety concerns, and refiling in the future for potential passenger operations. UP's Fort Collins Branch remains in this report as well, but no changes in its status have occurred in the past year.

South Central Colorado's San Luis & Rio Grande (SLRG) Railroad, owned by Iowa Pacific Holdings, was placed in receivership in September 2019, and was involuntarily placed into bankruptcy at the end of 2019, with the line operating normally throughout the bankruptcy process. Sale to a potential buyer is expected to be complete in early 2022. The buyer will continue freight operations on the railroad. The short line freight railroad plays a critical role in the region's economy, with shipments of agricultural and mining products and rail car storage.

Many of the general rail planning activities, which have appeared in prior reports, are no longer included in this report. Rail planning activities are documented in the 2018 State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan, which was approved by the Transportation Commission of Colorado in August 2018, and accepted by the FRA in December 2018.

**Part I** provides **Background Information** on Colorado's rail system and Legislative and Transportation Commission actions. **Part II** describes **Abandonment Activities**, which have occurred over the past year. **Part III** lists the **Recommendations** of CDOT.

# Part I: Background

## (A) Rail System in Colorado

The Colorado rail system currently includes both a freight rail network and a limited passenger rail network. The role of the railroads and rail transportation in the state is to provide efficient and safe transportation choices for the movement of goods and people while connecting effectively to other transportation modes. The rail system in the state is an interconnected component of much larger regional, national, and global multimodal transportation systems and economies.

Currently, 14 privately owned freight railroads operate in Colorado. These railroads own more than 2,800 miles of track in the state and currently operate on 2,684 miles of those tracks. This represents about 1.9 percent of the nation's 140,000 miles of network track. The extent of this network is also reflected in the fact that 48 of Colorado's 64 counties are directly served by the freight rail network. There are two Class I railroads in Colorado, BNSF Railway and Union Pacific (UP). Combined, they operate over 80 percent of the freight track miles and carry the majority of rail freight in the state.

In addition, there are 12 short line railroads in Colorado comprising 20 percent of freight track miles in the state. They primarily provide localized service with connections to the Class I railroads. They principally serve the agricultural industry, as well as the oil & gas industry, and are very valuable assets to both local and statewide economies.

The passenger rail system in Colorado is presently very limited. Outside of the Regional Transportation District's (RTD) light rail and commuter rail lines in the Denver metro area, Amtrak and Rocky Mountaineer Railroad provide passenger rail service through the state

Amtrak's two passenger routes use existing freight tracks and rely on freight railroad infrastructure to be maintained and/or upgraded for efficient service. These two routes are:

- The California Zephyr, which runs daily between Chicago and San Francisco. Colorado stops include Fort Morgan, Denver, Fraser/Winter Park, Granby, Glenwood Springs, and Grand Junction. This service operates over UP track from Utah to Denver, and BNSF Railway track eastward of Denver.
- The Southwest Chief runs daily between Chicago and Los Angeles. Colorado stops include Lamar, La Junta, and Trinidad. Much of this service operates over BNSF Railway track.

The Rocky Mountaineer Railroad, a Canada based company, began offering its Rockies to the Red Rocks luxury passenger rail service in 2021. The company launched the route with a preview season of 40 departures across 10 weeks, from August 15 to October 23, 2021. It runs on existing freight railroads. It is a two-day journey between Denver, Colorado and Moab, Utah with an overnight stop in Glenwood Springs, Colorado.

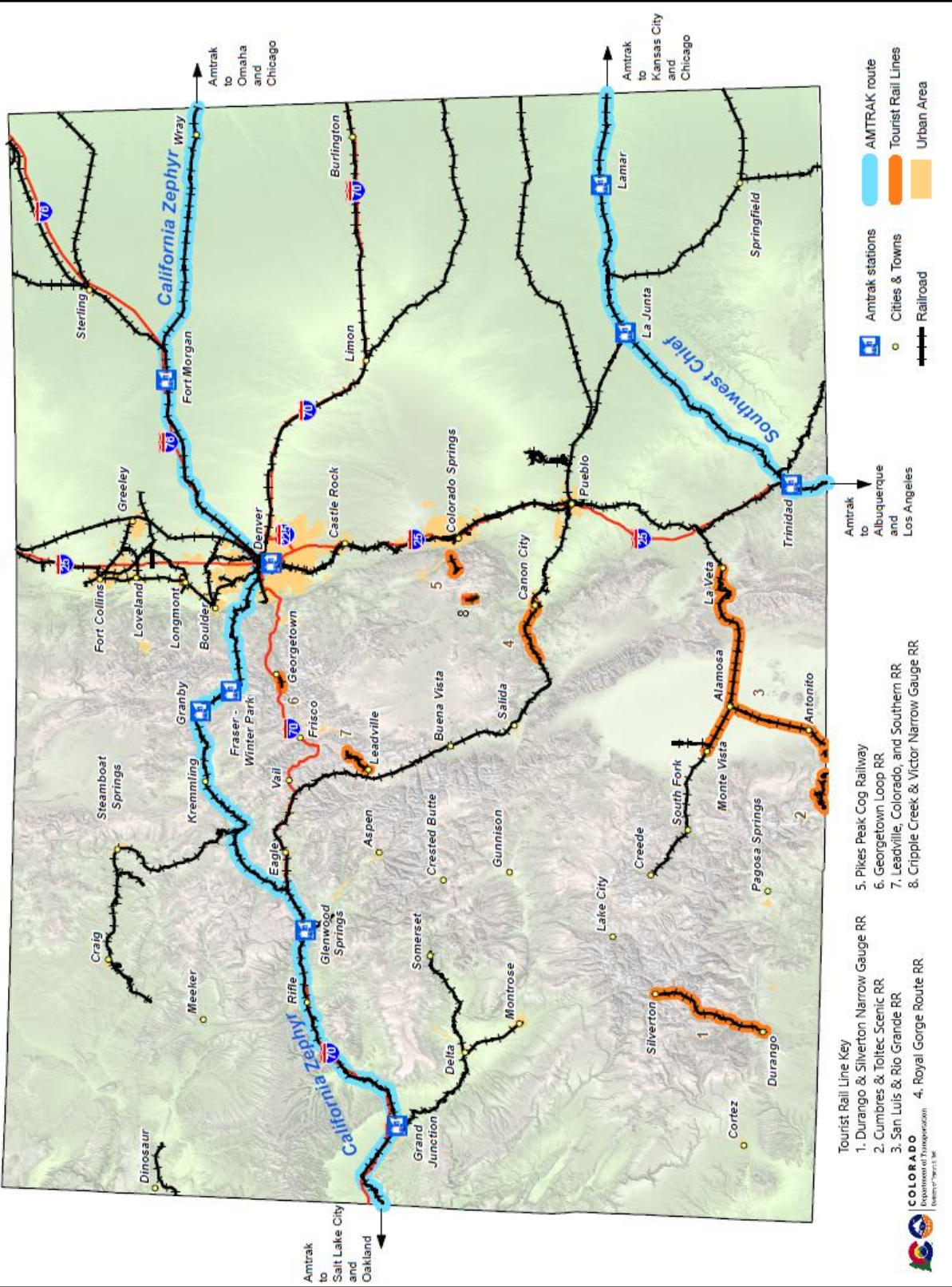
Because ridership declined in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Amtrak decreased service on most of its long-distance routes, dropping from daily service to three days per week on both the California Zephyr and the Southwest Chief routes, beginning in October 2020. Amtrak resumed daily service again in May 2021.

Colorado had two additional Amtrak routes discontinued in 1997 due to reductions in federal funds. These two trains were the Pioneer, operating between Denver and Seattle, and the Desert Wind, operating between Denver and Los Angeles by way of Salt Lake City and Las Vegas.

Colorado has eight tourist railroads which showcase Colorado's history and offer trips through Colorado's scenic outdoors. These scenic & tourist lines are located in Cripple Creek/Victor, Durango/Silverton, Georgetown, Leadville, Manitou Springs/Colorado Springs, Cañon City, and two near Alamosa. Most of the tourist railroads were temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but resumed service in the summer of 2021. One tourist railroad—the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad—suspended service indefinitely in 2019 while its parent company is in bankruptcy.

The Manitou & Pikes Peak Cog Railway closed during the 2018 season due to disrepair. The railway officially reopened May 20, 2021 with entirely rebuilt track, new rolling stock, and a remodeled depot complex and summit station. The schedule of service varies according to the season. During the summer 2021 season, the railway operated 8 am to 9 pm, with departures every 40 minutes until 5:20 pm.

# Colorado Rail System



(B) Colorado Legislative Actions

**1997 SB 37 / CRS 43-1-13-3 CDOT Report to Legislature**

In 1997, the General Assembly enacted Senate Bill (SB) 37, concerning the disposition of abandoned freight and passenger railroad rights-of-way in Colorado. According to this legislation and resulting state statute (CRS Title 43, Part 13 – Acquisition of Abandoned Railroad Rights-of-Way, 43-1-1303 rev. 2013), an existing rail line, railroad right-of-way, or an abandoned railroad right-of-way is eligible for acquisition by CDOT, if the Executive Director determines it serves one or more of the following purposes:

- (1) Preservation of the rail line for freight or passenger service;
- (2) Maintenance of a rail corridor for future transportation purposes or interim recreational purposes;
- (3) Access to surrounding state manufacturing facilities, agricultural areas, or other locales that may be adversely affected by the loss of rail service or loss of railroad corridor; or
- (4) Any public use of the rail line or railroad right-of-way that is compatible with the future use as a railroad or other transportation system.

The legislation also requires the Transportation Commission of Colorado (Transportation Commission) to review any property determined to be eligible for acquisition and approve the acquisition before the Executive Director submits the prioritized list of rail lines or rights-of-way to be acquired to the Transportation Legislation Review Committee (TLRC) ((43-1-1303)(2)). CDOT Policy Directive 1607 (PD 1607) and the State Freight & Passenger Rail Plan, both described further below, are Transportation Commission and staff-level implementation of the SB 37 legislation.

43-1-1308 C.R.S., states, “the members of the TLRC shall make a written report setting forth its recommendations, findings, and comments as to each recommendation for the acquisition of railroad rights-of-way and their uses and submit the report to the General Assembly.”

43-1-1301(3) C.R.S., stipulates that the “Executive Director shall submit a prioritized list with recommendations to the TLRC concerning the railroad rights-of-way or rail lines to be acquired by the state and their proposed use.”

**2017 SB 17-153 / CRS 43-4-1001 Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission**

On May 22, 2017, Governor Hickenlooper signed into law this replacement and expansion of the former Southwest Chief Commission. In addition to CRS 43-4-1001, the bill amended sections of law pertaining to the relationship of this Commission with CDOT. See 24-1-128.7 8(a) and 8(b).

The Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail (SWCFRPR) Commission created two new positions to represent their interests, a Project Director and a Commission Liaison, housed with the Division of Transit and Rail at CDOT Headquarters.

This SWCFRPR Commission has a two-part responsibility:

- (1) Assume and complete the mission of the Southwest Chief Rail Line Economic Development, Rural Tourism, and Infrastructure Repair & Maintenance Commission, as it existed prior to July 1, 2017, by continuing to coordinate and oversee efforts by the State and local governments and cooperate with the states of Kansas and New Mexico, Amtrak, and BNSF Railway to ensure that the track repairs and upgrades required for the continuation of existing

- Southwest Chief Rail Service in Colorado are completed, that such service is extended to Pueblo, and that benefits of extending such service to Walsenburg are fully explored; AND
- (2) Facilitate the future of Front Range Passenger Rail and, in so doing, to specifically develop draft legislation to facilitate the development of a Front Range passenger rail system that provides passenger rail service in and along the Interstate 25 (I-25) corridor and that is a well-integrated component of a modern, efficient, and cost-effective multimodal transportation system.

More information on the Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission's work can be found at these web sites:

<https://www.codot.gov/about/southwest-chief-commission-front-range-passenger-rail>  
<https://www.frontrangepassengerrail.com/>

The Front Range Passenger Rail District will serve as the successor to the Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission upon its creation in May 2022 (see below).

### **2021 SB 21-238 / CRS 32-22-102 Creation of Front Range Passenger Rail District**

On June 30, 2021, Governor Polis signed into law the creation of The Front Range Passenger Rail District as the successor to the SWCFRPR Commission. This bill allows for the creation of a rail district along the Front Range, the largest special district in the state, for the purpose of designing, developing, financing, constructing, operating, and maintaining an interconnected passenger rail system along the Front Range.

The area that comprises the district extends from Wyoming to New Mexico and includes:

- The entirety of the City and County of Broomfield and the City and County of Denver;
- All areas within Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Douglas, El Paso, Huerfano, Jefferson, Larimer, Las Animas, Pueblo, and Weld counties that are located within the territory of a metropolitan planning organization (MPO);
- All areas within Huerfano, Las Animas, and Pueblo counties that are not located within the territory of a MPO and are located within a county precinct that is located wholly or partly within five miles of the public right-of-way of I-25; and
- All areas within Larimer and Weld counties that are not located within the territory of a MPO and are located within a county precinct that is north of the city of Fort Collins and is located wholly or partly within five miles of the public right-of-way of I-25.

The district is governed by a Board of Directors that is composed of:

- Six voting members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by Senate
- 10 voting MPO/COG representatives confirmed by Senate:
  - Four members from MPOs representing more than 1.5 million residents (DRCOG)
  - Four members from MPOs representing more than 500,000 residents (PPACG, NFRMPO)
  - One member from PACOG
  - One member from SCCOG
- One voting director appointed by the CDOT Executive Director
- Multiple non-voting members:
  - BNSF Railway
  - Union Pacific (UP)
  - AMTRAK



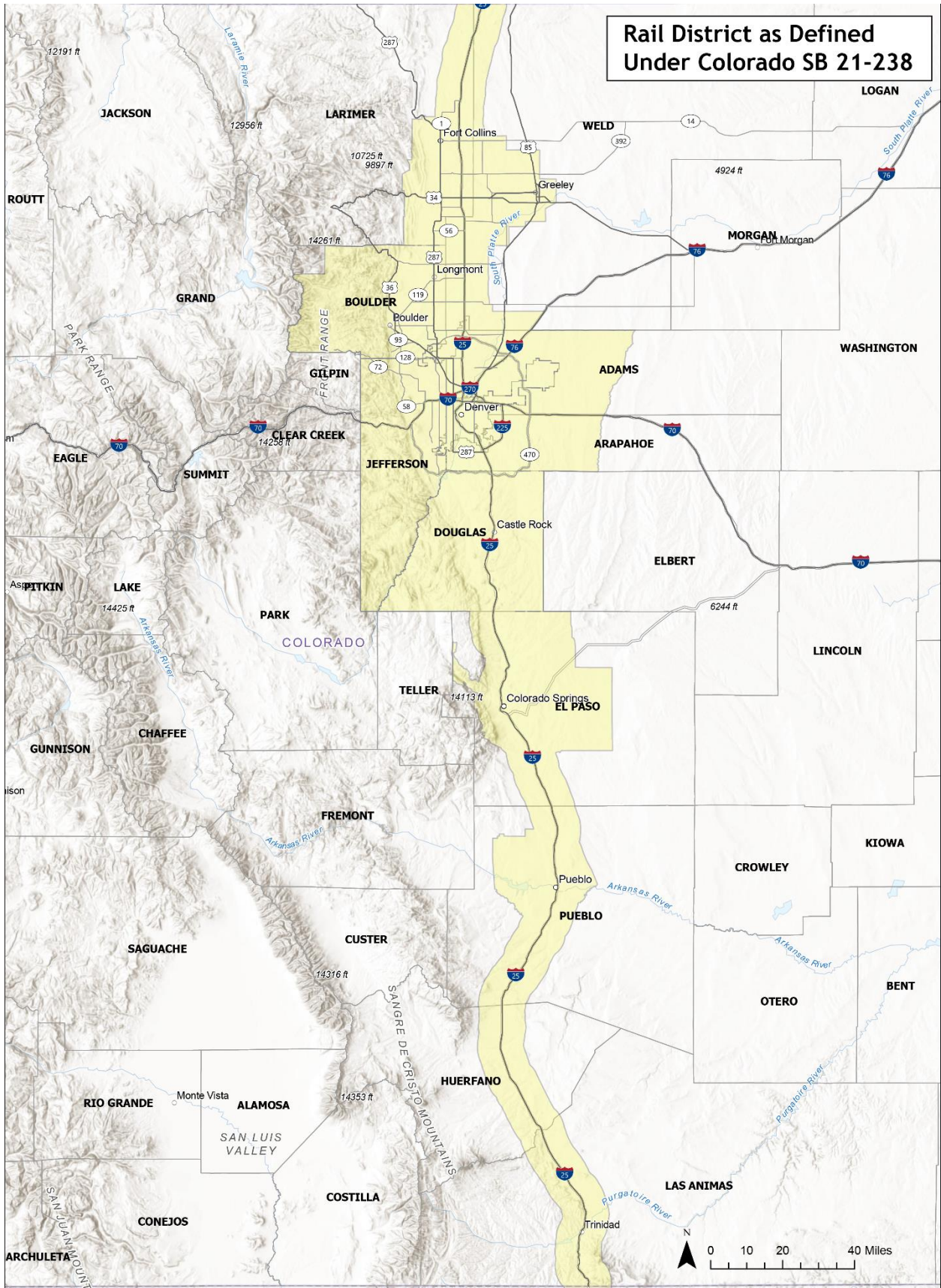
- Regional Transportation District (RTD)
- I-70 Mountain Corridor Coalition
- Wyoming
- New Mexico

The Board of Directors of the rail district has the ability to:

- (1) Ask voters who reside within the district to vote on sales and use taxes;
- (2) Create station area improvement districts to cover the cost of construction, operation, and maintenance of the station, but only with approval of property owners within a two-mile radius of the proposed station;
- (3) Enter into public-private partnerships; and
- (4) Employ its own personnel and contract with public or private entities for the operation and maintenance of the Front Range Passenger Rail.

The timeline for the board appointee selection is as follows:

- December 1, 2021: Selection of RTD, CDOT, Railroad, and I-70 Coalition appointees
- March 1, 2022: Selection of MPO/COG appointees
- April 1, 2022: Selection of Governor appointees
- May 15, 2022: Deadline for first board meeting



## (C) Past Transportation Commission Actions

The Transportation Commission believes that certain significant rail corridors represent an irreplaceable state transportation resource and that it is critical to preserve them because once they are lost, the cost of recreating equivalent corridors in the future will be prohibitive.

In June 2000, the Transportation Commission first approved a **Rail Corridor Preservation Policy, also known as CDOT PD 1607**. The policy directive was updated and approved by the Transportation Commission in August 2014. As updated, PD 1607 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 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.

In August 2018, the Transportation Commission approved the updated State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan (Rail Plan). The Rail Plan serves as a framework for future freight and passenger rail planning in Colorado and was approved by FRA in December 2018. It contains the most recent information concerning the forecasted growth of freight and passenger rail operations and includes an updated short-term (four-year) investment plan, and a long-term (20-year) investment vision. The Rail Plan identifies the state's priority strategies and actions to implement them.

## Part II: Abandonment Activity “Watch List”

When a rail line is not economically viable to operate, the result is often either (1) the sale of the line, usually from the two Class I national railroads (Union Pacific (UP) and/or BNSF Railway), to small, regional railroad companies; or, (2) a formal request for abandonment to the U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB) by the owner of the rail line. Rather than abandon a line, a larger railroad company will usually solicit bidders for the purchase of the line by a short line operator or regional railroad in an effort to maintain rail service along the line. These smaller railroad companies usually have lower operating costs and do not need the same volume of business on the line as the larger railroads to be profitable.

The ability to respond quickly to a potential abandonment can be an important factor in ensuring corridor preservation: once a Request to Abandon has been formally filed with the STB, abandonment can take place in as little as 90 days.

The issue of rail lines being abandoned is of statewide importance due to the impact these abandonments may have on the remainder of the transportation system. As lines are lost, the freight that was being moved by rail must then be moved by truck, causing additional deterioration (e.g., pavement surface condition and/or increased traffic volumes) of the local roadways and/or state highways. In addition, some businesses cannot survive without access to a rail line, thereby causing these businesses either to relocate to another area in the state or to move out of state, resulting in negative local or statewide economic impacts. In addition, once a railroad corridor is abandoned, it is unlikely it will be returned to rail service or be available for any transportation purpose, especially if the rail tracks are salvaged and the right-of-way is sold or reverts to adjoining property owners.

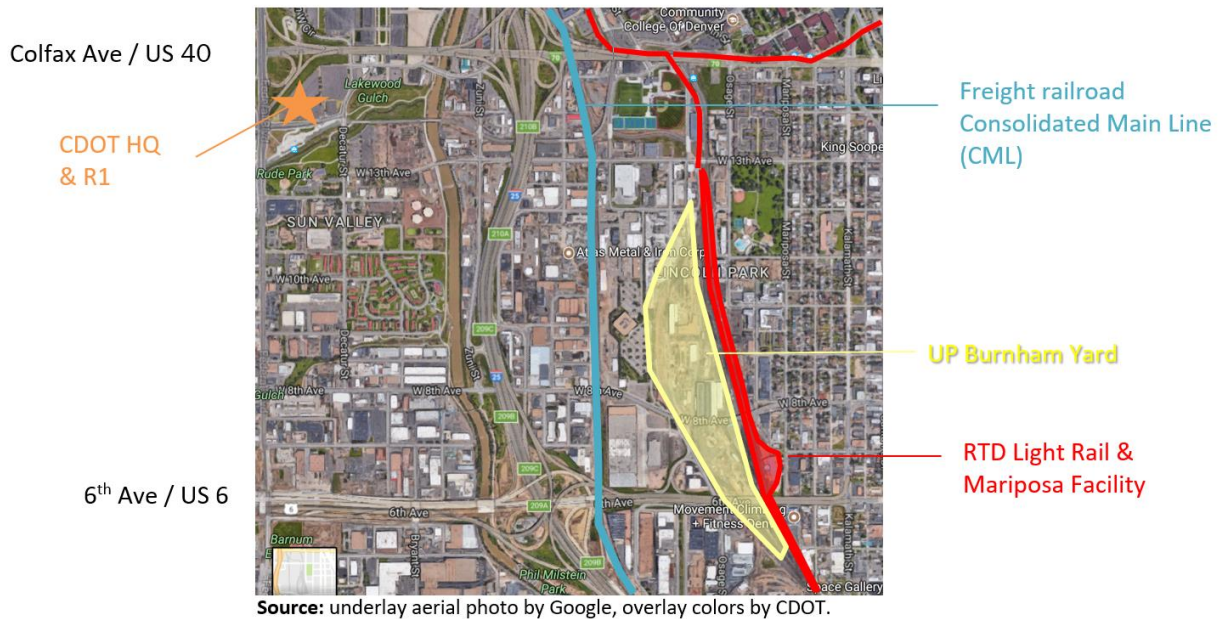
CDOT will continue to monitor short line railroads in the state to ascertain their current financial status and to examine the prospects for their continued survival because they continue to be an important part of Colorado’s future.

### Burnham Yard (UP)

In November 2015, UP made the decision to close and sell the Burnham Shop repair yard in central Denver due to a decline in coal shipments and a desire to consolidate maintenance activities. Adjacent to the Burnham Yard, in the area between US-6 and Alameda Avenue, is Interstate 25 (I-25) which has been identified by both the Valley Highway Environmental Impact Statement (Valley Highway EIS) and the I-25 Central Planning and Environmental Linkages Study as having a need for both additional capacity and geometric changes to correct short weaves and merges. The ability to implement these improvements to I-25, is significantly constrained by the Consolidated Main Line (CML) to the east and the South Platte River to the west.

The Burnham Yard site provides an opportunity to realign the CML away from I-25 and into the former yard site, freeing up right-of-way and providing opportunity to secure additional right-of-way for future rail projects of both Regional Transportation District (RTD) and potential Front Range Passenger Rail.

## Burnham Yard and Surrounding Area



The most important CDOT facilities in the vicinity are Colfax (US 40 Business) to the north, I-25 to the west, Santa Fe and Kalamath Streets to the southeast (south of I-25 it is US 85), and 6th Avenue to the southwest (US 6 begins at I-25 and continues west). CDOT's interest relates to I-25 between Alameda and 6th Avenue.

Between fall 2017 and winter 2020, CDOT Region 1 conducted its Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study of I-25 between Santa Fe Drive and 20th Street. This segment of I-25 is the busiest and most congested freeway in the state, and represents the primary conduit for travel north and south through and around the downtown Denver core. It is utilized for trips through the area and to regional and local connections, including downtown Denver employment, commerce, entertainment, and residences.

The PEL study identified causes of congestion and considered options to improve safety, travel time, and reliability in this highly-congested corridor. A range of improvements are being evaluated and prioritized for future project development. The PEL study also included the evaluation of environmental impacts, coordination with federal, state, and local agencies, and public involvement.

Major conclusions of the PEL study included:

- Managed lanes are recommended for further analysis for capacity addition due to congestion and travel time reliability benefits;
- Collector/Distributor roads and braided ramp systems are recommended as operational improvements due to safety and turbulence reduction benefit;
- Smaller local or early-action projects may also be necessary to correct some issues at low cost, and can provide improvements to corridor permeability without precluding future projects; and
- CDOT plans to expand I-25 in this section. CDOT's purchase of the Burnham Yard from UP would facilitate the relocation of the CML and industrial businesses nearby to accommodate the eastward expansion of I-25.

The relevance to CDOT's public sector partners of this site are as follows:

- For RTD, it is of importance to their ability to expand light rail operations. To expand service for both central downtown and Denver Union Station destinations, RTD needs four main tracks in this area. Although RTD does not need the entire Burnham Yard site, it would benefit from a right-of-way purchase west of, and along the existing light rail and Mariposa facility site.
- Private railways also stand to gain from a relocation of the CML, which would eliminate major at-grade crossings over Kalamath and Santa Fe Streets. The elimination of these crossings would also improve traffic flow and safety for drivers using those streets, which are major commuter routes into and out of downtown Denver.
- For intercity / Front Range commuter rail purposes, a 60- to 80-foot right-of-way purchase west of, and along existing RTD light rail and Mariposa facilities would be required for safety separation from through-freight trains. This would be in addition to RTD’s needs.
- It is also of importance because it could potentially relieve freight train stoppages through commercial and residential properties in Lower Downtown Denver. Freight rail shipments “stage” or hold trains in or near downtown to sequence the movements of trains south of Denver, over Monument Pass / Palmer Divide.

### Acquisition

CDOT Region 1 and Colorado High Performance Transportation Enterprise (HPTE) successfully negotiated the purchase with UP to acquire the Burnham Yard. After some delays brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, HPTE was successful in obtaining financing for the purchase price and closed on the property on May 19, 2021. Under the deal, CDOT will pay UP \$50 million for the property, with CDOT Region 1 and HPTE each providing \$7.5 million—for a total of \$15 million—and the remainder being financed through a bank loan. Since the purchase, CDOT has assumed responsibility for the property and has begun initial cleanup and preservation of historic structures, pending additional planning and engineering efforts.

### Next Steps

CDOT Region 1 plans to begin environmental, planning, and engineering efforts starting in October 2021. This will involve design of the realigned CML, environmental impacts determination and mitigation, local small area planning in coordination with the City and County of Denver, and coordination with RTD for eventual sale of right-of-way on the eastern face of the property. This planning and engineering effort is partially funded and will proceed to the extent that the current funding permits.

### Tennessee Pass Line (UP)

The Tennessee Pass line runs 178 miles from near Gypsum, through Eagle, Edwards, Avon, and Minturn, under Tennessee Pass (by tunnel) and along the Arkansas River via Leadville, Buena Vista, Salida, and Cañon City to Pueblo. The Tennessee Pass line has been identified as significant to CDOT 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 serve 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. Such an event would have a significant impact on Colorado, particularly on the Western Slope, since the railroads would be forced to move freight through Wyoming.

The Royal Gorge Route Railroad currently offers scenic, tourist rail trips on 12 miles of the Tennessee Pass Line west of Cañon City. CDOT often receives inquiries from parties interested in operating commuter

and/or tourist operations on the line. Additionally, the line is considered desirable by bicyclists as a rail-to-trail corridor and was identified as one of 16 priority trails by Governor Hickenlooper in 2016. The Department of Natural Resources has also been working to make use of the line's right-of-way by "railbanking" which would allow interim use of the property for biking while preserving the right-of-way for future resumed rail use. Any arrangements by UP to resume freight service on the line would preclude other uses such as railbanking. Although no freight has been shipped across the full Tennessee Pass Line since 1996, recent conversations with the UP indicate that they do not intend to abandon this line in the near future.

In December 2020, Colorado Midland & Pacific Railway Company (CMP), a subsidiary of Rio Grande Pacific Corporation, entered into a commercial agreement with UP for the potential use of the corridor for commuter passenger services over the pass. However, CMP's filing for common carrier authority was rejected by the STB on March 25, 2021, over environmental and safety concerns. CMP stated that they are currently reviewing the ruling and considering the next steps.

### **Fort Collins Branch Line (UP)**

The Fort Collins Branch line is a line that runs southeast from Fort Collins to Milliken and Dent, then east to La Salle. It is identified as a Rail Corridor of State Significance since it connects Greeley and Fort Collins to the North I-25 corridor and was identified as part of the preferred alternative in the North Front Range Transportation Alternatives Feasibility Study (NFRFAS, March 2000). This line does not appear to be at risk of abandonment at this time. However, it should be noted that this branch line was not included in the Preferred Alternative of the North I-25 Environmental Impact Statement (December 2011), though that EIS recommends a new commuter rail line connecting the commuter rail line in Longmont and the north end of the RTD FasTracks North Metro Line. Recent conversations with the UP indicate that they do not intend to abandon this line in the near future. CDOT will continue to monitor activities on this rail line, but it will not be considered a potential line for acquisition until such time as conditions may warrant.

### **San Luis & Rio Grande Railroad (Iowa Pacific)**

The San Luis & Rio Grande Railroad (SLRG) runs west from a connection with the UP Railroad at Walsenburg, Colorado, over the Sangre de Cristo Mountains at La Veta Pass and into the San Luis Valley. At Alamosa, the railroad splits with a branch extending south to Antonito, Colorado just north of the New Mexico border, and northwest to South Fork. SLRG owns approximately 150 route miles of track, 126 miles of which are currently operated. Scenic passenger service was also offered on the line by the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad (RGSR) from 2006 to 2019, but the service was ended indefinitely when the SLRG went into receivership.

In September 2019, SLRG was placed in receivership, which is an alternative to bankruptcy during which SLRG continued operating. Leading up to receivership, SLRG had struggled with rising maintenance needs and logistics difficulties with access to the national rail network. In late 2019 the receivership was ended and SLRG was placed into involuntary bankruptcy. Communications with the bankruptcy trustee in September 2021 indicate that negotiations with a potential buyer are at the final stages and the sale of SLRG is expected to be complete in early 2022. The new owner will continue freight operations and determine if there is any potential for revival of passenger excursion service.

## Southwest Chief

Amtrak's long distance route, the Southwest Chief, is included in this 2020 SB37 report because there are multiple projects in various stages to replace and update track infrastructure to secure the safe operation of this route for the future. There are still 29 miles of track on the Raton Pass Line (which Amtrak uses for this route) in need of replacement to complete the needed infrastructure updates to sustain future service.

The following projects are underway or have been funded to rehabilitate BNSF Railway track used by the Southwest Chief in Colorado. These projects use a combination of funding from FRA, state DOTs, and other partners:

- 2017 TIGER IX FRA grant for the Amtrak Southwest Chief Stabilization Project in Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico, with Colfax County, New Mexico as the lead. The \$25.2 million project is being funded by \$16 million in TIGER IX funding with match funding of \$9.2 million from the states of New Mexico, Colorado, and Kansas; local communities and organizations along the route; and financial support from BNSF Railway and Amtrak. The grant agreement with FRA was executed in August 2020 and the project is expected to be completed by the end of 2021.
- 2018 CRISI FRA grant to install Positive Train Control (PTC) on tracks from Dodge City, Kansas, to Las Animas, Colorado. This \$11.45 million project includes \$9.15 million from FRA and \$2.3 million from the states of Kansas and Colorado, Amtrak, and the Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission. This project kicked off in September 2020 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2021.
- 2020 FRA CRISI grant to update the rail infrastructure between Trinidad, Colorado and Lamy, New Mexico. This project is being led by the New Mexico DOT and will partially complete critical replacement of track to secure safe operation of the route over Raton Pass.



## Part III: Recommendations

There are no major rail lines in Colorado which have been abandoned in the past year that impact the state's transportation system.

CDOT is recommending the following actions as noted below:

### **Abandonment/Acquisition Recommendations**

As CDOT Region 1 and Colorado High Performance Transportation Enterprise (HPTE) work to begin the planning and engineering efforts supporting the potential relocation of the Consolidated Main Line (CML) through the former Burnham Yard, CDOT HQ and Front Range Passenger Rail staff will continue to monitor and support those efforts.

In addition, CDOT is recommending continued monitoring of activities on the Tennessee Pass and the Fort Collins Branch Lines. While there is no indication that Union Pacific (UP) will abandon these lines in the near future, the Tennessee Pass Line has not been used for freight movements in over 15 years and interest has been expressed for other uses, such as passenger train service and a bicycle trail. Currently, Colorado Midland & Pacific Railway Company (CMP) is reviewing next steps in their application to the U.S. Surface Transportation Board for future operations on the Tennessee Pass line. CDOT will closely monitor the progress of any developments. *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.*

The sale of the San Luis & Rio Grande Railroad is expected to be complete by early 2022. CDOT will continue to monitor this railroad as it continues to move through the sale process. *Should the sale of the Railroad successfully occur, the state should reach out to the new owner and explore ways to support them to improve the state of good repair and ensure future success on the line.*

### **Maintenance Recommendations**

The Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail (SWCFRPR) Commission should continue to pursue additional funding (e.g., TIGER/CRISI grants) to finance necessary repairs on the Raton Pass Line. It is estimated that the line will require further investment of tens of millions of dollars on more than 30 miles of track within the next five years to maintain adequate track quality, sufficient speeds, and continued operational reliability. The SWCFRPR Commission and neighboring states have made great strides in pursuing and securing funding toward this project, but full funding for the project is far from complete. It is critical that the SWCFRPR Commission continue negotiations with Amtrak as it evaluates its long-distance routes.

