

## Comments & Responses To Safety Issues

### Background:

The comments included in this document were derived from several sources, including the Public Hearing for the New Mexico Rail Runner Express service extension to Santa Fe held on August 21, 2007 and two more public meetings held on October 23, 2007 and October 30, 2007 respectively. Some comments were also generated from emails or phone calls as a result of these meetings. Specific references to home addresses or names have been omitted from the comments for privacy reasons. For further information on project plans and updates please consult the New Mexico Rail Runner Express website at [www.nmrailrunner.com](http://www.nmrailrunner.com)

### Comments On Safety

***General:** The safety of the general public, train patrons and crews, persons working in the rail road rights of way and emergency responders is a top priority of the New Mexico Rail Runner Express. There are many aspects of safety associated with running rail service. One is providing safety features within the physical design of the infrastructure. For this project special attention has been placed on road and rail crossings. The features that are planned for these crossings include quad gates or medians and dual gates. Crossings with these features are the safest at grade crossings nationally. The track has also been re-aligned at Zia and St. Francis to eliminate the problem of cars backing up on the railroad tracks. At Zia and St. Francis and at the intersection of Cerrillos and St. Francis, crossing gates and signals are also interconnected with the traffic light system to insure that cars clear the tracks before gates go down. New continuous welded rail will be placed on new concrete ties to insure that a stable and safe track environment is constructed. The train signal system includes "broken rail detection". This system insures that trains will be stopped before reaching any track section with a problem. This system is also used to manage the operation of the trains and insures that only one train is allowed on the track section at a time. Stations and station parking lots will be outfitted with a communication system that includes variable message signs, cameras, a public address system and emergency phone that direct dials to 911. Parking lots and station areas will be lit (with night sky compliant lighting). The cameras are monitored real time and any issues are reported immediately to local law enforcement.*

*Training of local law enforcement and emergency response personnel is another important aspect of the safety program. This training includes classroom work with national experts and full scale exercises that simulate potential emergency situations. Part of this training includes contending with potential terrorist threats. Several Santa Fe area law enforcement and emergency responders attended a recent training session that include three days of class room work and a full scale simulation using both Rail Runner and Amtrak train equipment.*

*The New Mexico Rail Runner Express is also required to have an Emergency Preparedness Plan. This Plan identifies communication protocols, equipment and crew emergency preparedness requirements and responses to emergency contingencies. This Plan will be updated to reflect the extension of service to Santa Fe.*

*The New Mexico rail Runner Express is also extensively involved in Operation Lifesaver and other outreach activities designed to raise public awareness of train safety issues. As part of the Operation Lifesaver program a great deal of time is spent making presentations to schools in the area of an active railroad.*

1. How will emergency vehicles turn around on I-25?

*Emergency crossovers will be constructed as part of the project.*

2. It is likely that cars will break or attempt to avoid gates.

*Driver behavior will always be a concern. The measures that are being taken to protect drivers at grade crossings (quad gates or medians and dual gates) will make it extremely difficult for drivers to avoid gates, without performing extremely dangerous maneuvers (breaking through gates or driving the wrong direction down a street for a considerable distance). These types of measures have performed very well around the country. While there is no system that is entirely fool proof, these are the best measures available to protect drivers (even bad ones) from crossing paths with a train at an at grade crossing.*

3. I am concerned about kids playing on the tracks.

*Part of the Rail Runner safety program is a very aggressive Operation Lifesaver campaign that will include presentations to kids of all school ages. This will commence before service is started and will continue on in perpetuity once trains are running. These presentations seek to educate kids and others about the dangers of playing any where near live railroad tracks. Locomotive engineers will also report any instances of unsafe behavior in the rail road rights of way immediately to local law enforcement.*

4. What is being done about potential terrorist attacks?

*See General Comments Above.*