

Comments & Responses To Train & Bus Operational 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

Comments on Train/Bus Operations

General: While a final schedule has not been developed the environmental work conducted as part of the project called out a maximum of 20 train movements a day. A more likely starting point will be 7-8 trains in and back out of Santa Fe on a daily basis. This translates into trains passing any given point on the line 14 – 16 times a day. A likely schedule would include 3 trains into Santa Fe and two out to Albuquerque between 6:00 and 9:00 a.m. to serve the morning commute, a mid day exchange in both directions and 3 trains out to Albuquerque from Santa Fe and 2 in from Albuquerque to Santa Fe between the hours of 4:00 and 7:00 p.m. It is possible that a later evening exchange could end up in the schedule, but no trains are likely to run in the Santa Fe area after 10:00 p.m. To run more than 20 trains a day would require more public comment and analysis. The NMDOT and MRCOG are also working with the City of Santa Fe and other transit providers to identify new or deviated bus service that could be interfaced with train movements to provide more market reach than the train service could provide alone. This includes the possibility of a downtown circulator shuttle that would serve destinations and origins in the core area of downtown Santa Fe and interface with trains at the Downtown Railyard station.

1. Will there be shuttles from the Albuquerque Destination to the Airport?

Yes, buses already connect Rail Runner service to the Airport from both the Downtown Albuquerque and the Bernalillo County Sunport International Stations. Rail Runner patrons use these buses free of charge.

2. What destinations are served by bus connections in Albuquerque?

There are many, but popular destinations that can be reached by walk or bus within a reasonable time period from Rail Runner Stations include: Albuquerque Sunport, Downtown, Old Town, the Albuquerque Bio Park, UNM, Presbyterian Hospital, TVI, Nob Hill, the Journal Center, Cottonwood Mall. Popular destinations that require longer bus trips but are still accessible from Rail Runner stations include: The Veterens Hospital, Kirtland Air Force Base/Sandia Labs,

Coronado Mall, ABQ Uptown, Winrock Center, Intel, the Sandoval County Judicial Complex, and the Santa Ana Casino.

3. My concerns are the number of hours the train is going to run on a daily basis.

See General Comments Above.

4. I also fully support this commuter train and public transportation and hope that the concerns expressed here to link the proposed stations to downtown via the bus system are followed.

See General Comments Above.

5. What usage is Rail Runner getting now? What percent of its actual capabilities?

The Rail Runner is currently serving between 2300 and 2500 riders per day. The average one way trip length is about 23 miles which translates into 53,000 – 57,000 passenger miles a day. Most peak direction trains are between 70 and 90 percent full. There is significant potential in the current service area and with the Santa Fe extension to add capacity to accommodate more users. This can be accomplished by adding more cars to trainsets (this was done this summer for several key trains) or adding more train service as warranted.

6. Could you please have a train outside of Santa Fe and measure the popularity of the train before having a commuter train go through the city of Santa Fe?

Key determinants of ridership include frequency of service, station locations/destinations served and the time/cost of competing modes. Analysis conducted for the project demonstrates that the main markets for the service are in the core area of Santa Fe (government jobs, private employment, tourism, recreation and business), and trips originating from within Santa Fe headed for key destinations in Albuquerque (Downtown, Albuquerque International Sunport, Journal Center, UNM, Hospital District). If the train does not serve these markets its utility will be seriously compromised.

7. Will freight trains be running over the line?

The Santa Fe Southern has rights to run freight trains over the line between Santa Fe and Lamy. No Freight trains will be allowed on the new portion of the line between Waldo and the junction with the Santa Fe Southern line in the vicinity of I-25 and St. Francis.

8. Concerns about the number of trains that may be operating in the future

See General Comments Above.

9. Will the trains still blow horns in the Downtown RailYard?

The Railyard is still working out proper treatments with the Federal Railroad Administration for crossings within the Railyard proper to establish quiet zones at these locations. The NMDOT has offered to assist with this process and has already committed to quiet zone the rail crossing at Paseo De Peralta, which is within the boundaries of the Railyard.

10. Can the Santa Fe Southern run more passenger trains?

As a result of the sale of the line to the NMDOT the Santa Fe Southern is limited to excursion trains only and is not entitled to run passenger service that would compete with Rail Runner trains.

11. Where does the train reduce speed to 35 mph?

As the train exits the I-25 median it will begin to slow down so that operating speeds will be down to 35 miles per hour at the junction with the Santa Fe Southern line. This junction is located about 2000 feet south of Rodeo Road.