Tennessee Pass Line Tourist Rail Service for the Arkansas River Valley

TENNESSEE PASS RAIL LINK, LLC (TPRL)



October 16, 2026

Contents

About Tennessee Pass Rail Link 3
History: The Past into the Present 4
The Present 4
Project Goal 5
Current Track Conditions and Quality 6
Present Conditions in Salida 6
Service Summary 7
Rail History and other Tourist Rail Services in Colorado 7
2024 CDOT Freight and Rail Passenger Plan and Economic Potential 8
Desired Prospective Territories Including Future Expansion 12
Phase 1: Salida to Buena Vista 13
Phase 2: Salida – Buena Vista – Americus 13
Phase 3: Rail Bikes in Salida Operating South to Swissvale 13
Phase 4: Salida – Buena Vista – Americus – Leadville (Malta) with Stage & Rail Service 14
Equipment 14
Platforms and Ticket Sales 15
Salida Yard 15
Rebuilding of the Engine House and the Salida Railroad Station as a Transportation Hub 16
Outdoor Community Partnerships- Bikes, Kayaks and Hikers 17
FIBArk (https://www.fibark.com/) 18
Fire/EMS/Search & Rescue/First Responder Support 18
First Aid/CPR/Drinking Water Onboard Train 18
Historic Value and Other Considerations 19
South of Salida (Parkdale to Cañon City) 19
Not a Plan to Restore Railroad Freight Bridge Traffic 20
Local Freight 20
Benefit to the State of Colorado 21
Benefit to Local Communities 21
Benefit to Union Pacific 21
Local Operation 22
Short-Term Repairs, Long-Term Repairs, No Positive Train Control 23
CDOT 2024 State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan Compatibility and Project Funding Options 24

Next Steps for TPRL 25
Appendix 1: Other Pictures 26
Appendix 2: Downtown Pictures and other Tourist Rail Operations 31
Appendix 3: Map of Desired Territory 32

About Tennessee Pass Rail Link

Tennessee Pass Rail Link LLC (TPRL) -- founded in March of 2023 by Pete Snyder of Broomfield Colorado -- was formed with the intent to develop and implement a plan to restore rail service on the long-dormant Tennessee Pass Line running from the Tennessee Pass tunnel south through Buena Vista on to Salida with a goal to preserve, restore, maintain and operate a railroad that should not be lost to history. Once restored, the line will become a functional and useful part of supporting future transportation needs of the Chafee County region and the state of Colorado.

Pete Snyder is a 30-year veteran of the tourist and passenger rail industry, specializing in commuter rail start-ups. Pete has held various positions over the years in Rail Operations and Safety. Pete is an experienced Operations Manager -- as Director, Supervisor, Rules Instructor, and Designated Supervisor of Locomotive Engineers (DSLE) -- and Safety Specialist. Pete is passionate about his work in Rail Operations and in Safety -- particularly for rules compliance -- given he knows that it is the *structure* of the rules that ensures everyone's safety on and around the railroad.

Pete knows the history of railroads and their tracks laid with backbreaking work, sweat, black powder, mule and pick axe -- everything accomplished the hard way. But this plan is more than nostalgic. It is about coupling that informative history with today's need for rail service that serves present and future generations. That vision drives this proposal to reopen the railroad in a practical way, bringing it back from dormancy to the inherent valuable transportation asset it remains.

Pete first found his rail roots in Vermont by developing costs for a rail construction project, then as a volunteer-turned-Operations Manager for a Tourist Railroad in the Adirondack mountains in New York. Pete progressed onto three different commuter rail start-ups: in Denver for the RTDC Commuter Rail Eagle P3P project; in Connecticut for the P3P CT Rail start-up; and in Maryland as the Director of Operations for the P3P Purple Line Light Rail start-up just north of Washington DC. Presently he is a rail consultant.



Pete is a Broomfield Colorado resident. Over his railroad career, Pete has developed a strong network of railroad professionals representing all crafts. To create the first-rate team required to implement this proposal, Pete can draw support from professionals in: track work, signal systems, live wire overhead catenary, rolling stock procurement, vehicle maintenance, operating practices, dispatching and, most critically, rail safety.

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History: The Past into the Present

The railroad's history, incorporating freight and passenger services, and its general character are integral to the region's history and character. In May of 1880 the Denver Rio Grande & Western (D&RGW) railroad reached the Salida line with the first passenger and freight trains. Initially a narrow-gauge line, the line was widened to standard gauge as it expanded north.

Salida quickly became a vital junction on what was also known as the Royal Gorge route and a strategic location where tracks converged, heading north and west. By 1884 at the peak of operations, approximately 100 trains passed through Salida daily, including 15 passenger trains. To service the railroad, Salida's infrastructure supported this level of activity, including two roundhouses and a dedicated hospital for railroad workers.

The death of passenger service came with the last scheduled passenger train in 1967 after the Colorado Public Utilities Commission granted the D&RGW (later just Rio Grande) the authority to discontinue passenger train services between Denver and Salida. Freight trains continued to run for many more years with as many as 42 double-stack intermodal trains a day by the early 1990's, making use of a line that was actually heavily constructed for busy freight traffic.

However, with the merger of the Rio Grande and the Southern Pacific, subsequently absorbed by the Union Pacific, the line became redundant and most rail operations ceased by 1998. It is this merger that explains the current dormant state of the Tennessee Pass Rail Line and why it has never been officially abandoned. Preservation for future use was a key requirement of the Surface Transportation Board's (STB) approval of the merger. While the Tennessee Pass line did not have to operate, the state of Colorado and STB understood that the rail infrastructure was too valuable to lose, anticipating longer-term re-activation.

The Present

This Tennessee Pass Rail Link proposal seeks to restore active rail service to significant segments of the 25-year-inactive Tennessee Pass rail corridor owned by Union Pacific Railroad.

Union Pacific stated the track will not be abandoned, and they will "preserve its continuity as a through route" in their agreement with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) as part of their Southern Pacific merger in 1997. At that time, it was understood that the line had significant rail value worth safekeeping for future use.

As indicated in the History section, the Tennessee Pass line was developed with heavy infrastructure to sustain freight traffic – and had grown to as many as forty trains per day. The track has been maintained at a substantial FRA Class 4 level and remains in remarkably good condition. While some repairs are needed, this proposal for tourist rail service would require modest work by comparison to a project proposing to run heavy or high-speed trains.



Project Goal

The underlying goal of this project is to restore rail service to as much of the corridor as possible, while it is still relatively easy to do. Like any abandoned property, time is taking its toll on Tennessee Pass Line through deterioration and trespass. **The TPRL proposal presents an opportunity for attention to and investment in a revived Tennessee Pass Line to turn the long-term trajectory of degradation into a forward-looking rail asset that serves the owner Union Pacific, the state, and public, assuring maintenance and operation of a fully functional active rail corridor**.

TPRL considered best case scenarios for the entire out-of-service corridor to create new rail activity and to minimize cost -- so immediate railroad use of the corridor is obtained. Ultimately, we determined the most promising section to begin operations for TPRL purposes is between Salida, Buena Vista, and Leadville (Malta) and up to and including the Tennessee Pass interlocking -- just short of the tunnel. Not part of this proposal but worth mentioning for future expansion is the territory north of the Tennessee Pass tunnel to Minturn, Avon, and the Eagle Valley Industrial Lead at MP 335.0.

We are aware of and support the efforts of a recently formed Western Rail Coalition that has expressed interest in the northern part of the line for a commuter rail service. We see the potential effect of combining both plans, and happily look forward to that combination resulting in almost all of this line being functionally restored.

The Tennessee Pass Rail Link business name was chosen to reflect the proposed service, again linking the Arkansas River Valley Communities together by rail, and the value of the entire rail corridor that the line represents for the state of Colorado. Strong appreciation and name recognition of the "Tennessee Pass Line" exists in public railroad circles. Technically the name referred to the section on either side of the tunnel, but it has become synonymous with the entire line, and that is why we feel it best represents our current efforts.

Current Track Conditions and Quality

Currently the Tennessee Pass property is in a state of some decline (noted in next paragraph), but the track was assessed to be in remarkably good intact condition for the following reasons and observations:

- Original substantial track infrastructure of heavy specification and adequate prior maintenance;
- Colorado's dry conditions;
- FRA Class 4 rail (specified with a maximum speed of 60 mph freight and 80 mph passenger) operated closer to 40 mph or below because of the terrain.
  [By comparison, Class 4 is the same track class used by the RTDC Commuter Rail (Denver) system operates at 79 mph.]
- Current inactivity/non-use.

Alternatively, and incorporated into our scenarios assessment, we offer the following observations:

- Nature and trespass activity are slowly over-taking/reclaiming some of the property;
- Brush is starting to take over some of the alignment and fencing;
- Private roads and trails have been constructed over some areas of the track;
- A few crossings have been paved over, and all gravel roads are graded over;
- Signal houses and wayside equipment have suffered some vandalism, including the small office and former engine house in Salida.

Finally, there is no doubt that the public's respect and appreciation of this important rail corridor is beginning to wane – as evidenced by our alternative observations. However, it's worth noting that an entire generation has never seen active rail service here. **TPRL believes that a significant revival is possible with proper and respectful care made on the line itself, followed by a strong marketing campaign to educate the public about the value of what is in its midst.**

Present Conditions in Salida

A focus for TPRL is the yard in Salida. Presently, the property has some trespass hazards with open track, large open box drainage culverts, and some minor vandalized property. TPRL will work with the community to secure the area and make it more presentable by cleaning up debris, marking off hazards and creating visible boundaries for the public to understand.

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Service Summary

This proposal seeks to provide tourist rail service and reopen the inactive Tennessee Pass rail corridor between the Arkansas River communities of Salida, Buena Vista, and Leadville (Malta). The tourist railroad will be community focused and headquartered in Salida.

Rail History and other Tourist Rail Services in Colorado

Colorado has a long history of tourist rail service with abundant data showing good ridership, with operations that are well respected and popular. Based on this data, it is reasonable to conclude that the TPRL plan can be a success.



There are seven scenic railroads in Colorado located in: Cripple Creek, Durango, Silverton, Georgetown, Leadville, Manitou Springs, and Canyon City. Each is operated and maintained privately (private funding) or under local government authority (government funding).

All these railroads have deep historic roots from the early settlement of Colorado that followed the expansion of mining and settlements in the late 1800's. This is also true of the railroad that is the subject of this proposal.

2024 CDOT Freight and Rail Passenger Plan and Economic Potential

The 2024 CDOT Freight and Rail Passenger Plan provides the following recent information and ridership levels for existing tourist railroads in Colorado. The CDOT plan includes significant detail about other tourist rail operations within the state, rail statistics and CDOT rail goals.

The CDOT Freight and Rail Passenger plan in particular acknowledges the importance of the Tennessee Pass Line. It explains the statistics for the tourist rail industry to help understand the economic potential of this TPRL proposal. Of equal significance is a section describing the importance to the state of Colorado of the high value of the Tennessee Pass Line for rail service.

Note the 2nd paragraph in the table below: "According to recent study of the C&TSRR, rail operations support 147 direct jobs and result in a total annual economic impact of $14.8 million in the surrounding five-county region of Colorado and New Mexico." In the case of this TPRL proposal, one thing is certain. No matter how you measure it, given the current lack of any activity, this proposal can only stand to benefit the region.

The following graphics are informational excerpts from the Colorado Freight and Passenger Rail Plan issued February 15, 2024 (pages 41-45). The Full Plan is located here: https://www.codot.gov/programs/transitandrail/colorado-freight-and-passenger-rail-plan



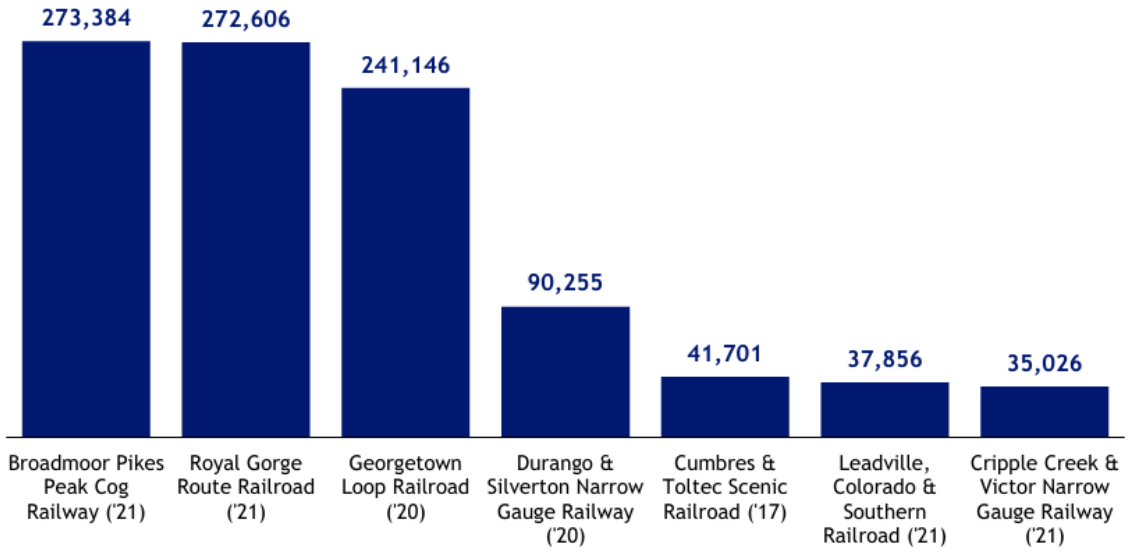
Scenic and Historic Rail Operations

Colorado's scenic and historic railroads provide visitors with experiences of steam locomotives, cog railways, and narrow–gauge track through remote mountainous areas, through deep canyons, and over scenic bridges. Many of these railroads have roots in Colorado's mining past and run on routes constructed in the late 1800s.

Ridership of individual scenic rail operators ranges from less than 10,000 to more than 250,000 annually. On average, tourism to these railroads amounts to about 1 million combined rail passengers each year. These visitors generate significant local economic impact in sales and lodging tax revenues and boost indirect spending in the towns and counties surrounding these historic assets. According to a recent study of the C&TSRR, rail operations support 147 direct jobs and result in a total annual economic impact of $14.8 million in the surrounding five-county region of Colorado and New Mexico.

Rail ridership decreased significantly in 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many scenic railroads closed in 2020 and re-opened in 2021 and 2022. The Rio Grande Scenic Railroad operated in Alamosa, CO, but closed in 2019 due to a fire that damaged their facilities and remains closed. For this reason, recent ridership counts are variable and will return to normal levels in the coming years. The most recent year of data available for each of the scenic railroads was compiled in the chart below. All data drawn from Colorado PUC annual reports of the railroads.

Figure 10. Scenic and Historic Railroad Reported Annual Ridership



Source: Colorado Public Utilities Commission. Note various years reported based on data availability. Years shown in parentheses.

Colorado's scenic and historic railroads offer visitors unique experiences, preserve railroading history, and contribute significantly to tourism-based economies in rural regions. Each railroad offers different excursions and amenities and ranks among the state's most popular tourism destinations. The following table shows available operating characteristics.

Table 8. Scenic and Historic Railroad Operating Characteristics

Scenic Railroad	Route Miles	Gauge	Trips per Day	Operating Season
Broadmoor Pikes Peak Cog Railway	9	Standard (with rack rail)	6-8	Year Round
Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad	47	Narrow	4	Year Round
Georgetown Loop Railroad	5	Narrow	6	Late April to December
Royal Gorge Route Railroad	12	Standard	4	Year Round
Cripple Creek & Victor Narrow Gauge Railway	2	Narrow	10	Mid-May to Mid-October
Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad	64	Narrow	2	Late May to Mid-October
Leadville, Colorado & Southern Railroad	13	Standard	2	Late May to Early October

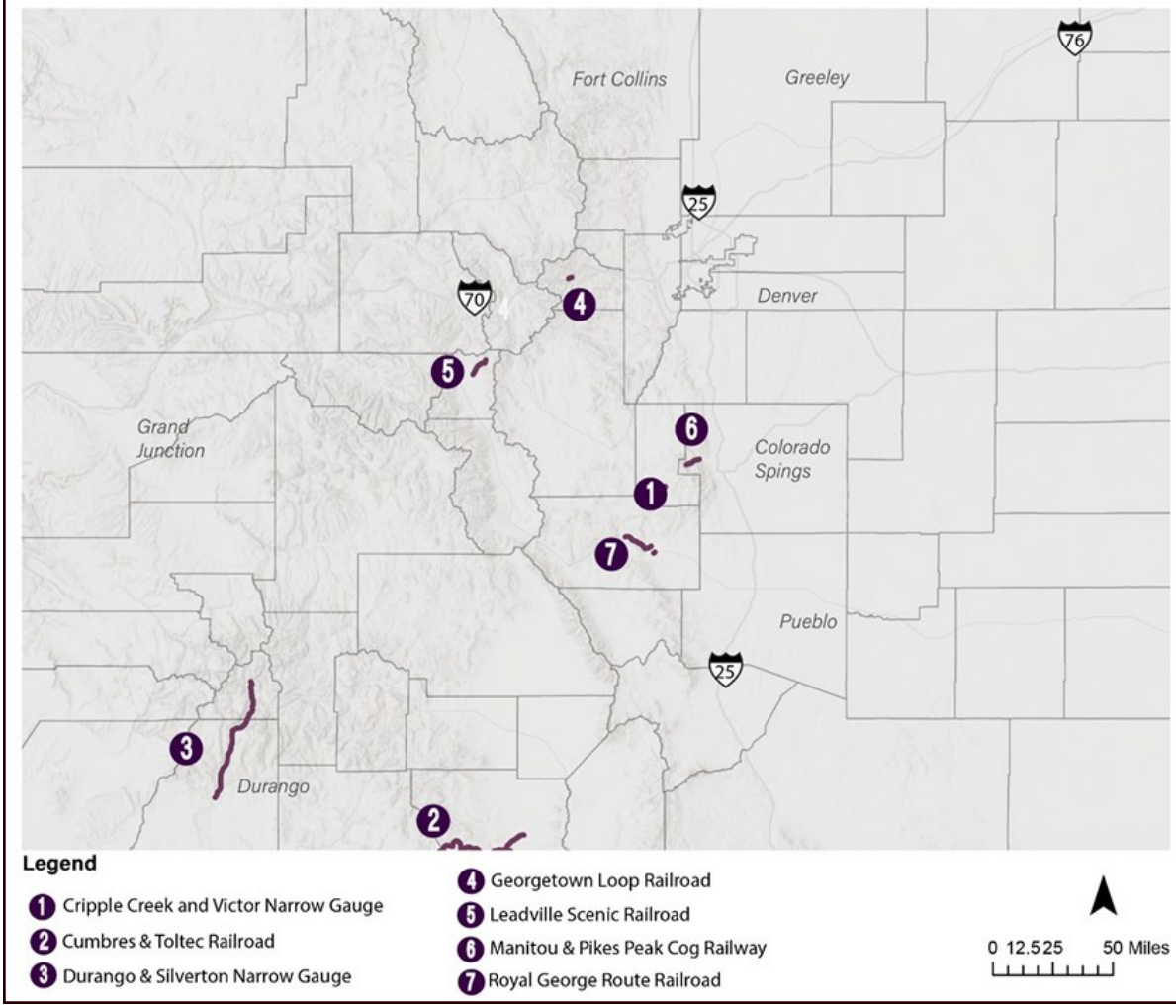
Narrow gauge routes in Colorado use a 3 ft gauge, as they leverage historic equipment and alignments and are consistent across the state. The Pikes Peak Cog Railway uses standard gauge for the outer guide rails and a single "Strub"-type rack rail located on the centerline of the alignment.

Typically, either individuals or national holding companies privately own scenic rail operations. History Colorado, a Division of the Colorado Department of Higher Education, owns the Georgetown Loop, which is operated by a private vendor. The states of New Mexico and Colorado jointly own and manage the C&TSRR with oversight by the governing C&TS Commission. The Royal Gorge Route Railroad shares lines with freight rail operators.

Rocky Mountaineer is a Canadian rail-tour company that operates luxury scenic trains on four rail routes in British Columbia, Alberta, Colorado, and Utah. Beginning in 2021, Rocky Mountaineer operates the Rockies to the Red Rocks route offering tourist travel between Denver and Moab, Utah with an overnight stop in Glenwood Springs. Service operates on Union Pacific Railroad trackage. Ridership is not reported by the private company.

Scenic rail operators rely on private funding, volunteer time and materials, and public grants for historic preservation from the State of Colorado to maintain and refurbish equipment, rolling stock, and facilities. Maintaining track and equipment in working order and meeting modern safety standards are critical to reducing safety risks and to improving operational speeds and reliability. FRA regulates scenic rail operators to meet those standards.

Figure 11. Colorado Scenic and Historic Railroad Map, 2023



Rail Corridor Preservation

CDOT recognizes that significant rail corridors represent an irreplaceable state transportation asset and preservation of future use is critical. In 1997, the General Assembly enacted Senate Bill (SB) 37, concerning the disposition of abandoned freight and passenger railroad rights-of-way in Colorado. The ability to respond quickly to a potential abandonment can be an important factor in ensuring corridor preservation. CDOT monitors 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. CDOT prepares an annual report, known as the SB 37 report, to the Colorado Transportation Legislation Review Committee (TLRC) detailing priority potential rail abandonments and rail acquisition opportunities. These acquisitions could also lead to opportunities to consider multimodal travel options within rail corridors.

In 2000, the Colorado Transportation Commission approved a Rail Corridor Preservation Policy, also known as Policy Directive 1607. Policy Directive 1607, last updated in 2023, enumerates rationale and support for rail corridor preservation and establishes criteria to identify state significant rail corridors. CDOT maintains the list of State Significant Rail Corridors, tracks corridors and rights-of-way at risk of potential abandonment, and provides updates to the Colorado Transportation Commission as well as the preparation of the annual SB 37 report to the TLRC. The risk of abandonment and opportunities for acquisition of the following railroad rights-of-way are detailed in the September 2022 SB 37 report:

Importantly, the CDOT 2024 State Rail Plan identifies the Tenneesee Pass Line as being a "Significant Rail Corridor" and provides its reasoning:

Owned by UP, the **Tennessee Pass Line** runs 178 miles from near Gypsum, through Eagle, Edwards, Avon, and Minturn, under Tennessee Pass and along the Arkansas River via Leadville, Buena Vista, Salida, and Cañon City to Pueblo. The Tennessee Pass Line is identified as a State Significant Rail Corridor 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. The Royal Gorge Route Railroad currently offers scenic tourist rail trips on 12 miles of the Tennessee Pass Line west of Cañon City. The Tennessee Pass Line may be used 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. The line could provide critical network redundancy and opportunities for alternative uses. No freight has been shipped across the full Tennessee Pass Line since 1996. UP has not indicated plans 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 in 2021 over environmental and safety concerns. More public process will be necessary before further steps by the State or other public entities to reactivate the line for any use.

Based on the information in the state rail plan, the importance of preserving and reopening this line is clearly articulated. It shows the importance of preserving the line and the strong economic potential via ridership which will translate into increased economic opportunity in the local economy.

By reopening this line simply for tourist service, the rail infrastructure is once again maintained and operational to serve as another mode of transportation available to future generations that are projected to need functional alternatives to 2-lane roads with automobiles.

Desired Prospective Territories Including Future Expansion

This proposal seeks a long-term lease of the rail corridor beginning north of the Vallie siding at MP 200.0, through Salida MP 215.0, Nathrop MP 233.0, Buena Vista MP 238.0, to Leadville (Malta) MP 272.3, terminating at the Tennessee Pass MP 282.0. The total corridor distance is 82 miles, while the 55-mile Salida to Leadville segment is the operating goal.

Initially, the 23 miles between Salida and Buena Vista would be the focus of the operation. Future expansion would include the additional sections from Leadville to the Tennessee Pass (short of the tunnel) ultimately connecting to the Cooper Ski Area, and the northern section from the Tennessee Pass tunnel to Minturn, Avon, and the Eagle Valley Industrial Lead at MP 335.0. While not part of this proposal, we recommend that this northern section be stabilized by the owner Union Pacific with minimal improvements and safety ties necessary to accommodate periodic Hi-Rail inspections or work trains -- work critical to maintain corridor integrity for connecting the active sections in the future.

Until the northern end of the line is reopened as an outside rail connection, use of the tracks south of Salida for occasional equipment moves for the duration of the lease will be from Parkdale MP 171.7 to north of Vallie MP 200. We expect Union Pacific to maintain this track at least as an FRA Excepted track class or better to allow for equipment movements.

This proposal is divided into the following phases -- each one building on the preceding phase:



Phase 1: Salida to Buena Vista

Phase 1 connects the downtown areas and complements the outdoor recreation communities.

Initially, service will be two daily round trips, operating at a maximum speed of thirty miles per hour on the twenty-three miles between Salida and Buena Vista with a trip length of approximately one hour each way, including a one-hour layover. Flag stops along the route will serve the outdoor community, dropping off or picking up passengers. Based on demand and peak-season time of year (such as fall), the number of daily round trips can expand to three, if needed.

In winter, some holiday-themed trains along with a limited seasonal operation will be offered. The overall plan accounts for a three-season operation, with some special holiday trips, and an anticipated winter season break.

An important focus of this phase will be to partially connect the "Stage & Rail" trail system. This 70-mile trail encompasses the Arkansas River Valley towns of Salida, Nathrop, Buena Vista, and Leadville. Presently, the Stage & Rail Trail has only isolated segments completed in each town. This trail crosses or runs near the railroad along its entire length. Optimally, the railroad will tie the Stage & Rail trail network together, helping to complete and promote it.

Phase 2: Salida – Buena Vista – Americus

Phase 2 extends the trip from Salida to north of Buena Vista to Americus, as well as the Elephant Rock Campground and the Railroad Bridge Recreation Site. Passengers can utilize this trip as a one-hour stand-alone trip from Buena Vista with flag service stops at identified trails.

An important focus of this phase will be to further connect the "Stage & Rail" trail system beyond Phase 1. This 70-mile trail encompasses the Arkansas River Valley towns of Salida, Nathrop, Buena Vista, and Leadville. Presently, the Stage & Rail Trail has only isolated segments completed in each town. This trail crosses or runs near the railroad along its entire length. Optimally, the railroad will tie the Stage & Rail trail network together, helping to complete and promote it.

Phase 3: Rail Bikes in Salida Operating South to Swissvale

Phase 3 is the implementation of Rail Bikes. **TPRL Rail Biking** is an important part of this proposal. A rail bike option will be offered for the line south from Salida during spring, summer, and fall. We anticipate a trip for **Rail Bikes in Salida Operating South to Swissvale** to be approximately 2.5 hours in total length for extended trips, or 45 minutes each way for short trips, including a 30-minute turn-around and rest stop period. Rail Bikes are very popular recreational offerings that fit well in this area. When rail bike tours are not active, this section of track will be used for special tourist train excursions.

We believe Rail Bikes will provide additional revenue to support the rail operation, extending the track mileage required for basic service, thereby providing more rail preservation in a simple inexpensive manner. Circumstances might allow for the rail bike offering to be moved up to Phase 2 or even Phase 1 since it is a separate standalone easily implemented offering.

Phase 4: Salida – Buena Vista – Americus – Leadville (Malta) with Stage & Rail Service

Implementation of Phase 4 would extend service an additional 34 miles north to Leadville (technically Malta- just outside Leadville), operating at a maximum speed of 30 miles per hour with an additional trip length of 35 minutes each way. This would effectively take the place of the previous 1-hour layover in Buena Vista.

An important focus of this phase will be to fully connect the "Stage & Rail" trail system building off the progress of Phase 1 and Phase 2. This 70-mile trail encompasses the Arkansas River Valley towns of Salida, Nathrop, Buena Vista, and Leadville. Presently, the Stage & Rail Trail has only isolated segments completed in each town. This trail crosses or runs near the railroad for its length. Operationally, the railroad will tie the Stage & Rail trail network together, helping to complete and promote it.

For this phase, a shuttle connection for passengers interested in visiting the nearby Leadville Railroad will be explored. Malta is also a location of multiple sidings and a Wye for TPRL to turn equipment. Malta also offers multiple sidings and a wye for turning around equipment.

Equipment

The planned service will consist of 2 locomotives and 3-5 passenger cars. Initially it would be arranged as Pull-Pull type service with a locomotive at each end. This will allow the service to start with less switching movements and add extra reliability with a redundant power source. After operations are established, it will transition to become one locomotive with a run-around switching movement to change direction, or a cab control-car will be added. However, a minimum of 2 locomotives will remain for redundancy and protection of the operation.

Beyond passenger cars, a baggage or flat car will be provided to accommodate bikes, kayaks or other outdoor gear.

Additional equipment will consist of Maintenance of Way (MOW) type equipment, including:

- 2 Hi-Rail Inspection trucks
- Tie crane/inserter and flat cars
- Hi-Rail Grapple Truck
- Hi-Rail Dump Truck
- Pettibone Speed Swing
- Backhoe
- Hi-Rail Brush cutter

- Small Pup Tamper

Platforms and Ticket Sales

In all locations, level sturdy platforms will accommodate foot traffic and include yellow safety lines marking safe distance away from the tracks. There will be room to station a portable handicap lift.

In Salida, simple paved or boardwalk platform will be constructed just north of the previous station location to provide standing train clearance from the Tenderfoot pedestrian path. In Buena Vista, the existing concrete platform will be utilized. In the Leadville later phase, a simple paved or boardwalk platform will be constructed.

If possible, retail/vendor locations for ticket sales will eventually be established in both Salida and Buena Vista downtowns. In the short term, for passenger comfort in each downtown, a three-side open-air covered wood structure will be used to provide basic shelter for waiting passengers, while tickets will be sold from a wooden shed structure at each location and on the train itself.

Salida Yard

Initially, the Salida yard will be secured with simple concrete or dirt barriers to prevent motor vehicle trespass along the ROW, and engine house doors will be secured. Signage will be erected alerting the public to the railroad property. An existing gravel path crossing (hereafter referred to as “Tenderfoot Crossing”) that crosses the tracks from the parking area to the Tenderfoot Mountain trail will be improved and better delineated by signage and crossbucks for safety.

The gravel areas will be graded and raked to remove loose debris and tripping hazards. Any remaining scrap ties, rail, and other material will be stored away from public interaction.

Agricultural-type smooth wire cattle fencing will be erected in limited parts of the yard to help prevent trespass near the tracks and staged trains to direct away pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

Passengers will board/disembark next to a simple platform that will eventually be paved or converted to wooden boardwalks. This area will be north of the original Tenderfoot crossing platform location.

The service and staging areas for the train will be south of Tenderfoot Crossing with temporary utilities and shelter until a permanent new engine house can be built in the future. The present small office structure will be used to access utilities and provide a small office space.

Rebuilding of the Engine House and the Salida Railroad Station as a Transportation Hub



This proposal initially planned to seek funding and support to rehabilitate the vacant railroad Car House (or Back shop as it was called). This building was more recently known as the CALCO Lime processing facility that still has a dedicated track up to it. However, it was sadly demolished recently, therefore plans for a replacement facility will have to be developed. It is the goal of this proposal to construct a building that would have a look and style that would pay respect to what it once was.

Reconstructing the iconic art deco white 1940's Salida Train Station is also part of our long-term vision. This icon will serve as TPRL headquarters, office, waiting area, and railroad ticket window, while also serving the community as a downtown transit hub. The station is widely known as an architectural gem, and a unique and beautiful landmark. It along with its red heart Rio Grande sign should be restored to serve its admiring community again. We are fortunate to have floor plans for this structure to reference.

While the goals of building a new Engine House and Station are ambitious, we believe that the importance and achievability of these goals will rapidly become self-evident once the railroad is operating and serving the community again – if not already evident from the beauty seen in the photo above.

TPRL similarly envisions the building of a Buena Vista station canopy of some kind. Initially, the existing former station concrete platform can be used.



Salida's and Buena Vista's railroad history are deeply rooted -- founded in 1880 by the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. For over 116 years, the railroad was actively part of the Arkansas River community. It is important to honor, retain, and preserve this historic railroad connection.

The intent of this proposal is to preserve historic infrastructure while simultaneously creating a fully functional railroad that contributes to the surrounding communities and once again becomes an important part of a regional Colorado rail network for future generations.

Simply put: this railroad is too important to let become derelict to the point of no return. It is in great danger of that fate unless rail activity resumes soon. TPRL wants to be the solution to making the railroad active and a complementary part of the community again.

Outdoor Community Partnerships- Bikes, Kayaks and Hikers

TPRL sees supportive partnerships with the local business community, particularly the outdoor community, of vital importance. TPRL will look for partners with the outdoor hiking, fishing, biking, camping, and whitewater community, and with businesses, to transport outdoor enthusiasts out or back at designated flag stops along the line. At these locations a simple short wood platform will be constructed for safe boarding at one vestibule.

A baggage car will be obtained to move outdoor gear such as packs, bikes, rafts, paddleboards, and kayaks. We will also look to partner with the Leadville Railroad to the north and Royal Gorge Railroad to the south, to consider a regional-rail type pass and/or drive business to the other tourist rail operations.



FIBArk (https://www.fibark.com/)

For eighteen years, from 1949 to 1967, the railroad transported hundreds of spectators to various locations to view the FIBArk (First in Boating in the Arkansas River) festival – the U.S.'s oldest whitewater festival. Since this is a signature community event located directly next to the railroad, TPRL will look for ways to support, contribute to, and participate in this event in coordination with event organizers.

Fire/EMS/Search & Rescue/First Responder Support

Large sections of this corridor are in beautiful yet remote areas such as Browns Canyon**. Since safety is paramount to TPRL, we will partner with First Responders to transport equipment and personnel into or out of these areas in the event of Search and Rescue, Wildfire, or Medical Emergencies using train or Hi-Rail vehicles.** We will also partner with and facilitate First Responder Railroad training regarding passenger or public rescue operations.

First Aid/CPR/Drinking Water Onboard Train

The train will carry First Aid and AED equipment. First Aid/CPR qualification will be required by all staff. In honor of what was a passenger rail tradition, fresh drinking water coolers and cone shaped paper cups will always be available and freely provided on all trains.

Historic Value and Other Considerations

The historic and nostalgic value of the corridor cannot be overstated. More importantly, by renewal and operation, the rail corridor will serve the communities along the line, visitors, and all citizens of the State of Colorado again. So, while this proposal is about preserving the past, it very much is about the present and the future of the corridor too.

From a market perspective, it is logical to focus on the Arkansas River Valley between Leadville and Salida because of its strong tourism economy (estimated at 70% of the region's overall economy) and relatively easy minimal grade operating terrain.

South of Salida (Parkdale to Cañon City)



For approximately twenty-one miles south of Vallie the tracks are inactive to Parkdale.

From Parkdale south to Cañon City, the Royal Gorge Railroad, and aggregate carrier Rock & Rail, operate the rail corridor. Located well to their north, TPRL will not interfere with these important established operations. We wish to be a good neighbor catering to a different clientele and offering a different type of service.

Rail access to Salida via this out-of-service section from Parkdale is critical to move equipment in to begin operations. Occasional equipment moves will be by Union Pacific trackage rights. These movements would be rare and limited. For TPRL to be successful, we must have the cooperation of the rail operators south of Parkdale to maintain a rail network connection to access

equipment. When the extreme northern section in reopened, equipment could alternatively access TPRL from that direction.

Not a Plan to Restore Railroad Freight Bridge Traffic

This rail proposal differs most significantly from other recent proposals in that it is not a plan to restore railroad *freight bridge traffic*. Concerns regarding shipment of overhead hazardous commodities on the line that could affect the Arkansas River Valley Watershed will not be at issue. This proposal desires to preserve and provide *tourist rail service* that complements and strengthens the local Arkansas River Valley community, whose primary industry is tourism, without the risk of freight bridge traffic. We differentiate overhead bridge traffic from local freight service as indicated below.

Local Freight

Once rail use is restored, local freight service would again be possible -- if there is a demand for it. Initially, TPRL does not plan to become a common carrier to provide local freight service but could possibly provide such service in the future. Currently, Union Pacific retains all rights to provide freight service and could restore freight service at any time -- since the line has never been officially abandoned.

In the long term, the ability to provide local rail freight service to support local business is an important indirect benefit of a reactivated railroad – the objective of this plan. We are in favor of supporting local economic development and will consider any service to meet that goal.



Benefit to the State of Colorado

With ever increasing highway congestion, there is universal understanding within the transportation planning community of the high value of all existing rail corridors, including this Tennessee Pass Line. In time, this and all mountain rail corridors will be needed to solve the overall transportation needs of the future. Once in operation, this Tennessee Pass Subdivision can serve the immediate and future rail transportation needs of the State. By reopening this line, it is TPRL's desire to eventually host part of a developing future "Mountain Rail" statewide passenger rail service. With this in mind, our hope is that a restored line will enable hosting longer-distance in-state passenger trains in the future, running to more-distant communities in the north or south that a CDOT-led Mountain Rail initiative might plan.

Benefit to Local Communities

TPRL knows that in order to achieve success -- beyond just the railroad's reactivation -- this project must also complement and benefit the local economy**. By design, it will be a *tourist railroad* focused on partnering with and serving the local *recreational and tourist industry*.**

Rail service is understood to be an environmentally friendly way to connect and provide transportation along the line and are the only alternative to state highways. Its functionality is in line with present day environmentally responsible transportation trends.

Most importantly, the main goal, mission, vision, and desired outcome of this proposal is: *the restoration of rail transportation to provide service to present and future generations in service of the entire community*.

Benefit to Union Pacific

Union Pacific will have a partner in TPRL that will restore, maintain, operate, and protect their Tennessee Pass Line assets. **Once back in operation, TPRL will serve as an active local property manager for Union Pacific, responding to and protecting against public and trespasser liability risks, and vandalism, all while maintaining this historic and strategic rail asset.** Care and local management will replace benign neglect, providing the public an active local representative to immediately manage and address any concerns or issues.

TPRL will provide weekly Hi-Rail inspections of the ROW to protect the property and keep the line open, benefitting Union Pacific with property and track inspections and improvements at no cost, using its own labor, and providing the conduit for additional funds generated by grant or program, for track repair and enhancements, further benefitting Union Pacific**. It is worth noting in its present dormant state, the line is missing out on state or federal funding opportunities that are going elsewhere. By active local management, TPRL can better help the line qualify for this new funding to support its maintenance.**

We understand that Union Pacific has leased the line in its entirety to the Rio Grande Pacific Corporation (RGPC) based in Texas. We also understand that this lease extends to 2030. To date,

we are aware of no plans for the restoration of service made by RGPC. We are interested to see if we can assume this portion of the lease directly, or sub-lease this part of the line from RGPC, as required. We are open to any arrangement/agreement that will facilitate bringing the TPRL plan to fruition, and we will seek a lease term that is sufficient for investment and facilitating the repair and improvement of the tracks and property on our time plan.



Local Operation

TPRL will be based and operated in Salida. TPRL will provide equipment, management, supervision, and labor, to support operations, inspections, and basic track repairs. The goal to start service will be to maintain FRA Track Class 2 operations on the mainline, allowing speeds up to 30 mph and, at a minimum, FRA Class 1 for operations in the yard not exceeding 15 mph.



Short-Term Repairs, Long-Term Repairs, No Positive Train Control

TPRL's short-term repair strategy to re-initiate use of the Tennessee Pass Line for Tourist Rail Service takes into consideration the many factors discussed as follows which enable initial engagement of the historic rail structure while minimizing the costlier expenses were the strategy to target busy passenger or commuter rail service. Since Tourist Rail does not require a Positive Train Control (PTC) system, the most cost-effective way to restore rail use for any purpose at minimal cost is via tourist service operations. Regardless, **TPRL will actively seek and identify initial and ongoing funding for all types of repairs, operations, and equipment wherever possible -- including for future potential large-scale renewal by securing public grants, funds from ongoing** operations, matching funds, materials provided by agreement, grants, loans, **and any other TPRL-aligned identified funding. As previously stated, this line dormant, is missing out on federal and state funding opportunities-funds that are available-*but are going to support rail projects elsewhere*. By restoring service to this line, these funds can be directly invested locally, thereby indirectly benefiting the Chaffee County community.**

Our first step in restoration will be to set the repair/service specification down to FRA Class 2 operation from its existing former-use FRA Class 4 track condition. Reduction from Class 4 to Class 2 is considered effectively a track renewal. And because our assessment of the existing condition of the tracks (heavy rail, good ties) and alignment, and our planned lighter tourist train traffic indicate only minimal track repairs are required, reopening the corridor in line with TPRL's envisioned start-up is more than just a vision.

Regarding crossings along the alignment: most are passive, equipped with just crossbuck signs without lights; they are either in or close to town center areas where the train would be

operating at a reduced speed of 10 to 15 mph to ensure safety. Only four grade crossings have lights and gates requiring repair. Until repaired, these crossings would employ a train stop-and-flag procedure.

Previously, the line was a fully signaled CTC territory. The pole line with the wires for that system was removed, thereby disconnecting the large block signals. As a result, TPRL operations will operate by means of written track warrant, locally dispatched by TPRL -- or by Union Pacific to be determined.

In the long term, some tie replacement and surfacing will inevitably be required.

CDOT 2024 State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan Compatibility and Project Funding Options

This proposal is fully in sync with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Rail Plan goal to "*Preserve and Maintain critical corridors and infrastructure to support Colorado's rail systems*" and to "*Expand and improve Colorado's rail systems for passenger and Freight*". In addition, this proposal can also be considered part of Colorado's Scenic and Historic Railroads as defined in the plan. In fact, the plan defines this line as a Class 1 railroad and part of the "*Mountain Corridor Network Vision*".

Within the rail plan, the Tennessee Pass Line is identified as a "*State Significant Rail Corridor*" because it is the only trans-mountain alternative to the Moffat Tunnel Line. These statements regarding the importance of this corridor make the indisputable case for support and action for this line to return it to active service.

A significant amount of funding will be by private investment. However, for track, equipment and other repairs, TPRL will pursue any and all public funding options available. There are many programs available for this type of project that the line and community could capitalize on. TPRL will apply for this funding to secure benefits for this project extending as economic benefit to the entire region.

Recent Colorado state-level legislation has created significant funding opportunities that can apply to this project including SB-184, which supports new rail funding; SB-230, which supports rail operations and community connectivity; SB-190, which provides economic support for rail lines at risk for abandonment; and HB-1030, which promotes rail safety investment.

Federal programs are also available such as: Department of Transportation's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grants; the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing Program (RIFF); the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement Program (CRISI) (NOTE: This program might require coordination with owner Union Pacific from a freight perspective to qualify.)

Next Steps for TPRL

The next steps for TPRL are:

- Establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Union Pacific Railroad (UP) to further study this proposal
- Work with UP to identify ways actively stabilize the right of way with cutting vegetation and spot repairing critical drainage problems as needed
- Seek support from the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)
- Gain support from local, county and state representatives
- Answer questions and get support from the local business community
- Address any public/community concerns
- Create an implementation timeline

TPRL understands there is important rail project planning at other locations within Colorado. We fully support those initiatives and understand their priority. However, we realize it will take time to develop this TPRL proposal. Therefore, we would like to hasten preliminary discussions in order to develop a path forward that will more rapidly restore rail service to this important dormant rail corridor.

The pictures in this proposal are of the line in its current condition. What is remarkable is the general good alignment of the track and quality of the ties. The line benefited from a major rehabilitation project in the 1990s that upgraded much of the line with new ties and many miles of continuous welded rail. This heavy infrastructure remains in good condition, largely due to the south facing location with generally warm and dry conditions. This in turn has preserved much of the infrastructure beyond many typical life expectancy levels. For example, the average life of a wood crosstie is considered 50 years, and it is clear the rail and ties here will exceed that as they are aging very slowly.

As previously noted, more track work would be needed for heavy rail service restoration. But this smaller operation and the very good condition track affords TPRL significant time and materials savings.

The pictures include the iconic Salida Station, demolished in 1985, for which we wish to work with Salida to construct a replacement sometime in the future, and the Salida Engine House, which was demolished in the spring of 2026.

We expect the TPRL vision of a restored railroad to positively resonate within the local community and translate into support for this proposal. Ultimately, a restored property will benefit the community well beyond the TPRL operation itself.

Appendix 1: Property Pictures

These pictures are of the current conditions of the line.



The tracks in Salida looking north. Can you see the train back on it?



Atop Tenderfoot Mountain in Salida with the train yard and tracks in the foreground



Dragging Equipment Detector Wellsville



Looking south along the Arkansas River near Swissvale



Ballasted Bridge south of Swissvale



Pip (RIP) inspects the north portal of the Red Hill Tunnel



Howard



Bridge over Badger Creek

Appendix 2: Downtown Pictures and other Tourist Rail Operations



Downtown Salida with Tenderfoot Mountain in the background



Downtown Buena Vista



Heber Valley Railroad is a good service example

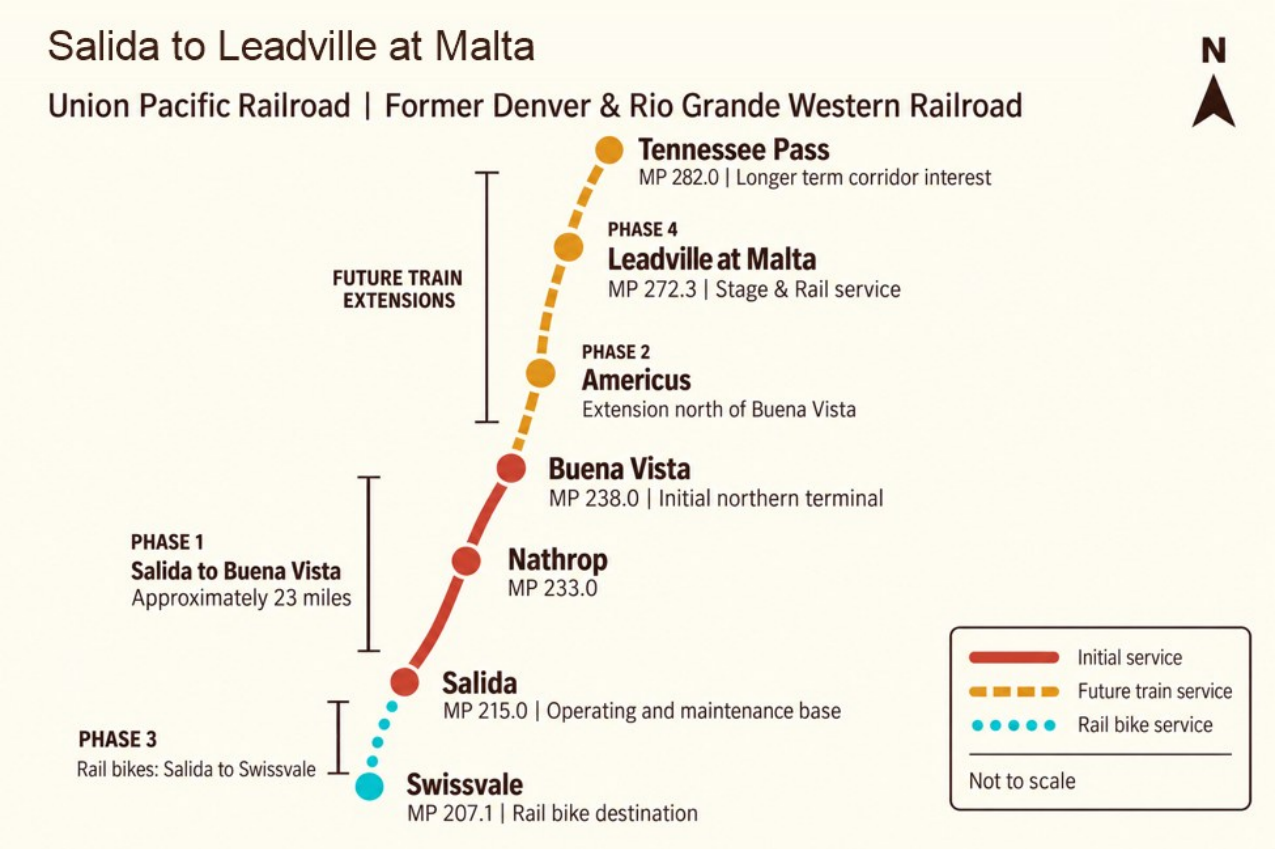


Conway Scenic in North Conway NH is similar good example

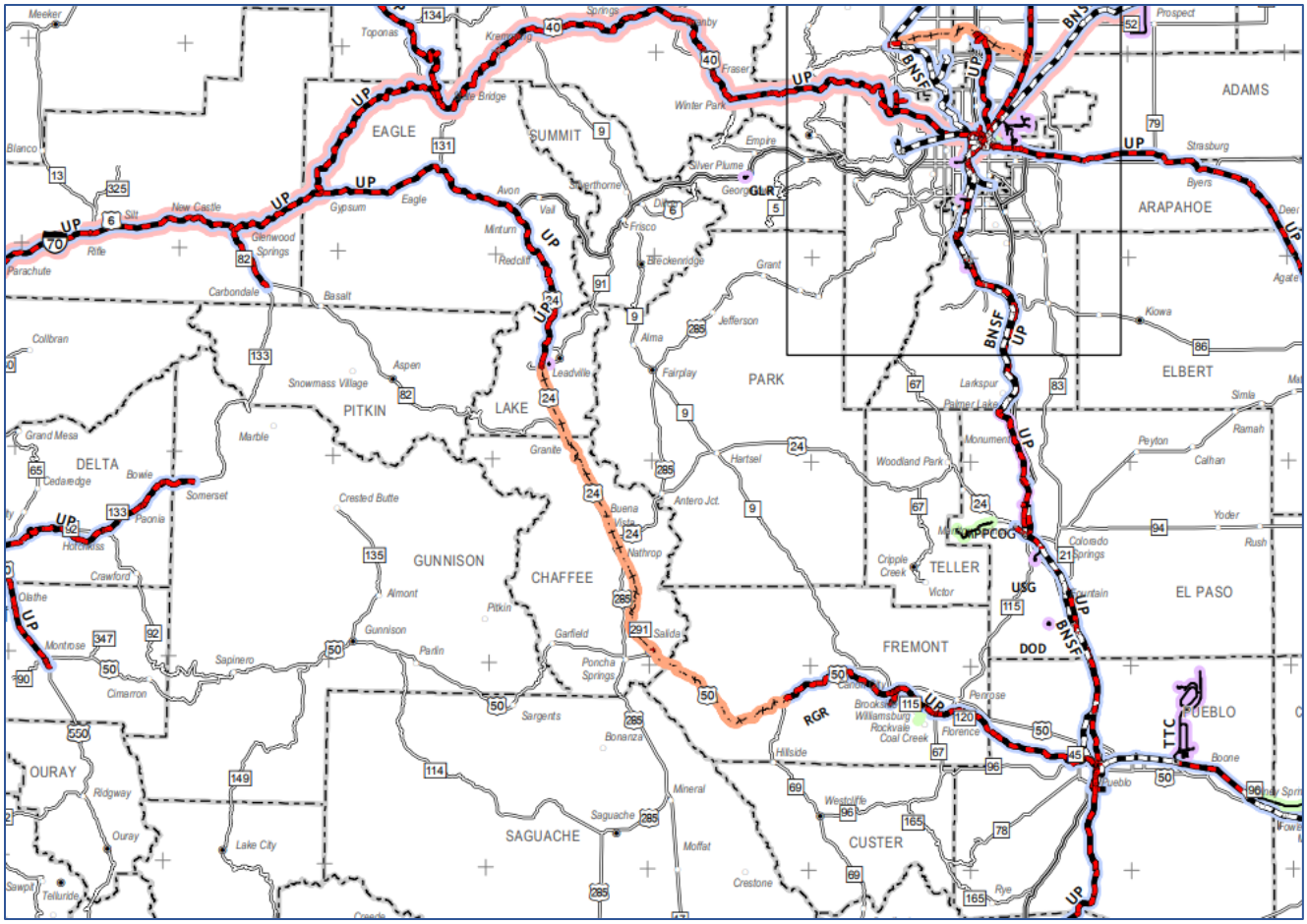


Rail Bikes based in Salida would travel south away from the active train service

Appendix 3: Maps of Desired Territory



Above: Phase delivery map and mileposts of TPRL Project Scope



Above: Project scope within the regional rail network. TPRL is the in the orange segment