



NMDOT 2025 Rail Plan

DRAFT PLAN - VIRTUAL MEETING

September 16, 2025, 6pm

Agenda

- 1. Introductions**
- 2. Rail Plan Purpose and Process**
- 3. Rail Plan Overview**
 - 3.1. The State of the New Mexico Rail System
 - 3.2. New Mexico Rail: Funding, Agencies, and Coordination
 - 3.3. Impacts and Trends
 - 3.4. The Future of Rail in New Mexico
- 4. Next Steps**

Introductions

NMDOT

Rob Fine, Rail Facilities and Permitting Manager

Kevin Olinger, Transit and Rail Division Director

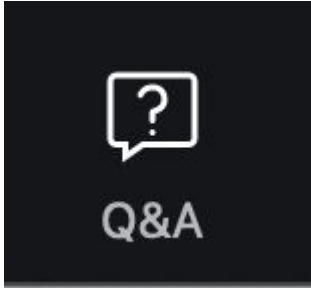
Huitt-Zollars

Madeleine Pelzel, Project Manager

Ashley Whitesides, Planner

Q&A

As you have questions, please use the Q&A function in the zoom bar below.





Rail Plan Purpose and Process

Rail Plan Purpose

The 2025 New Mexico State Rail Plan is a **federally required systematic analysis** of New Mexico's rail system and identifies a long-range service and investment program for freight and passenger rail improvements in the state.

The plan is aligned with the New Mexico 2045 Plan, which discusses passenger and freight rail transportation in the state though the State Rail Plan provides additional depth on rail issues and concerns.

This State Rail Plan is an update of the 2014 New Mexico State Rail Plan.

Rail Plan Federal Purpose

- Required to receive future funding from Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
- Renewed Federal emphasis on railroad investments (PRIIA, RSIA, TIGER)

Rail Plan State Purpose

- **Set forth State policy regarding passenger and freight rail transportation**
- **Present priorities and strategies to enhance rail service that benefits the public**
- **Serve as the basis for Federal and State rail investments**

Rail Plan Process

- **Review of pre-pandemic draft materials**
- **Stakeholder outreach to determine needs, issues, and priorities**
- **Draft rail plan**
- **Public and stakeholder review and comment**
- **Final rail plan submitted to Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for approval**
- **Update plan every 5 years**

Rail Plan Process

- Review of pre-pandemic draft materials
- Stakeholder outreach to determine needs and priorities
- Draft rail plan
- **Public and stakeholder review and comment**
- Final rail plan submitted to Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for approval
- Update plan every 5 years

We are here!

Stakeholder Outreach Participants

Passenger / Other

- Amtrak
- Rail Runner / Rio Metro
- C&TS
- Sky Railway / SFS
- NM Heritage

Class III Freight

- Arizona Eastern RW
- Santa Fe Southern RW
- Southwestern RR
- Santa Teresa Southern RR
- Texas & New Mexico RW

Class I Freight

- BNSF RW
- UP RR

Organizations

- Rail Passengers Association
- Rails Inc.

A photograph of a train station platform, overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. On the left, a white train with 'RAIL RUNNER' and a large red and yellow rooster logo is visible. Several passengers are walking away from the camera on the platform. Some are carrying backpacks, and others are pulling rolling suitcases. In the background, there are train tracks, overhead power lines, and a small red-roofed structure. The overall scene depicts a busy transit hub.

Rail Plan Overview

Rail Plan Overview

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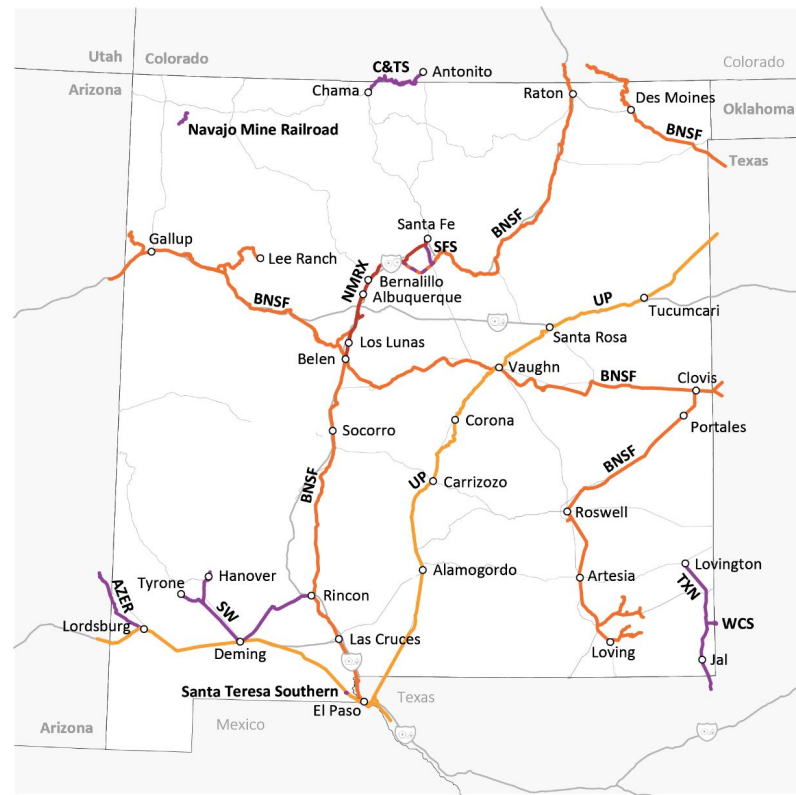


RAIL PLAN OVERVIEW

Chapter 1: The State of the New Mexico Rail System

New Mexico Rail Network

- Passenger
- Class I Freight
- Class III Freight
- Private Freight



Legend

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Arizona Eastern RW (AZER) | Santa Fe Southern RW (SFS) | Freeways |
| BNSF RW (BNSF) | Santa Teresa Southern RR (STS) | Major Roadways |
| Cumbres and Toltec Scenic RR (C&TS) | Southwestern RR (SW) | State Boundaries |
| Waste Control Specialists (WCS) | Texas & New Mexico RW (TXN) | New Mexico State |
| Navajo Mine RR | Union Pacific RR (UP) | |
| Rail Runner Express (NMRX) | Stations along rail lines | |

1" = 70 miles

0 35 70 140 mi



New Mexico Rail Network

- **Passenger - Amtrak**
 - 2 lines: Southwest Chief and Sunset Limited
 - 7 stations: Gallup, Albuquerque, Lamy, Las Vegas, Raton, Deming, and Lordsburg
 - Nationwide, Amtrak ridership reached 32.8 million passengers in FFY2024, up by 14% from FFY23.



Legend

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| — Amtrak Southwest Chief | — Freeways |
| — Amtrak Sunset Limited | — Major Roadways |
| ● Station Ridership 500 - 5,000 | □ State Boundaries |
| ● Station Ridership 5,000 - 50,000 | □ New Mexico State |
| ● Station Ridership > 50,000 | |

1" = 70 miles

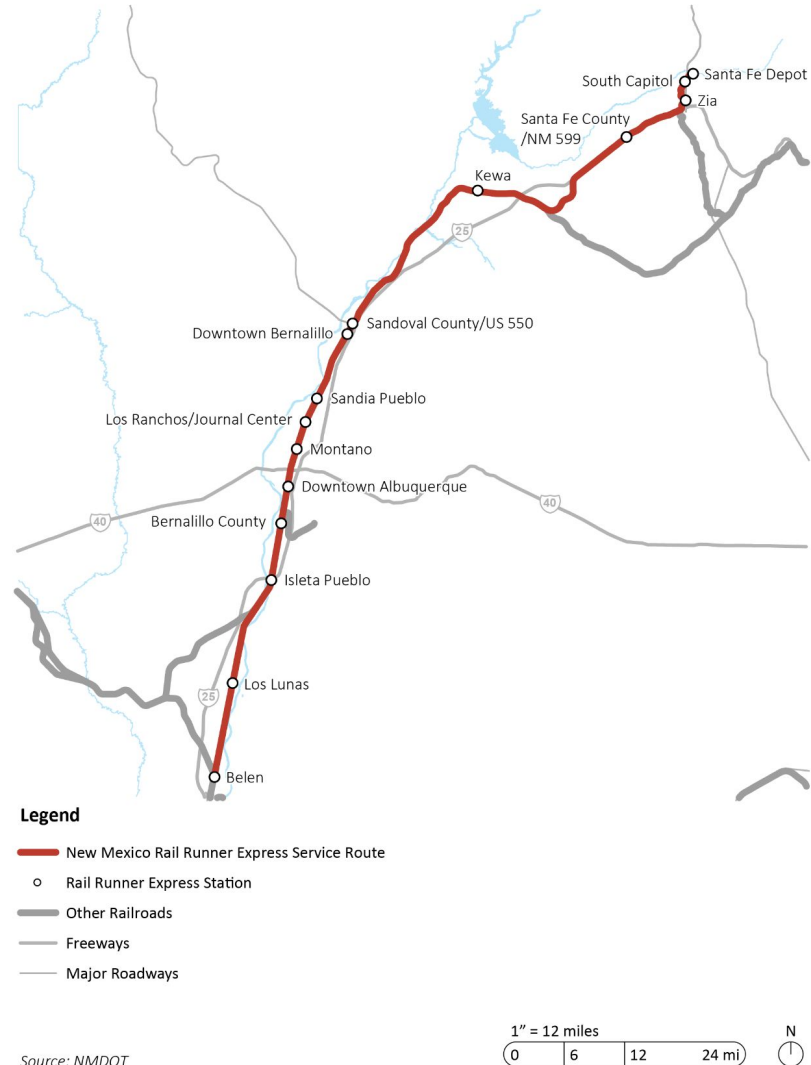
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New Mexico Rail Network

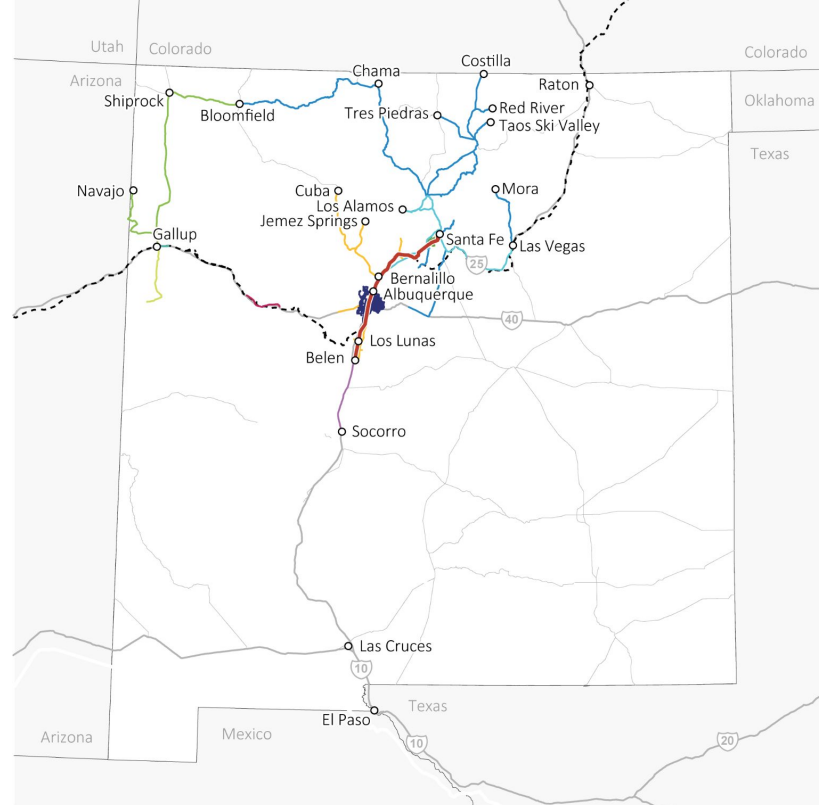
- **Passenger - Rail Runner Express**

- 97-mile corridor
- 15 stations
- Throughout the years leading up to 2020, yearly ridership was between 750,000 and 800,000, down from over 1 million in 2010. Ridership has recovered to about 80% of the pre-pandemic total.
- Rio Metro has added additional weekday trips and recovered the full-service schedule.



New Mexico Rail Network

- **Passenger - Rail Runner Express**
 - Rio Metro also operates commuter bus, fixed-route local service, and some demand-response service.
 - NCRTD operates 26 fixed routes and offers fixed route connections to Rail Runner.
 - In Albuquerque, ABQ RIDE has over 40 routes that are useful from the Alvarado Transportation Center, include a direct route to the airport

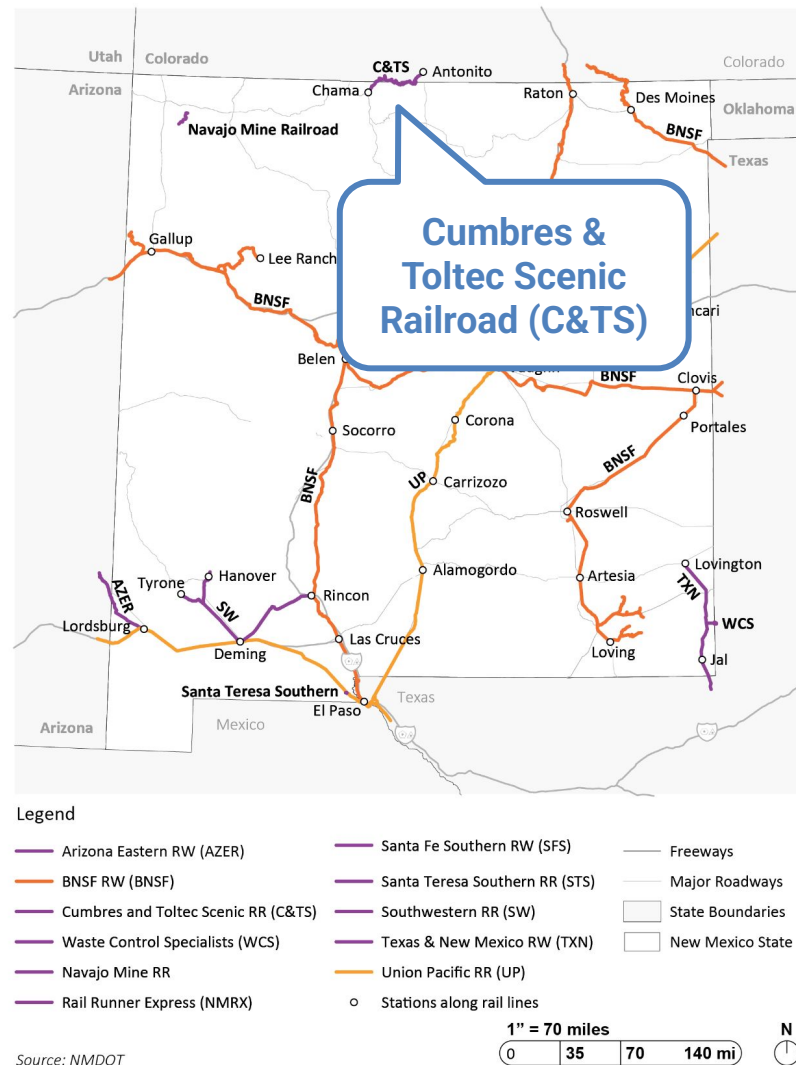


Transit Providers Connecting to Rail Runner



New Mexico Rail Network

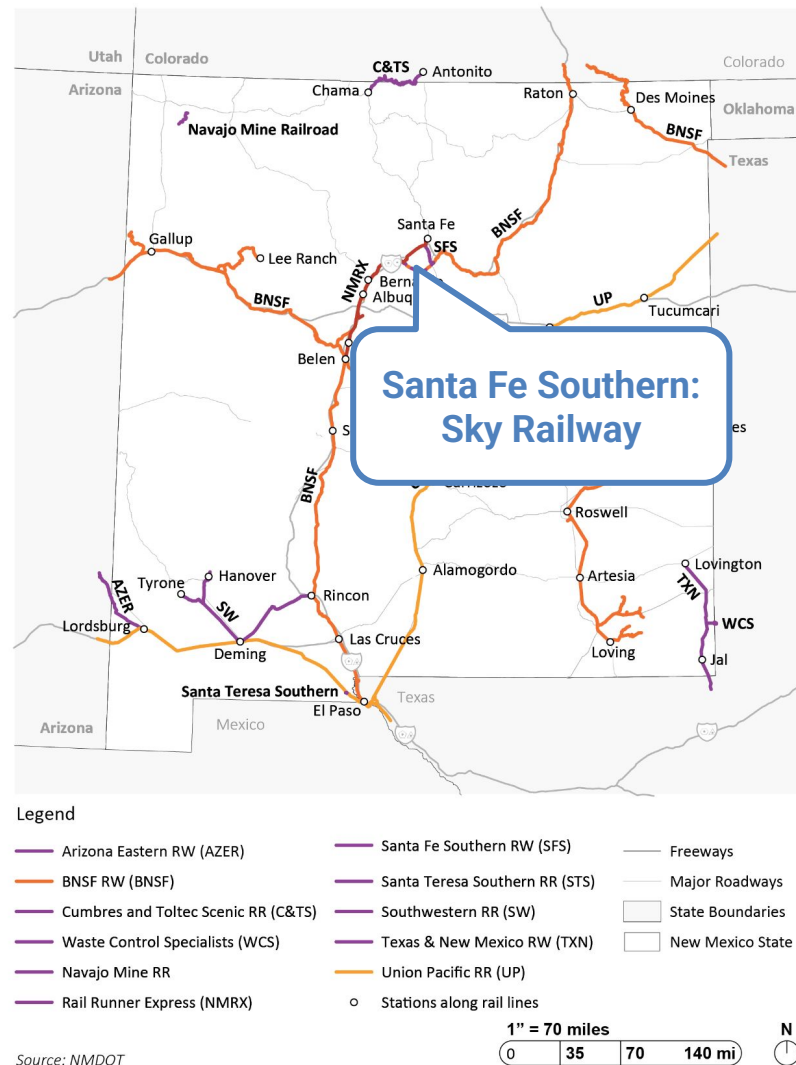
- **Passenger - Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad (C&TS)**
 - 64 miles of narrow-gauge track between Antonito, CO and Chama, NM
 - In 2024, there were 38,500 riders, nearing pre-pandemic ridership
 - C&TS is supported by a non-profit organization, Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc.



New Mexico Rail Network

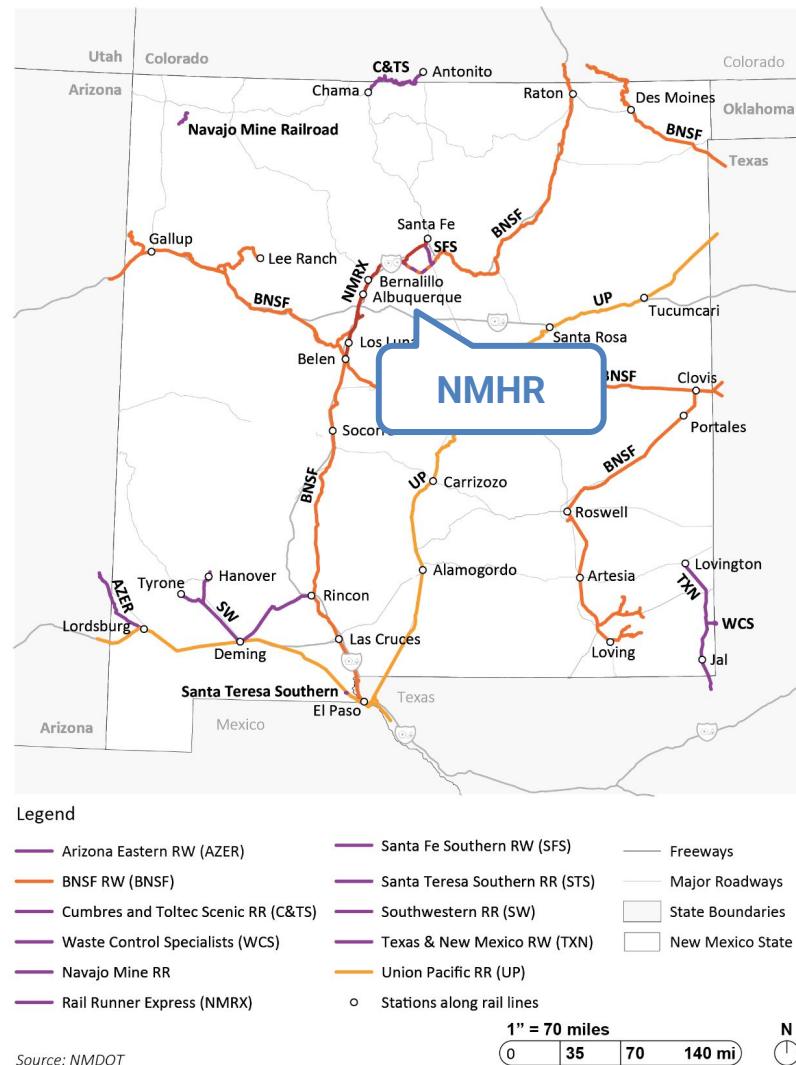
- **Passenger - Santa Fe Southern: Sky Railway**

- Operates on the 18 miles between Lamy and Santa Fe offering live music, performances, food, and drink in historic passenger cars
- Over 75,000 people have enjoyed their tours since the service began.



New Mexico Rail Network

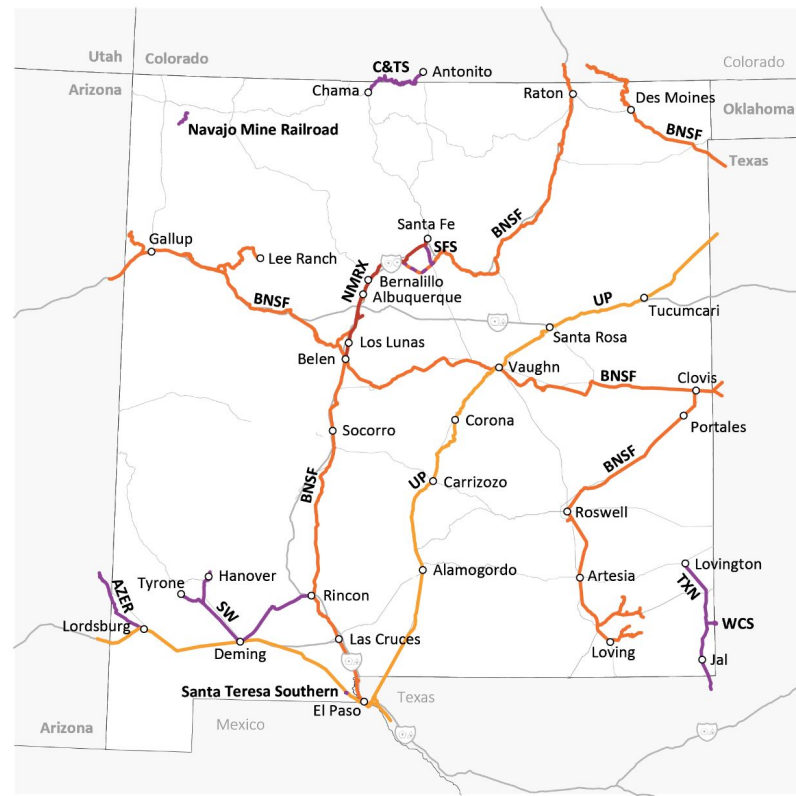
- **Passenger - New Mexico Steam Locomotive & Railroad Historical Society (NMHR)**
 - All-volunteer, non-profit organization that has spent 20 years restoring the former Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe (ATSF) steam locomotive.



New Mexico Rail Network

- **Freight**

- Class I Freight
- Class III Freight
- Private Freight



Legend

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| — Arizona Eastern RW (AZER) | — Santa Fe Southern RW (SFS) | — Freeways |
| — BNSF RW (BNSF) | — Santa Teresa Southern RR (STS) | — Major Roadways |
| — Cumbres and Toltec Scenic RR (C&TS) | — Southwestern RR (SW) | — State Boundaries |
| — Waste Control Specialists (WCS) | — Texas & New Mexico RW (TXN) | — New Mexico State |
| — Navajo Mine RR | — Union Pacific RR (UP) | |
| — Rail Runner Express (NMRX) | ○ Stations along rail lines | |

1" = 70 miles

0 35 70 140 mi

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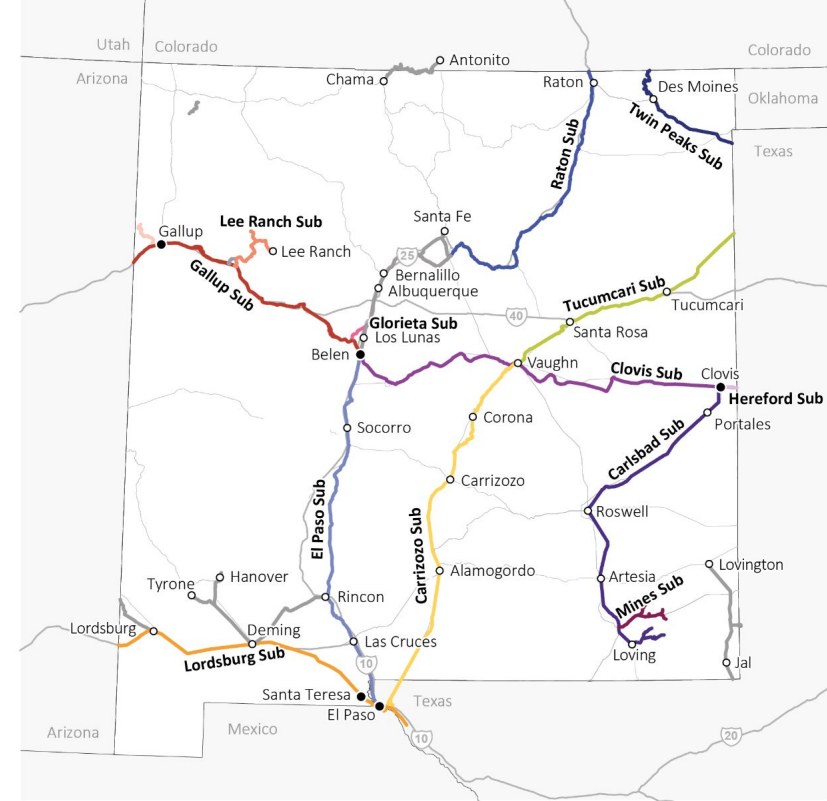
Source: NMDOT

New Mexico Rail Network























- **Class I Freight**

- BNSF
- Union Pacific (UP)

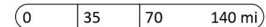
- The Class I railroads in New Mexico are part of two national networks: the National Multimodal Freight Network (NMFN) and the National Strategic Rail Corridor Network (STRACNET).



Legend

 BNSF Defiance Sub  BNSF Carlsbad Sub  UP Tucumcari Sub  Freeways
 BNSF Gallup Sub  BNSF Mines Sub  UP Carrizozo Sub  Major Roadways
 BNSF Lee Ranch Sub  BNSF Raton Sub  UP Lordsburg Sub  State Boundaries
 BNSF Glorieta Sub  BNSF Twin Peaks Sub   Stations along rail lines  New Mexico State
 BNSF Hereford Sub  BNSF El Paso Sub  Major Yard
 BNSF Clovis Sub  Other Railroads

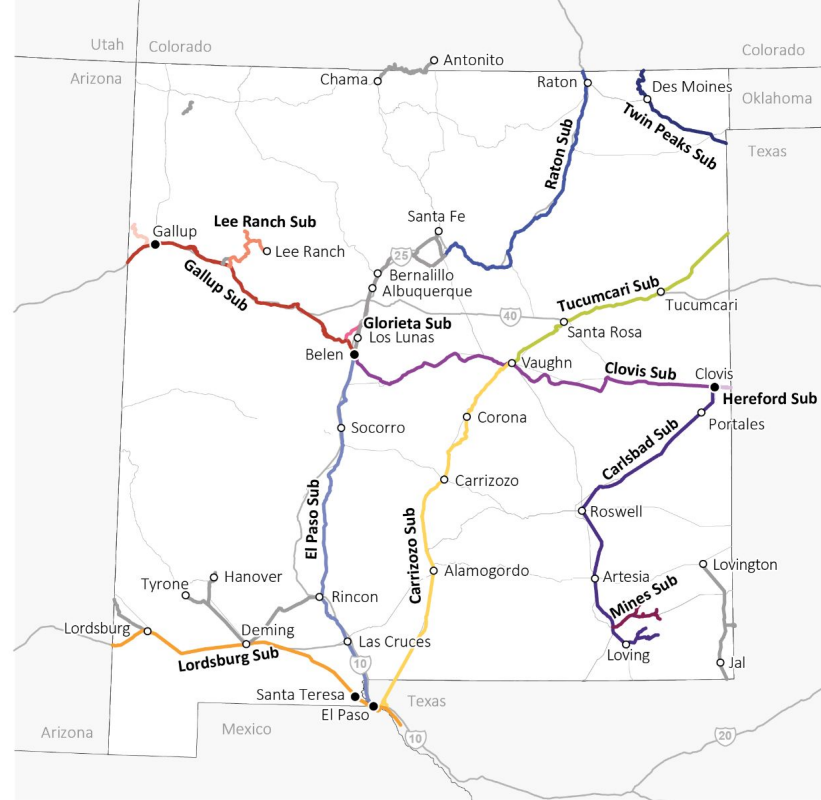
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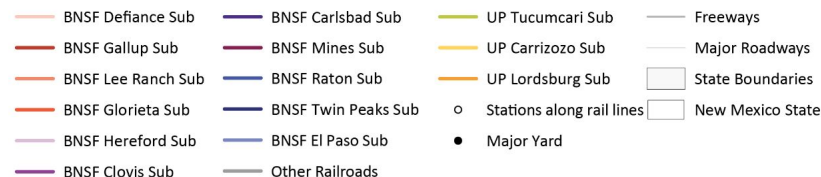
Source: NMDOT

New Mexico Rail Network

- **Class I Freight - BNSF**
 - Created by a merger in 1996
 - The Southern Transcon connects Chicago, Illinois, with Los Angeles, California
 - Other BNSF lines in NM connect the Powder River Basin and power plants in Texas and connect Clovis to mines and the Permian Basin
 - Transports coal in and out of NM and delivers and exports many different supplies and products in and out of the state



Legend



1" = 70 miles

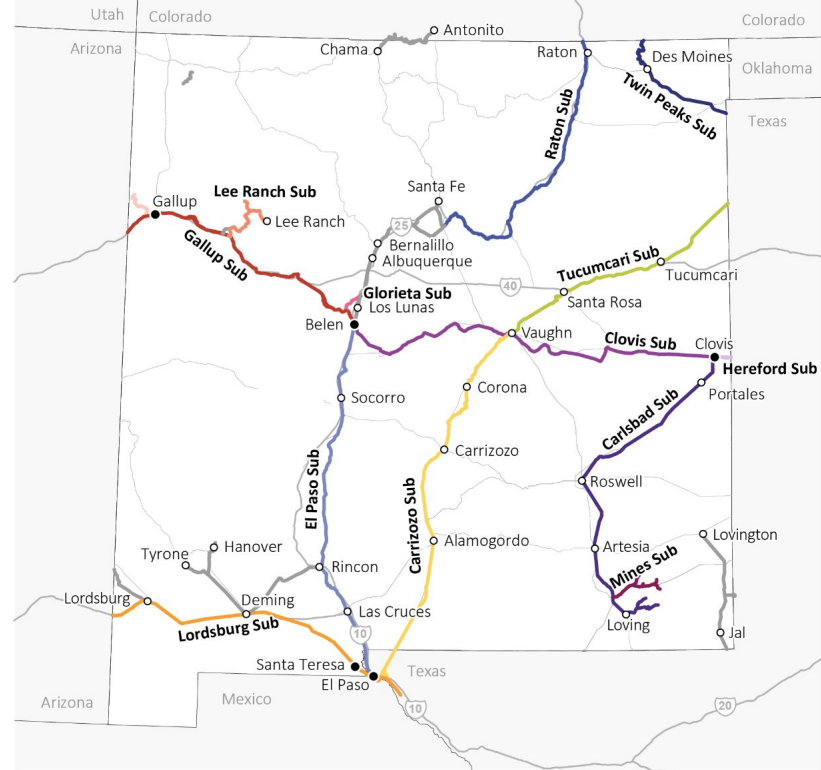


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New Mexico Rail Network

- **Class I Freight - UP**

- Founded in 1862, with presence in NM beginning in 1996 with the purchase of Southern Pacific RR
- The Sunset Route connects LA and El Paso through New Mexico
- The Golden State Route feeds into the Sunset Route at El Paso
- Carries consumer goods, building materials, produce, and a variety of other traffic



Legend

BNSF Defiance Sub	BNSF Carlsbad Sub	UP Tucumcari Sub	Freeways
BNSF Gallup Sub	BNSF Mines Sub	UP Carrizozo Sub	Major Roadways
BNSF Lee Ranch Sub	BNSF Raton Sub	UP Lordsburg Sub	State Boundaries
BNSF Glorieta Sub	BNSF Twin Peaks Sub		New Mexico State
BNSF Hereford Sub	BNSF El Paso Sub	○ Stations along rail lines	
BNSF Clovis Sub	Other Railroads	● Major Yard	

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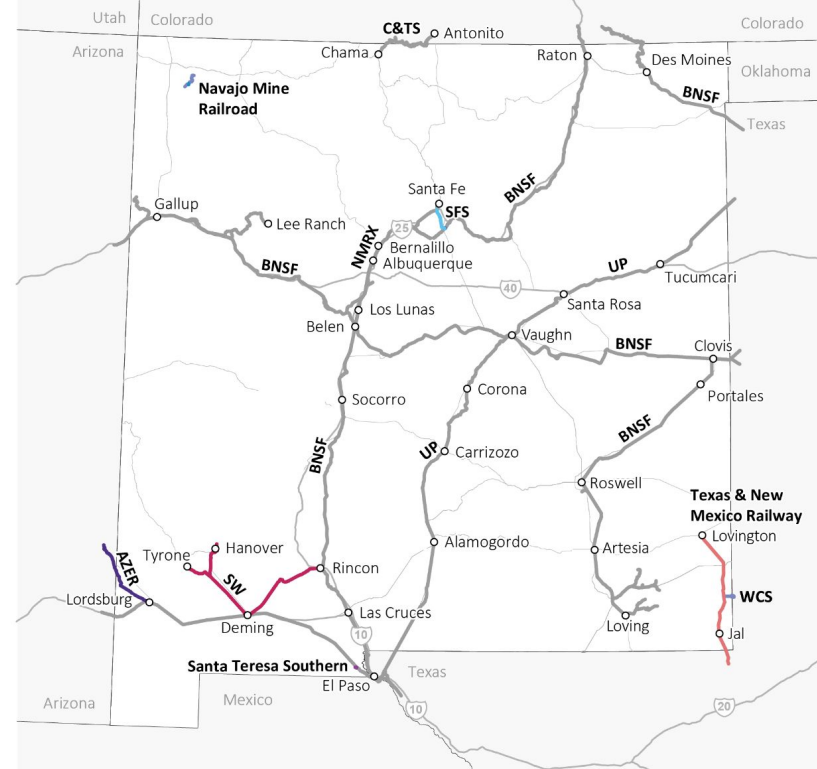
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New Mexico Rail Network

- **Class III Freight**

- Arizona Eastern RW
- Navajo Mine RR
- Santa Fe Southern RW
- Santa Teresa Southern RR
- Southwestern RR
- Texas & New Mexico RW



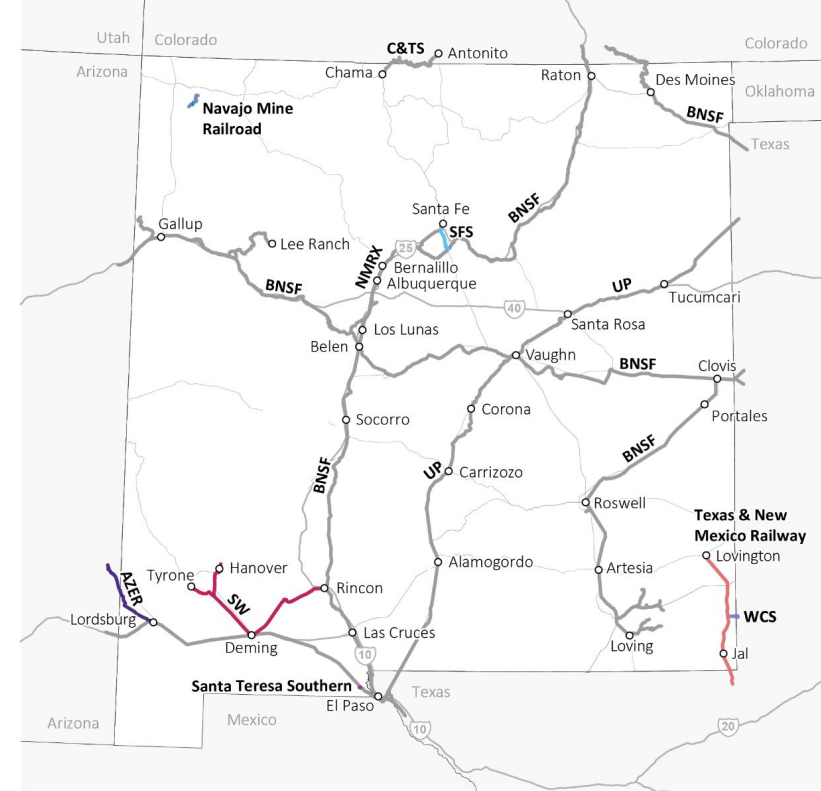
Legend

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| — Santa Fe Southern RW (SFS) | ○ Stations along rail lines | — New Mexico State |
| — Santa Teresa Southern RR (STS) | | |

New Mexico Rail Network

- **Private Railroads**

- Navajo Mine RR
- Waste Control Specialists RL



Legend

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| — Arizona Eastern RW (AZER) | — Southwestern RR (SW) | — Freeways |
| — Waste Control Specialists (WCS) | — Texas & New Mexico RW (TXN) | — Major Roadways |
| — Navajo Mine RR | — Other Railroads | — State Boundaries |
| — Santa Fe Southern RW (SFS) | ○ Stations along rail lines | — New Mexico State |
| — Santa Teresa Southern RR (STS) | | |

New Mexico Rail Network

- Subdivisions
- Railroad Facilities and Industrial Parks
- Interchanges
- Rail-Served Industrial Parks,
Transload Facilities, and Inland Ports

Rail Needs in New Mexico

- **A common theme throughout the state is the need to promote economic activity tied to the state's railroads. This was expressed in many ways, including:**
 - ensuring that existing railroad infrastructure is maintained to support existing businesses and passenger rail service;
 - developing new rail-served businesses adjacent to existing rail lines, including transload facilities; and
 - constructing new rail lines to serve communities that presently have no railroads.

Rail Needs in New Mexico

- New passenger rail services and improvements to existing passenger rail services were identified.
- In the wake of the 2023 East Palestine derailment and release of hazardous materials, there has been increased concern about preventing a similar event occurring in New Mexico.
- Amending the state's anti-donation clause to give the state and its political subdivisions more flexibility to fund railroad-related improvements was identified.

Rail Needs in New Mexico

- Class III railroads noted that the state's ROW fencing requirements can be a financial burden, and that they sometimes spend as much money to comply with those requirements as they do to maintain the railway itself.
- Continue efforts to minimize collisions with trains at highway-rail at-grade crossings by upgrading passive crossings to active warning devices.
- Eliminate grade crossings through construction of grade separations or the consolidation of crossings.
- Implement quiet zones, where locomotive engineers no longer must blow train horns when approaching at-grade crossings as a means to mitigate noise impacts in communities near at-grade crossings.

Rail Safety in New Mexico

- **Ongoing Programs and Projects to Improve Safety and Security**
 - Federal Railroad Administration's Office of Railroad Safety
 - Operation Lifesaver
 - Positive Train Control
 - State Legislative Initiatives

Rail Safety in New Mexico

- **New Mexico Rail Accidents and Incidents**
 - Train Accidents
 - Other Rail Incidents
 - Highway-Rail At-Grade Crossing Safety in New Mexico
 - Highway-Rail At-Grade Crossing Incidents in New Mexico

Non-Railroad Use of Railroad Property

- **Abandonments**
- **Rail-Banking**
- **Rails to Trails**

The background image shows a train on tracks, with a large locomotive in the foreground on the left and a long freight train in the distance. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent red overlay. The locomotive in the foreground has the 'AMTRAK' logo and a stylized arrow graphic. The freight train in the distance consists of several locomotives and a long line of cargo containers.

RAIL PLAN OVERVIEW

Chapter 2: Funding, Agencies, and Coordination

New Mexico Rail-Related Programs

- **New Mexico Department of Transportation**
- **Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad Commission**
- **New Mexico Economic Development Department**
- **New Mexico Border Authority**
- **Rio Metro Regional Transit District**
- Other state agencies with rail-related responsibilities include the New Mexico Tourism Department, the New Mexico Department of Public Safety, and the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

Regional Organizations with Rail-Related Responsibilities

- **Metropolitan Planning Organizations**
- **Regional Transportation Planning Organizations**
- **Economic Development Districts and Councils of Government**
- **Regional Transit Districts**

New Mexico Rail Funding Sources

- **State Sources**
 - Legislative Appropriations
 - State Road Fund and Bonds
 - New Mexico Match Fund
- **Local Sources**
 - Gross Receipts Taxes

New Mexico Rail Funding Sources

- **Federal Sources**
 - Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
 - Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
 - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
 - National Surface Transportation and Innovative Financing Bureau (NSTIFB)
 - U.S. Department of Transportation

New Mexico Rail Funding Sources

- **Public-Private Partnerships**
 - Requires underlying funding source due to Anti-Donation Clause

Program Coordination

- **Integration with Other State Plans**
- **Coordination with Neighboring States**
- **Coordination with Federal Transportation Plans and Programs**



RAIL PLAN OVERVIEW

Chapter 3: Impacts and Trends

Economic Impacts

In New Mexico, rail operations support three objectives:

- (1) moving goods (freight);**
- (2) moving people (long-distance passengers and commuters); and**
- (3) serving tourists as attractions (historic/scenic rail).**

Economic Impacts

- **Trade and Economic Development**
- **Congestion Mitigation**
- **Safety Impacts**

Environmental Impacts

- **Air Quality**
- **Land Use**
- **Energy Use**
- **Resilience to Climate Change Impacts**

Community Impacts

- **Air Pollution**
- **Train Horn Noise**
- **Passenger Rail and Sustainable Communities**
- **Freight Rail and Sustainable Communities**
- **Enhancing Safety**

Demand

- **Commodity Movements**
- **Vehicle Miles of Travel Forecast**
- **Intercity Rail Ridership Forecast**
- **Rail Runner Express Ridership Forecast**
- **Fuel Cost**
- **Rail Congestion**



RAIL PLAN OVERVIEW

Chapter 4: The Future of Rail in New Mexico

Vision

New Mexico's rail network is a fully integrated and safe multimodal rail system that provides efficient passenger services to, from, and within the state; provides a competitive option for New Mexico shippers; is a vital component of the national transportation network; and supports sustainable, inclusive economic development statewide.

Goals and Objectives Supporting the Rail Vision

Support economic growth and development

- Increase capacity and efficiency of long-distance freight corridors
- Develop and promote local freight connections and industrial sites
- Promote rail-related tourism

Goals and Objectives Supporting the Rail Vision

Improve railroad safety and security and reduce impacts

- Link rail investments to strategies that support economic development
- Develop and implement mandatory safety-related measures
- Improve highway-rail grade crossing safety and reduce impacts of rail crossings on local mobility
- Improve rail security

Goals and Objectives Supporting the Rail Vision

Maintain railroad assets in a state of good repair

- Improve the conditions of the state's Class III short lines
- Maintain/improve the conditions of the NMRX rail lines

Goals and Objectives Supporting the Rail Vision

Promote efficient passenger rail service

- Improve passenger rail options in New Mexico as part of a multimodal transportation system
- Improve Rail Runner Express operations

Related Plans

- **New Mexico 2045 Plan**
- **2025 New Mexico Statewide Public Transportation Plan**
- **2025 Strategic Highway Safety Plan**

RSIP: Rail Service and Investment Program

- Includes short-range (2025-2030) and long-range investment programs (2031-2045)
- Includes both passenger and freight projects as well as rail-highway grade crossing improvement projects



NEXT STEPS

Comments

- **Draft State Rail Plan (2025) is available on the Rail Bureau's website**
 - <https://www.dot.nm.gov/planning-research-multimodal-and-safety/modal/transit-rail/rail-bureau/>
- **Comment period ends November 30, 2025**
- **Please email rail.plan@dot.nm.gov with any comments or questions.**