

Analysis of the Economic Benefits of

The Amtrak Empire Builder to Montana



A Report Prepared for:

Montana Department of Transportation,
Montana Department of Commerce, &
Montana Department of Agriculture

Submitted by:
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Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Executive Summary	1
Background	3
Brief History of Empire Builder and Amtrak	3
The Current Amtrak Debate	5
Study Framework	5
Information Available	6
Analytical Methods	6
Empire Builder Benefits	7
Economic Impacts if Empire Builder is Cancelled	20
Findings	22

Tables

1	Montana Amtrak Stations	8
2	Empire Builder Amtrak Ridership	9

Appendices

A	Contacts
B	Selected Bibliography
C	Summaries of Interviews of Mayors and Others
D	E-mails and Faxes Received from Montana Citizens

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Executive Summary

Purpose of Study

The precarious financial status of the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, better known as Amtrak, including Congress' 1997 mandate to eliminate the need for subsidies by 2002, subsequent recommendations of the Amtrak Reform Council, and threatened terminations of Amtrak service, have resulted in concern over the future of the Empire Builder passenger train service across northern Montana.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the economic benefits of Empire Builder service to Montana, and determine the economic impacts if the Empire Builder is eliminated.

Methodology

This study builds on earlier work accomplished by the Montana Department of Transportation, includes updated data from Amtrak and others, quantifies benefits and economic impacts where data are readily available, explains benefits and impacts qualitatively based upon interviews with Montana officials, business owners and other sources, and includes important background material, all within constraints of available study time and resources.

Conclusions

Following is a summary of Empire Builder benefits to Montana.

- (1) Amtrak's Empire Builder is an essential transportation service for which there is, by and large in most of the Montana communities served, no reasonable alternative.
- (2) Direct spending by Amtrak-using nonresident travelers in Montana and by Amtrak is conservatively estimated to total between \$5.3 and 5.7 million annually.
- (3) The respending of these dollars in Montana is conservatively estimated at \$0.515 million personal income for Montana residents annually, which in turn generates 30

Montana jobs. As an example, the Empire Builder supports bus service at Amtrak transfer points at Whitefish, Cut Bank and Shelby,¹ and BNSF fueling facilities and various retail establishments in Havre, not to mention jobs associated with lodging and recreation at Glacier National Park and other locations in Montana.

(4) Money is saved for Montanans by the availability of Empire Builder express package service to/from Montana. Data were not available to quantify this benefit.

(5) The benefits (money saved, automobile costs avoided, lower accident probability, reduced highway maintenance, etc.) associated with using Amtrak intercity transportation total at least \$7.6 million annually.

(6) Expenditures by nonresident Empire Builder passengers in Montana result in addition of \$135,000 annually to state and local tax revenues.

(7) Overarching all the above, Amtrak's Empire Builder as an institution is no small part of everyday life to many Montanans who live in rural isolation along the line and who depend upon it to get to medical appointments, send their children to college, travel to Havre for a day's shopping, visit out-of-state, etc.

With regard to (7), it appears that there are important quality of life benefits provided by the Empire Builder to Montana, to those living in areas where population density can be as low as one person per square mile, that those who live in metropolitan areas take for granted. An important component of this study was the interviewing of Montana mayors and others in the small towns along its route, and the word often used was "devastating" when the question was asked, "What would be the impact if Amtrak service is cancelled?"

A number of arguments have been advanced to eliminate long-distance passenger trains. These arguments lose cogency when the relatively sparse funding support--and the conditions of that support--of Amtrak compared with other modes of transportation--highways, air and water--is considered. If Amtrak were treated by the federal government as are the other transportation modes, the objective would be utility, not profitability. In contrast with all other transportation modes, freight railroads receive no federal funding support.

One of the strongest arguments justifying retention of the Empire Builder is the relatively isolated and rural character of Montana and adjoining states. Scheduled air services to small towns either don't exist at all or, where it is provided with federal subsidy and described as "essential air service" it is so dispersed geographically as to be of only marginal utility to most citizens. Also, essential air service is considered relatively expensive. Support for small town transportation service can be marshalled because it results in a lesser use of resources if by rail, all the more so if a cluster of such communities is served by one single rail schedule, as is the case in Montana.

¹ RLBA phone conversation with Leslie Momberg, Rim Rock Station Agent, Cut Bank, Montana, June 16, 2003, and Greyhound website: www.greyhound.com.

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Background

Amtrak's financial difficulties in recent years have threatened continuation of long-distance passenger train service, including the Empire Builder, which crosses northern Montana and serves 12 Montana communities on the Hi-Line as well as their surrounding areas. The State of Montana wishes to determine the economic benefits of the Empire Builder to the state, and the economic impacts on Montana if Amtrak were to withdraw that service.

Brief History of the Empire Builder and Amtrak

Empire Builder intercity passenger rail service, named to honor James J. Hill, (who, despite his Canadian origin, became) the great pioneer of U.S. northwestern railroad expansion, was inaugurated by the Great Northern Railway on June 11, 1929, as its premier passenger train connecting Chicago and Seattle. Forty years later, following a long and controversial effort, first in a proceeding before the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) and later in the federal courts, up to the U.S. Supreme Court, the consolidation of the three great railroads built by Hill--the Great Northern, the Northern Pacific and the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy--was finally sanctioned by the government in 1970, and the name of the combined railroad became Burlington Northern (ultimately Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF)).

The Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970 created the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), which began operations in 1971 over a 23,000 route-mile system. This system grew to 27,500 route-miles by the time the federal government enacted the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1978, at which time Montana benefited from two intercity passenger rail routes, the Empire Builder and the North Coast Hiawatha. The latter operated across southern Montana and served Glendive, Miles City, Forsyth, Billings, Livingston, Bozeman, Butte, Deer Lodge, Missoula and Paradise. The Amtrak Improvement Act resulted in discontinuation of North Coast Hiawatha service in October 1979.

But the Act also resulted in U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) recommendations justifying retention of the Empire Builder--in a "trimmed down route system"--on the basis that it served isolated areas with no alternative transportation:

"The analysis found that 40 percent of the passengers who rode the Empire Builder during Fiscal Year 1978, or 80,000 people, would have had no other reasonable public transportation available to them if the train had not operated."²

Other rationale favoring preservation of the Empire Builder mentioned in the USDOT report was rail's "unique all-weather capability" which is "more important on routes located in relatively isolated areas with severe winter weather than it is in mild regions with more highly developed highway systems."³

And with specific regard to Montana:

"Public testimony and an evaluation of environmental considerations both indicated that the Empire Builder route between Chicago and Seattle traverses areas with isolated communities, served by a relatively meager highway system, that experienced very severe winter storms. For example, public testimony during a hearing at Havre, Montana, indicated that the major highway in that area is a two-lane road that was completely closed due to inclement weather 13 days during the 1977-78 winter season. Partially on the basis of those considerations, and in response to the Congressional directive that the availability of alternate modes and tourism be considered, the Department included the Empire Builder route in the recommended system."⁴

Also, USDOT recognized the importance of tourism:

"[T]he Department analyzed each route to determine whether it served any particular tourist attraction, and particularly any national park, directly or exclusively. This analysis played a part in the decision to include in the recommended route system ... the Empire Builder (which traverses Glacier National Park and stops at two gateways to the Park including the park lodge) "⁵

Finally, USDOT recognized that in Montana the Empire Builder parallels a "difficult alignment" two-lane highway, with no adequate bus service.⁶

In summary, the 1979 USDOT analysis resulted in preservation of the Empire Builder because:

² "Final Report to Congress on the Amtrak Route System As Required by the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1978", United States Department of Transportation, January, 1979, (hereafter Final Report) page 4-18.

³ Final Report, page 4-9.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Final Report, page 4-11.

⁶ Final Report, page 4-18.

- It served isolated communities which had no alternative transportation.
- The train had dependable all-weather capability in Montana's severe winter weather.
- The parallel highway was a difficult alignment two-lane road.
- Tourism was important.

These arguments appear equally valid today.

The most recent Amtrak funding crises once again raises the question whether long distance passenger train service should be terminated. The installation of David Gunn as President and CEO appears, at least temporarily, to have reduced the threat of termination of Amtrak services.

The Current Amtrak Debate

The mandate given Amtrak by the Congress to operate a nationwide passenger rail service has endured a tortuous and difficult three decades. One thorny issue has been the troublesome relationship of Amtrak with the freight railroads over which Amtrak is authorized by law to operate. Another tough issue has been the notion that intercity passenger rail service should operate at a profit, notwithstanding the facts that all transportation modes but freight rail are subsidized, and that no intercity passenger rail system in the world operates at a profit. Finally, the Congress has not been generous in its funding of Amtrak.

The federal government enacted the Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act in 1997, requiring Amtrak to eliminate the need for federal operating assistance in five years, and creating the Amtrak Reform Council to monitor Amtrak performance and make appropriate recommendations. In February 2002, the Amtrak Reform Council submitted its recommendations for restructuring Amtrak to the Congress. At the same time, Amtrak announced "unprecedented service reductions if Congress did not fully fund its budget request."⁷

David Gunn became president and CEO in May 2002 and has set an agenda which includes putting the railroad's books in order, cutting costs, operating the railroad efficiently and proposing a five-year infrastructure improvement program.

Study Framework

Montana Department of Transportation authorized R.L. Banks & Associates, Inc., (RLBA) to initiate this study on May 27, 2003, and directed that all research activities must be completed by June 30, 2003. Thus the study necessarily has been performed within constraints of time and available information. No new survey or other new data development has been possible within the study time specified.

⁷ "Modern Passenger Trains: A National Necessity", National Association of Railroad Passengers, June 2002, page 10.

Information Available

At the beginning of this project, efforts were devoted to determining what data and other information were available. Amtrak cooperated fully, providing up-to-date information on Montana ridership (boardings and alightings⁸ at Montana stations) and other data. Mayors of Montana communities served by the Empire Builder also assisted, by providing information in telephone interviews. Business owners cooperated in a number of telephone interviews. The University of Montana's Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research provided updated data related to tourist spending. Information developed earlier by Montana Department of Transportation constituted the invaluable "launching pad" for this study, and enabled RLBA to use its available time more effectively. The most important study contacts are named in Appendix A, and some of the more relevant bibliographical sources are described in Appendix B. Under each source in Appendix B is stated the pertinent information from that reference. Summaries of interviews of mayors and others are in Appendix C. E-mails and faxes received are compiled in Appendix D. This unplanned portion of the study resulted when Montana's press learned of the study and solicited comments. The 28 pages of Appendix D contain 89 e-mails and faxes which articulate the concerns of Montanans and others who want to keep the Empire Builder. The assistance provided by the contacts named in Appendix A is gratefully acknowledged.

Analytical Methods

The approach used here is to portray economic benefits and impacts in straightforward terms comprehensible to the layman. Where benefits and impacts are quantified, the data sources from which they are derived are stated and the calculations are described. Care is taken not to double-count benefits. In general, the quantitative benefits calculated in this brief study are by necessity understated because study time and resources did not allow calculation of additional benefits known to exist. Where this occurs, the benefits are described qualitatively, supported by sources provided where appropriate.

⁸ "Boardings" refers to people getting on the train, "alightings" to those getting off. The term "deboardings" is also used with reference to those getting off the train. Also, "ons" and "offs" is sometimes used.

Empire Builder Benefits

Briefly Stated

Amtrak's Empire Builder benefits Montana in a number of ways. It brings to the state tourists and others who purchase goods and services. Amtrak spends money in Montana on salaries, fuel, water and food. Importantly, the intercity passenger train constitutes a "lifeline" across rural northern Montana, providing essential transportation to many Montanans and important express package shipping to individuals and commercial enterprises. Utilization of the rail mode of passenger transportation, compared with highway and air, results in a number of additional benefits to Montana such as reduced cost of transportation, reduced cost of highway maintenance, improved safety, and reduced requirements for, and expenditures on, alternative transportation.

Evaluation of Benefits

Benefit Categories

1. Direct Spending in Montana by Nonresident Amtrak Passengers.

Table 1 shows Montana's Amtrak stations and other data pertinent to this study. It assists in demonstrating the Empire Builder's benefits to Montana and is pertinent to several parts of the following texts.

Table 2 provides a recent-year history of Empire Builder ridership (boardings and alightings) at each Montana Amtrak station. This table assists in understanding vagaries of Empire Builder ridership and is discussed later in this section.

Amtrak provided other data showing alightings at each Montana station in the period June 2002 through May 2003, with a total of 57,900 alightings for all 12 stations in this 12-month period.⁹

Data on spending by nonresident travelers are available from the University of Montana Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research (ITRR), which has compiled a body of research on tourism in the state. The ITRR website includes a table titled "Preliminary 2002 Nonresident Travel Estimates for Montana"¹⁰, which shows average daily spending of \$105.30 per "group". Amtrak data further shows that, of the 57,900 alightings in Montana over a 12-month period, 29 percent are Montana residents.

⁹ Since the figure 57,900 is not a calendar year number, it is not found in Table 2.

¹⁰ www.forestry.umt.edu/research/MFCES/programs/itrr/econest.pdf

**Table 1
Montana Amtrak Stations**

Amtrak Empire Builder Station	Population- 1999 U.S. Census Estimates¹¹	County and Population – 2002 U.S. Census Estimates¹²	Amtrak Express Shipping and Baggage Service	Amtrak Rail Inclusive Vacation Packages	Bus Service on Rimrock Stages with connections to Greyhound Lines, Inc.¹³	Nearest Public Airport	Nearby Indian Reservation
<u>Wolf Point</u>	2,890	Roosevelt County 10,494				L.M Clayton Airport (essential air service) ¹⁴	Fort Peck Indian Reservation
Glasgow	3,781	Valley County 7,382				Wokal Field/Glasgow International Airport (essential air service) ⁴	
Malta	2,162	Phillips County 4,321					Fort Belknap Indian Reservation
Havre	10,425	Hill County 16,372	Yes			Havre City-County Airport (essential air service) ⁴	Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation
Shelby	2,596	Toole County 5,103	Yes		Service north to Canada and south to Great Falls		
Cut Bank	3,519	Glacier County 13,106			Service to Shelby		Blackfeet Indian Reservation
Browning (Winter only)	1,199	Glacier County 13,106					Blackfeet Indian Reservation
<u>East Glacier Park (Summer Only)</u>	<1000	Glacier County 13,106		Yes			Blackfeet Indian Reservation
Essex (Izaak Walton Inn)	<1000	Flathead County 77,240		Yes			
West Glacier Park	<1000	Flathead County 77,240		Yes			
Whitefish (Kalispell)	6,292	Flathead County 77,240	Yes	Yes	Service south to Kalispell and Missoula	Glacier Park International Airport – scheduled airline service (Kalispell, MT)	
Libby	2,948	Lincoln County 18,665					Flathead Indian Reservation

Notes:

¹¹ Source: Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Department of Commerce, data from Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington D.C., <http://ceic.commerce.state.mt.us/Demog/estimate/pop/City/99estpl.xls> accessed 5/16/2003.

¹² Source: U.S Census Bureau, Montana County Population Estimates: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2002, <http://erie.census.gov/popest/data/counties/tables/CO-EST2002/CO-EST2002-01-30.php> accessed 5/16/2003.

¹³ Information available at www.greyhound.com.

¹⁴ Federally subsidized Essential Air Service to remote communities.

⁵ Amtrak data is from National Timetable, Fall 2002/Winter 2003.

Table 2
Empire Builder Amtrak Ridership
Total On and Off Passengers, by Station
1995-2002

Station	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Wolf Point	6,552	5,885	7,357	8,496	7,615	8,331	7,328	6,412
Glasgow	4,116	3,744	4,445	6,046	5,668	5,688	5,144	4,678
Malta	2,702	2,384	3,021	4,065	3,094	3,198	2,874	2,749
Havre	12,818	10,495	12,107	15,633	14,379	15,571	13,278	12,472
Shelby	13,249	11,270	14,868	15,685	15,036	15,674	13,504	11,992
Cut Bank	2,012	1,729	2,100	2,767	2,162	2,589	2,151	2,177
Browning	1,296	1,019	1,421	1,455	1,549	1,498	1,344	1,087
East Glacier Park	11,021	10,541	12,936	14,688	13,226	13,034	11,086	9,648
Essex	2,596	1,931	3,080	3,132	3,354	3,100	2,949	3,293
West Glacier Park/Belton	2,749	2,720	3,779	3,571	3,702	3,959	3,721	4,124
Whitefish	54,538	42,533	53,371	57,320	54,338	57,251	49,690	46,915
Libby	3,937	3,604	4,655	5,393	5,443	5,528	4,781	4,003
Total	117,586	97,855	123,140	138,251	129,566	135,421	117,850	109,550

Sources: The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, University of Montana, and Amtrak.

Therefore $57,900 \times 0.71$, or 41,109, are nonresidents. ITRR surveys show that a "group" is 2.436 persons; thus the 41,109 nonresidents represent 16,876 groups. ITRR provides the figure 4.3 days as the average length of stay in Montana. The assumption is here made that train ridership patterns are similar to the air and automobile patterns which were measured by ITRR. It is assumed that those who travel to Montana by train remain in Montana the same amount of time as those who fly or drive, that their spending patterns are the same, and that their group size is the same. These assumptions are made because no other data are readily available.

Annual benefits to Montana resulting from the direct spending of these nonresidents in the state is, at current levels, about \$7.641 million (rounded result of $16,876 \times \$105.30 \times 4.3$).

There is a reasonable argument that this figure should be reduced by the number who would travel to Montana by other means if there were no Empire Builder, and this is addressed later in the "Summary of Readily-Quantified Benefits" section below.

Because of the importance of tourism to Montana, and the number of Empire Builder patrons who are tourists traveling to and from Montana, a number of commercial lodging and other tourist establishments in and near Glacier National Park were contacted as a part of this study. Their confidential statements are summarized in Appendix C near the end of the appendix, under the heading, "Discussion with Business Establishments of Amtrak Tourist Benefits". These discussions suggest that the spending benefits estimated above may be understated.

2. Direct Spending by Amtrak.

59 Amtrak employees in Montana are paid annual wages of \$2,386,805.¹⁵ Additionally, Amtrak spends annually \$1.3 to \$1.7 million on fuel, station maintenance, food, and charter of motorcoaches when required. Thus direct annual spending by Amtrak in Montana is between \$3.7 and \$4.1 million annually.

3. Amtrak Mail and Express

Mail is not carried by Amtrak to or from Montana destinations. Express service, however, is available and is utilized by Montanans at some savings compared with alternative shipping means, thus providing a Montana benefit. Flowers, fish, novelty chandeliers and human remains are some of the items which are being shipped to or from Montana stations utilizing this service. This is a benefit to Montana in that alternative shipping is more expensive.

In contacting the mayors of communities along the Hi-Line, it was confirmed that some communities which do not enjoy the benefit of official Amtrak baggage service do, in fact, still receive express shipments courtesy of the Empire Builder. For example, the local flower shop in Malta receives flowers, blooming and green plants, as well as

¹⁵ June 13, 2003, phone conversation with Gary Erford, Amtrak.

supplies in this way. Carl Harms, owner of Jane's Flowers, said that he receives deliveries two to three times per week via the Empire Builder and that it is the most economical and timely way to have those goods transmitted. Harms intercepts the train, the baggage car door opens and Amtrak baggage attendants help him unload the flowers and supplies into Harms' van; "it takes five minutes." Without Amtrak, Harms would have to drive 200 miles to Great Falls or Billings, which would require an entire day of his time, cost of a meal and loss of a workday.

When asked if there were other businesses along the Hi-Line for which Empire Builder performs the same service, Harms' response was "yes." Harms said that he believed that the local chapter of the Girl Scouts or 4-H relied upon the Empire Builder around the Christmas holiday in particular to deliver wreaths and other greenery. Harms also mentioned that the flower shop in Glasgow benefited from a similar arrangement with Amtrak.

Study time and resources were not sufficient to obtain the necessary data and quantify the value of Amtrak express package service to Montana. Suffice it to say that Montana mayors and others have emphasized the importance of this service to small and isolated Montana communities on or near the Hi-Line.

4. Benefits to Agricultural Producers and Communities.

Empire Builder benefits to agricultural producers and communities lie in a wide range, including low-cost transportation for isolated agricultural communities, express shipping service for those communities, spending in these communities by Amtrak and transportation by Amtrak of nonresident tourists and others.

The testimony of numerous individuals--mayors, business owners and other Montanans who live on or near the Empire Builder's route across northern Montana--provide eloquent expression of the importance of the intercity passenger rail service. Some of this testimony is included in Appendices C, "Summaries of Interviews with Mayors and Others", and D, "E-mails Received from Montana Citizens". Also, others have discovered how much daily train service means to isolated communities and the importance of this is well-articulated in the following references (which are briefly described in Appendix B).

Dennis Brown. "When Rural Communities Lose Passenger Rail Service"

John F. Due. "Amtrak and State-Supported Trains"

"Final Report to Congress on the Amtrak Route System As Required by the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1978"

"Pulling Out All the Stops: The Real Cost of Losing Passenger Rail Service in New Mexico"

Dave Reece. "Group gets back aboard to help save Amtrak line"

Dave Reece. "Amtrak struggles to make a profit"

Healthy, economically viable rural communities are very important to agriculture in that farmers and ranchers rely on local rural communities for equipment, supplies, medical care, education of their children, etc. In many cases, farmers and ranchers are the main users and beneficiaries of the services provided by rural communities. Amtrak adds greatly to the economic well-being of the rural communities along the Hi-Line; therefore it greatly benefits farmers and ranchers who rely on these communities for the services they need.

This point needs emphasis, because those who live in urbanized or metropolitan areas may take for granted the availability of transportation and ready contact with "the outside world"; Montana citizens living in areas where population density can be as low as one person per square mile do not take for granted these important quality of life benefits provided by the Empire Builder to Montana. An important component of this study was the interviewing of Montana mayors and others in the small towns along its route, and the word often used was "devastating" when the question was asked, "What would be the impact if Amtrak service is cancelled?"

5. Benefits to Indian Reservations.

There are four Indian reservations on or near the Hi-Line in Montana. The availability of Empire Builder service--one train a day in each direction--constitutes a convenient and economical method of transportation and is utilized by people on these reservations for transportation to medical appointments, colleges, shopping and for other purposes.

Appendix C (Summaries of Interviews of Mayors and Others) contains the statement prepared for this study of Henri Headdress, Transportation Planner for the Fort Peck Tribes. Headdress makes the following points:

- The Fort Peck Reservation uses Empire Builder "extensively" for travel.
- Empire Builder is an "affordable means of transportation".
- Many on the Reservation have no vehicles.
- Big Sky Airlines is expensive.¹⁶
- There is no bus service.
- Empire Builder is used for business, school-related, recreational and medical travel.
- Express package service is used.
- Discontinuation of the Empire Builder would have a negative effect, with loss of jobs on, and loss of tourist visits to, the Reservation.

¹⁶ RLBA telephone inquiry of June 28, 2003, yielded these quotations for a one-way trip on July 7, 2003, from Wolf Point to Whitefish: Big Sky \$301.37, Empire Builder, adult in coach class, \$61.

Spike Bighorn, Superintendent of the Fort Peck Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs, states in a letter to R.L. Banks & Associates, Inc., that "Amtrak service provides an affordable transportation option for reservation residents who are unable to afford air travel. The loss of Amtrak service would require many of our residents to travel by automobile, which can be time consuming and difficult given our remote location."¹⁷

6. Secondary/Tertiary Economic Benefits of Direct Spending.

The direct spending in Montana by Amtrak and those who ride on Amtrak results in additional spending, or re-spending, of those dollars, resulting in a "multiplier effect" in Montana's economy. In addition to Amtrak employees (the result of direct spending) there are additional jobs resulting from salaries paid to Amtrak employees, and jobs resulting from nonresident spending. As one example, bus service at Whitefish and Shelby interchanges passengers with Amtrak and conveys them to and from destinations in Montana and Canada. The economy of Havre is augmented by Amtrak's one-hour refueling stop there, allowing passengers to visit retail establishments in downtown Havre, which surrounds the Amtrak station. Amtrak purchases food from Box Cars restaurant in Havre, and it is estimated by the owner of Box Cars that up to 12 of his food preparation and service personnel would be laid off if the Empire Builder were discontinued, representing an estimated \$108,000 in wages. Businesses at or near all Montana Amtrak--stations including those in or near Glacier National Park--profit from Amtrak boardings and alightings.

The following discussion of respending draws heavily on information obtained from the University of Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR).

ITRR states that:

"Every nonresident dollar spent in the state generates 32 cents in personal income for Montana residents.

Nonresident travel expenditures expenditures directly and indirectly contributed to the generation of 32,440 Montana jobs in the course of 2001, nearly 6 percent of all jobs in the state. Every \$53,820 in expenditures supported one job.

Each dollar spent by nonresident travelers in Montana generated 8.4 cents in state and local tax revenue ... "¹⁸

Applying these factors to the direct spending in Montana by nonresident Empire Builder travelers, one may say that the Empire Builder carries passengers whose spending results in:

¹⁷ June 20, 2003, letter to R.L. Banks & Associates, Inc.

¹⁸ Extracted from Executive Summary of Thale Dillon and Jill Sanderson. "An Economic Review of the Nonresident Travel Industry in Montana, 2002 Edition", The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, University of Montana, July 2002, page i.

- \$2.45 million personal income for Montana residents
- 142 Montana jobs, and
- \$642,000 in state and local tax revenue.

Again, as stated above under benefit category number 1, these benefits technically should be reduced in proportion to the number of Empire Builder passengers who would travel to Montana by other means in the event of cancellation of the Empire Builder. This is addressed later, under the heading "Summary of Readily-Quantifiable Benefits".

7. Benefits of Amtrak vis-a-vis Alternative Transportation.

There are a series of Empire Builder Montana benefits related to use of train transportation to, from and through Montana as compared with alternative means of travel. For example, it is a benefit to Montana when a Montana resident elects to ride the Empire Builder as opposed to more expensive transportation, or transportation which requires a longer trip or an overnight stay. Where the Empire Builder is used instead of highway travel within the state, there is a benefit to Montana to the extent that state-supported highways require less maintenance or capital investment (both road structure and public safety/law enforcement). Likewise there is a benefit to Montanans who ride Amtrak, as opposed to Montana's highways, in terms of automobile cost, insurance and relative safety. Within the confines of the time available for this analysis, the following benefits are evaluated and quantified.

Reduced Transportation Cost

One of the important benefits provided to Montana residents by the Empire Builder is relatively low-cost transportation, \$0.175 per passenger-mile.¹⁹ Amtrak generally is the only practicable alternative.²⁰ The automobile alternative is probably the most reasonable for cost comparison purposes, given that most of the Montana communities connected by Amtrak do not have commercial air service,²¹ and given that there is no east-west bus service on Highway 2, which parallels the Amtrak route, except for the 23 miles between Cut Bank and Shelby. The automobile travel cost is \$0.502 per vehicle-mile.²² Time and resource constraints in this brief study imply simplifying assumptions

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Transportation Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) National Transportation Statistics: current data on www.bts.gov website.

²⁰ See, for example, "Final Report to Congress on the Amtrak Route System As Required by the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1978", United States Department of Transportation, January, 1979, page 4-18. In a June 17, 2003, phone conversation with Rim Rock Stages, an intercity bus operator in Montana, RLBA was informed that "If you are traveling east to west or vice versa [in northern Montana], it is better to take Amtrak; there is no alternative."

²¹ Of Montana's 12 Amtrak stations, only one, Whitefish, has nearby commercial air service with scheduled national airlines. Three stations--Wolf Point, Glasgow and Malta--have Montana Essential Air Service; however this service is not deemed a preferable alternative to Amtrak for many purposes. See, for example, the statements of Montana mayors in Appendix C of this study.

²² BTS National Transportation Statistics.

and use of available data; use of these generalized passenger-mile and vehicle-mile cost figures is included in this reasoning. Another simplifying assumption is use of 847 miles as the average trip length taken by Montana residents when they use the Empire Builder.²³ Finally, the average automobile loading must be determined in order to compare passenger-mile and vehicle-mile data. Here 1.59 persons per automobile has been used,²⁴ resulting in a cost of \$0.316 per passenger-mile. Thus the differential cost, or benefit to resident Montanans of traveling by the Empire Builder, is \$0.141 per passenger-mile.

Data provided by Amtrak show that Montana ridership, in terms of total numbers alighting (deboarding) at Montana stations over the 12-month period June 2002-May 2003, is 57,900. Amtrak data also show that annual alightings and boardings in Montana are approximately twice that figure, or 115,800.²⁵ For calendar year 2002, total alightings and deboardings in Montana was 109,550, compared to 117,850 in 2001. It should be noted that Empire Builder ridership (alightings and boardings) in Montana has been much higher--138,251 in 1998 and 135,421 in 2000--and many observers believe these figures would be even higher were more Amtrak passenger railcars available. In other words, Amtrak ridership is depressed by absence of train seats.²⁶ To that extent, these calculations and estimates should be deemed conservative. It is reasonable to assume that in most cases the return trip will be made on the same transportation mode; therefore the figure of 115,800 will be used as the total number of annual Montana trips (total Montana boardings and alightings). Amtrak advises that 29 percent of the Montana travelers are residents of the state; therefore their total annual Empire Builder trips number 33,582 (115,800 x 0.29).

Ideally, and if time permitted, a survey would poll Montana residents to determine more accurately average trip lengths, average number in an automobile, and other relevant data.

The product of 33,582 annual resident Montanan Empire Builder trips (going plus returning), an average trip distance (one way) of 847 miles, and a \$0.141 cost savings per passenger-mile is \$4.011 million (rounded). This is the estimated annual cost savings benefit for Montanans traveling on the Empire Builder.

²³ "Modern Passenger Trains: A National Necessity", National Association of Railroad Passengers, June 2002, Appendix V, Table #3 (page 57).

²⁴ Based upon a division of U.S. passenger car annual passenger-miles by vehicle-miles; data from BTS National Transportation Statistics.

²⁵ Note that this is a different figure from the year 2002 Amtrak figure in Table 2, which provides calendar year totals.

²⁶ This was confirmed by Gary Erford, Amtrak Manager in Seattle, who said in a June 13, 2003, telephone interview that the 2000-2002 decline in Empire Builder ridership was a "capacity problem", that is, there were not enough seats to accommodate the demand. This point is emphasized and described at length in Kuhn, Daniel B., "Long-Distance Passenger Trains: Myth and Reality", prepared for the Standing Committee on Rail Transportation of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, March 6, 2002, in particular on pages 10 and 11.

Reduced Highway System Maintenance

This Montana benefit expresses the cost avoided, with regard to maintenance work and other services on Montana highways, as a result of the Empire Builder.

In this case both residents and nonresidents--all those who drive--result in a benefit to the state insofar as they do not use the highways because they choose to travel by the Empire Builder. Thus the entire annual ridership figure of 115,800 may be used as the total trips which do not use Montana highways. As in the previous case, readily-available data and simplified (but reasonable) assumptions are utilized owing to the time and resource limits on this study.

The 115,800 figure must, however, be reduced to account for the number of nonresidents who would travel by air if the Empire Builder were not available. The University of Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) data show that 1,258,773 airline passengers were destined to Montana points in 2001. This is 13 percent of the same year's 9.55 million visitors. As discussed above, it is assumed that the resident Montanan portion of annual Amtrak ridership, 33,582, would use the highway in the absence of Empire Builder service. The nonresident portion, 82,218 (115,800 minus 33,582), is reduced by those who would fly, and the result is 71,530 (82,218 minus 13 percent of 82,218) non-flying nonresidents. Adding this figure to the resident Montana travelers, the total 105,112 (71,530 plus 33,582) annually reduce wear and tear and the requirement for other services on Montana's highways.

An average trip length (one way) of 281 miles is assumed, this distance representing one-half the distance between Wolf Point and Libby, Montana's easternmost and westernmost Amtrak stations, respectively.

A per vehicle-mile cost of highway maintenance and services of \$0.029 is taken from "Saving Energy in U.S. Transportation", U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment, OTA-ETI-589 (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1994) and, using producer price indices, the figure is adjusted to \$0.0328. This figure is further adjusted, as done above, to account for the average number of travelers in an automobile, assumed as 1.59.

Thus estimated annual highway maintenance savings to Montana is $105,112 \times 281 \times \$0.0328 / 1.59$, or \$0.609 million (rounded).

As already stated, this analysis necessarily utilizes national-level statistics rather than Montana-level data in this portion of the report ("7. Benefits of Amtrak vis-a-vis Alternative Transportation") because of constraints on study time and resources. If there were no constraints, the study would have investigated, as one example, state gasoline and diesel taxes, and many other factors, in arriving at more precise numbers, tailored to Montana. Nonetheless, it is believed that the data readily available show that the Empire Builder provides important quantifiable benefits to Montana.

Accidents, Pain and Suffering on Others

There also is a cost to Montana for accidents that occur on the state highways, and a corresponding benefit where Empire Builder service reduces the number of accidents. A close correlation exists between traffic volume and the frequency of accidents. In addition to injury, accidents cause pain and suffering, loss of wages, property damages and can result in legal costs.

Again, the U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment provides a factor pertaining to this cost of highway use, in this case \$0.082 per vehicle-mile (1994) for pain and suffering as a result of accidents. Adjusting for inflation, this figure becomes \$0.0928 per vehicle-mile. As was done above, this figure is further adjusted to account for an average 1.59 persons per automobile, and the resulting benefit to Montana, in terms of reduced accidents, is $105,112 \times 281 \times \$0.0928/1.59$, or \$1.724 million (rounded)

Pollution and Emissions

Entire studies are devoted to the cost of environmental degradation inflicted by automobiles. However, as stated previously, it is not possible to develop a detailed analysis in this effort. It is possible, however, to portray a general sense of the benefit the Empire Builder provides to Montana in terms of reduction in pollution on a per vehicle-mile basis.

Similarly to previous calculations, the U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment provides a figure indicating the cost of pollution, \$0.073 per vehicle-mile. Again, the product of this figure, modified to reflect average vehicle occupancy (1.59), passenger trips (105,112), and average trip distance (281 miles) produces a gross annual reduction of pollution benefits figure of \$1.356 million (rounded). A net benefit is obtained by reducing this figure to recognize that an Empire Builder trip results in some, albeit less, pollution. In an analysis performed for the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, a comparison was made with regard to cost of mitigating emissions generated by autos compared with that of trains carrying the equivalent number of persons; the cost ratio was 16. Accordingly, the figure \$1.356 million is reduced by 1/16, and net annual pollution benefits in Montana are \$1.271 million.

Summary of Transportation Benefits

Reduced transportation cost	\$4,011,000
Reduced highway costs	609,000
Reduced accident costs	1,724,000
Reduced pollution costs	<u>1,271,000</u>
Total	\$7,615,000

These are not all the benefits which can be quantified based on comparing Empire Builder travel with other modes, and a more thorough analysis would no doubt yield

different numbers. Time and resource constraints limit this study. However, the total of \$7.6 million provides an indication of the lower bound magnitude of those benefits.

8. Induced Travel

The term "induced travel" is applied to trips made which would not be made at all were it not for the transportation mode utilized. In other words, there are those who will travel to Montana only if intercity passenger rail service is available. Various factors account for this, for example, convenience of using the train, predilection for train travel over other modes, concern about safety of air travel, or desire not to drive. Although induced travel benefits to Montana are included in the direct spending by nonresidents calculations above, it is nonetheless important to emphasize the contribution of induced travel. If the Empire Builder were cancelled, Montana would not see these travelers at all.

Summary of Readily-Quantified Benefits

Within the scope of and time available in this study, data are available to quantify some benefits but not others. Following is a summary of the readily-quantified Empire Builder direct benefits:

Nonresident spending in Montana	\$7.6 million
Amtrak direct spending in Montana	\$3.7 - \$4.1 million
Transportation benefits to Montana	\$7.6 million

For a total (readily-quantified benefits) of \$18.9 - \$19.3 million.

Secondary and tertiary economic benefits of spending by Empire Builder passengers results in \$2.45 million personal income for Montana residents, 142 Montana jobs, and \$642,000 in state and local tax revenue.

The nonresident spending benefits and associated secondary and tertiary benefits articulated above may be considered overstated to the extent that travelers alighting in Montana would travel by another mode were the Empire Builder to be cancelled. Amtrak states that, for the Empire Builder as a whole (not just service in Montana), 21 percent would not have completed the trip if the train were not available.²⁷ Assuming this survey result may be applied to Montana offs and ons, the above-stated nonresident spending figure would be reduced from \$7.6 million to \$1.6 million.

The total readily-quantified benefits would then be in the range \$12.9 - 13.3 million.

²⁷ RLBA phone conversations with Dharm Guruswamy, Officer, Planning & Business Development, Amtrak, 60 Massachusetts Ave., N.E., Washington DC, and Steve Roberts, Marketing Research and Analysis, Amtrak, Oakland, California, June 30, 2003.

The secondary and tertiary would likewise be reduced, to:

- \$0.515 million personal income for Montana residents
- 30 Montana jobs, and
- \$135 thousand in state and local tax revenue.

These figures are deemed conservative. The few businesses contacted--see summaries of interviews and data provided in Appendix C--state Empire Builder benefits totaling \$3,464,000 (which figure presumably includes Montana residents). Constrained study time has not allowed pursuing this.

There are also important benefits which cannot be readily quantified. For example, an important Empire Builder benefit is that it operates in bad weather, even when the parallel highway, U.S. Route 2, is closed owing to snow, ice or "white-out" conditions.²⁸ Moreover, the simple fact of having an alternative is a benefit to Montana, inasmuch as highway or air travel may, in some circumstances, be less desirable or unavailable, for whatever reason.

Potential Benefits

There are yet more potential benefits to Montana. Amtrak data for the years 2000, 2001 and 2002 (see Table 2) show a downtrend in Montana boardings and deboardings. Amtrak states that this reflects not a decline in demand, but a capacity constraint. There are insufficient seats to meet the demand. If more cars were available to add to the trains, there would be more riders.

Because of the constraint on cars available and other infirmities which have characterized under-funded and inefficiently-provided intercity passenger rail travel over the past several decades, the true demand for long-distance train travel is unknown.²⁹ One of the initiatives of the new president and CEO of Amtrak is to repair and return to service the "miles of" unserviceable equipment at Amtrak's Beech Grove facility. David Gunn also strongly emphasizes the importance of bringing all infrastructure up to a state of good repair, and espouses a Five-Year Infrastructure Capital Investment Plan.³⁰ Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison likewise supports improvements to Amtrak infrastructure, and plans to introduce legislation to that end.³¹ Even the highway lobbying organization, AASHTO, recommends that the federal government accept and

²⁸ Kunka, Jenny. "CBS crew gets in on the blizzard while filming Amtrak segment", Golden Triangle News, Online archives from Golden Triangle Newspapers, May 29, 2002, www.goldentrianglenews.com.

²⁹ Richard Hamish. "Long Distance Trains: Sinkhole or Scapegoat?", *The Midwest Rail Report*, December 2001.

³⁰ William C. Vantuono, "Separating fact from fiction", *Railway Age*, May 2003, pages 27-31.

³¹ Kay Bailey Hutchison. "Senator Hutchison Announces Plans to Make AMTRAK A National Rail System", press release, June 5, 2003.

fund long-distance trains as a public system.³² Finally, polls indicate firm support for federal investment in Amtrak.³³

The Executive Director of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, Ross B. Capon, commenting on David Gunn's Five-Year Infrastructure Capital Investment Plan, says that "the service Amtrak would provide under the plan would be far greater--and ridership far higher--than anything seen before."³⁴

If passenger rail continues to be an important transportation service despite Amtrak's troubled times, it can only be imagined what increased use would be made of an adequately-funded and efficiently-managed national passenger train system, and what corresponding benefits would accrue to Montana and the rest of the nation.

These potential benefits lend force to the suggestion that, whatever today's benefits, they would be higher if Amtrak were able to meet the demand for intercity passenger rail service.

Economic Impacts if Empire Builder is Cancelled

Understanding the Importance of Passenger Train Service to Rural Montana

Availability of Transportation

The importance of the public transportation option--bus, train or plane--may be taken for granted in many more populated areas of the United States. In some of the more sparsely populated areas, such as northern Montana, public transportation is often described by those who need and use it as "essential", a "lifeline", and the impact of losing it, "devastating".

The Airline Deregulation Act, passed in 1978, gave airlines almost total freedom to determine which markets to serve domestically and what fares to charge for that service. The Essential Air Service (EAS) program was put into place to guarantee that small communities that were served by certificated air carriers before deregulation maintain a minimal level of scheduled passenger air service. The Essential Air Service program currently subsidizes commuter airlines to serve 8 communities across the state of Montana that otherwise would not receive any scheduled passenger air service.

Three of these communities--Wolf Point, Glasgow and Havre--are among the 12 station stops of Amtrak's Empire Builder. Were the Empire Builder to be terminated, these three EAS communities would have only air service as a public transportation option.

³² Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation. Standing Committee on Rail Transportation, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 2002.

³³ For example, see Don Phillips and Richard Morin, "Amtrak Subsidy Support Strong, Survey Shows", *Washington Post*, August 5, 2002, page A-1.

³⁴ Ross B. Capon, "NARP Testifies on Value of Amtrak 'State of Good Repair'", NARP News, National Association of Railroad Passengers, May 2003, page 1.

One Empire Builder station, Whitefish, may use a nearby full service airport (Kalispell). There is no bus service paralleling the US Highway 2/Empire Builder route (with the exception of the segment between Cut Bank and Shelby).

North-south bus service is available at Shelby and bus service to points south, at Whitefish.

The point of this discussion is that there are not many transportation options across northern Montana, and the Empire Builder performs a service considered essential by many Montanans.

Asked the impact if Empire Builder were cancelled, one mayor said, "It would be devastating." He described jobs that would be lost, and businesses that would either close or suffer losses. He said that many routinely utilize the Empire Builder as transportation, for example, to medical appointments, including long-distance transportation to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, or to Spokane and Seattle. He described his town's business center as built around the Amtrak station, and estimated an annual loss of at least a \$5 million if Amtrak service were terminated.

Havre's flower shops rely on shipping and receiving their products on the train.³⁵ Also, Amtrak brings medical supplies to that town. People from other towns, such as Malta, use the train to get to the medical facility at Havre.

One Montana newspaper reported that "Amtrak is the only way to travel when the weather is bad. The train ran without delay on Wednesday and Thursday [May 28 and 29, 2002], even though both Highway 2 and Interstate 15 experienced closures."³⁶

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Standing Committee on Rail Transportation (SCORT) recognizes this important role in its recent report on intercity passenger rail transportation:

Essential Services--Many long-distance trains serve small communities with limited or no significant air or bus service, especially in remote or isolated areas such as northern Montana and central West Virginia. As a result, rail transportation may provide the only affordable public transportation in such communities.³⁷

And in the same place, AASHTO SCORT recognizes the importance of transporting express (less-than-truckload freight) to communities, a very important benefit of the Empire Builder to Montana.

³⁵ "Amtrak situation draws NBC to Northern Montana", *Golden Triangle News*, June 5, 2002, www.goldentrianglenews.com.

³⁶ "CBS crew gets in on the blizzard while filming Amtrak segment", *Golden Triangle News*, May 29, 2002.

³⁷ Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation, Standing Committee on Rail Transportation, The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 2002, page 44.

Specific Impacts

The preceding discussion indicates that cessation of the Empire Builder service would result in the following specific impacts in, on and to Montana.

1. Loss of spending by nonresidents in Montana, formerly transported to stations in the state by Amtrak, who would not travel there by an alternative mode. This is estimated to be on the order of \$1.605 million.
2. Loss of Amtrak spending in Montana, currently \$3.7 - \$4.1 million per year.
3. Loss to Montana of at least \$7.6 million a year in transportation benefits (in the form of travel cost savings, and highway maintenance, accident and pollution cost reductions).
4. Loss of express package service, deemed very important to many on or near the Hi-Line. (Impact not quantified in this study.)
5. Loss of a vital transportation alternative which for some at all times, and for a greater number in severe weather conditions, is the only alternative.
6. Loss of respending benefits: \$0.515 million personal income for Montana residents, 30 jobs, and \$135,000 in state and local tax revenue.

Findings

The Empire Builder serves a vital transportation function in northern Montana, the importance of which may be difficult to appreciate by those who are used to more generous transportation options and amenities in more populous parts of the nation.

In addition to this very important quality of life benefit, there are numerous related and other benefits, including:

- Spending by Amtrak in Montana
- Spending by nonresidents in Montana
- Package express convenience and cost
- Reduced costs of transportation, highway maintenance, accidents and pollution
- Re-spending, or multiplier effects (including more jobs)

It is emphasized that the quantified benefits estimated in this study are conservative.

Perhaps the greatest benefits to Montana are nonquantifiable. The Empire Builder is not simply a low-cost transportation convenience or a quality of life benefit to small agricultural communities in northern Montana; the many responses received in this study show that the Empire Builder is also a way of life in these isolated rural locations. The most important impact of canceling the Empire Builder would be disruption of this way of life.

Appendix A

Contacts

This appendix lists those individuals who provided important assistance in preparing this study.

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Appendix B

Selected Bibliography

This appendix contains the more important references utilized in preparation of this study.

"Amtrak has rough year in 2001", *The Daily Inter Lake* (Kalispell, Montana), March 26, 2002.

Empire Builder passenger activity dropped sharply across Montana in 2001, thirteen percent down from 2000. Amtrak announced in February that it would eliminate 18 long-distance routes, including the Empire Builder, unless Congress approves \$1.2 billion in funding for fiscal 2003.

Amtrak National Timetable, fall 2002/winter 2003, National Passenger Railroad Corporation.

Provides data on Montana stations, including bus connections and express and baggage service where available.

Dennis Brown. "When Rural Communities Lose Passenger Rail Service", *Rural Development Perspectives*, vol 12, no. 2

The article begins, "Passenger rail service is an integral part of rural America's transportation network, serving as one of the few options for intercity public transportation for many small communities. Especially for rural residents without automobiles, access to passenger trains can provide a relatively inexpensive, safe, and environmentally friendly mode of transportation." Later it says: "Amtrak ... continues to serve a number of smaller rural communities. ... In many of these smaller towns, especially those without commercial air service, passenger rail is the only mode of public transportation available ... " And still later: "Because Amtrak represents one of the few transportation options for rural residents, ... reductions in services may hurt The most affected by the loss of passenger train service are individuals without access to cars"

Thale Dillon and Jill Sanderson. "An Economic Review of the Nonresident Travel Industry in Montana, 2002 Edition", *The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research*, University of Montana, July 2002.

Documents nature and impact of the nonresident travel industry on the State of Montana. Discusses travel and the economy, travel expenditures, travel-generated income, travel-generated employment, Montana employment structure, travel-generated tax revenue and travel inflation.

John F. Due. "Amtrak and State-Supported Passenger Trains", *Illinois Business Review*, Bureau of Economic and Business Research, College of Commerce and Business Administration, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Summer 1996, pages 4-7.

A review of the advantages of public rail transportation, the experience of states, and the challenges of determining the best future policy. Concludes among other things that the "great merit of retaining the trains is the externality benefits—primarily the lessening of highway congestion and pressure for additional highway improvements ... plus gains to the users who are receiving benefits from the service in excess of what they are willing to pay. There are also benefits to the communities served, both to their residents as individuals, especially those who do not have cars or do not wish to drive, and in terms of location of homes and businesses. Many communities served by Amtrak have little or no bus service. [Amtrak provides r]elatively cheap, comfortable, convenient transport".

John F. Due. "Railroad Passenger Service: Amtrak and State-Supported Trains", University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, College of Commerce and Business Administration, Office of Research Working Paper Number 96-0125, 1996.

Describes establishment of Amtrak and rising ridership until 1991, followed by deterioration of service as a result of various factors including reduced funding and airline fare wars. Discusses externality benefits of Amtrak: lessening highway and airport congestion and the need to build additional highways, reducing highway accidents, contributions on energy and pollution.

Economic Impact Analysis of Transit Investments: Guidebook for Practitioners. Transit Cooperative Research Program, Transportation Research Board, National Research Council. TCRP Report 35, 1998.

Guidebook to provide methods to conduct economic impact analysis of transit investments. Provides guidance in choosing methods and in interpreting results.

Empire Builder, Trains Newswire (www.trains.com) June 10, 2003.

The "Empire Builder" passenger train connecting Chicago and Seattle was inaugurated June 11, 1929, and named to Great Northern Railway leader James J. Hill, known for his ability to create prosperous businesses.

"Final Report to Congress on the Amtrak Route System As Required by the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1978", United States Department of Transportation, January, 1979.

This report was prepared in response to the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1978, and presents recommendations of the United States Department of Transportation regarding the route system that should be operated by the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak). The report also recommends several major policy objectives for improvement of intercity railroad passenger service. (page 1-1)

Amtrak began operation in 1971 with a 23,000 route-mile system connecting 21 city-pairs designated by the Secretary of Transportation, and grew over a seven year period to a system of 27,500 miles. At the time of this report, two long distance routes were operated through Montana, one through Havre and the other through Billings [respectively, the Empire Builder and the North Coast Hiawatha]. (pages 2-1, 2-3, and 2-5)

A portion of this report remains especially pertinent to today's Amtrak service in Montana:

"Amtrak provides a primary transportation service to a limited number of persons. To a significantly larger group it provides a transportation alternative that may be used only occasionally. To many other people it represents a national resource that they value even though they rarely, if ever, travel by train. Thus, continuing Federal assistance for intercity rail passenger service is a policy that is supported by a far greater proportion of the American public than the share which actually uses Amtrak's services regularly. This is not an uncommon circumstance, since many public assistance programs draw support from a broader range of the populace than those who receive direct benefits." (page 3-1)

Nevertheless the Department of Transportation recommended a "trimmed down route system" in order to create a "stable operating environment that will permit Amtrak to concentrate on improving its financial performance and the quality of services it provides to the public." (page 3-2)

Key policy goals advanced by the Department of Transportation for Amtrak included meeting "a greater portion of its expenses with revenue collected from its customers" (36.8 percent in FY 1978), "further improve the quality of railroad passenger service", and implement "best routings between the [city pair] end points and key intermediate points designated in the recommended route structure as quickly as possible." (pages 3-2, 3-3)

The Department of Transportation recommended a system of 15,700 route-miles, and also recommended discontinuation of the North Coast Hiawatha. (pages 4-4 and 4-7)

The Department of Transportation recognized "that rail passenger transportation has a unique all-weather capability that is more important on routes located in

relatively isolated areas with severe winter weather that it is in mild regions with more highly developed highway systems.” (page 4-9)

With specific regard to Montana, the report went on to say:

“Public testimony and an evaluation of environmental considerations both indicated that the Empire Builder route between Chicago and Seattle traverses areas with isolated communities, served by a relatively meager highway system, that experienced very severe winter storms. For example, public testimony during a hearing at Havre, Montana, indicated that the major highway in that area is a two-lane road that was completely closed due to inclement weather 13 days during the 1977-78 winter season. Partially on the basis of those considerations, and in response to the Congressional directive that the availability of alternate modes and tourism be considered, the Department included the Empire Builder route in the recommended system.” (page 4-9)

The report again describes specific Montana needs:

“The Department’s analysis showed that alternative transportation is available between most of the cities served by Amtrak and that this characteristic is generally common to all of Amtrak’s routes and thus does not assist in distinguishing one from another. A special analysis conducted for the Department concerning alternate transportation to cities located on current Amtrak routes that are not included in the recommended route system found that, with one exception, adequate alternate transportation is available. The exception occurs on the Empire Builder route between Chicago and Seattle where air and bus transportation is infrequent and routings are often indirect. The analysis found that 40 percent of the passengers who rode the Empire Builder during Fiscal Year 1978, or 80,000 people, would have had no other reasonable public transportation available to them if the train had not operated. As noted above, based in part upon this analysis the Department included the Empire Builder in the recommended route system.” (page 4-10)

With regard to other considerations used in the selection of routes, the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1978 states that “the Department should consider the impact of the recommended route system upon existing tourism markets and the potential for future tourism. ... [T]he Department analyzed each route to determine whether it served any particular tourist attraction, and particularly any national park, directly or exclusively. This analysis played a part in the decision to include in the recommended route system ... the Empire Builder (which traverses Glacier National Park and stops at two gateways to the Park including the park lodge)” (page 4-11)

Yet another discussion relating to Montana is made with regard to Chicago to the West Coast service. The report here repeats the importance of the Empire Builder owing to extreme climate and a “difficult alignment” two-lane highway,

and the fact that 40 percent of Empire Builder patrons during 1978, or 80,000 people, had “no adequate alternative service”. The report then says that the Department’s analysis “found that the tourist attractions between Havre, Montana, and Whitefish, Montana, including Glacier National Park, have no adequate bus service. Moreover, National Park Service ranger-naturalists ride the train during part of its trip through Glacier National Park, providing an interpretive resource to passengers on the train.” (page 4-18)

"Gateway to Glacier: The Emerging Economy of Flathead County", a synthesis of three studies on Flathead County's economy conducted by the University of Montana and commissioned by the National Parks Conservation Association, May 2003.

Vitality of the Flathead County economy is directly tied to Glacier Park and the region's natural environment and small-town character. Many of Flathead Valley's most attractive qualities are at risk. The community must encourage high-quality economic growth and development, and protect its natural amenities. Tourism is a stable and growing industry.

Hamish, Richard. "Long Distance Trains: Sinkhole or Scapegoat?", *The Midwest Rail Report*, December 2001.

Amtrak long-distance trains are not cruise trains (like American Orient Express); rather, they provide basic transportation and fill many roles. They provide a comfortable, convenient, affordable and safe way to travel. They are often faster than driving. Ridership includes cost conscious travelers as well as "the very well heeled". Amtrak long-distance trains haul mail, provide a foundation on which to build future services, contribute to overhead, and feed passengers to other trains. Reports of long distance trains losses do not tell the whole story. Existing Amtrak one-train-a-day service and car fleet are insufficient to meet demand. Ridership would grow if cars were added to existing trains. Amtrak's express freight program was ill-conceived, resulted in "large unreported losses", and resulted in delays and schedule lengthening which lost riders. The reasonability of Amtrak costs cannot be assessed because Amtrak does not measure productivity and does not benchmark itself with other similar businesses. We do not know the true demand for long-distance train travel nor do we know true operating cost. Infrastructure and institutional improvements are needed to make long distance trains effective.

Hutchison, Kay Bailey. "Sen. Hutchison Announces Plans to Make AMTRAK A National Rail System", press release, June 5, 2003.

Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison announced plans to introduce legislation to reauthorize Amtrak for five years and foster billions of dollars of private investment to restore and improve rail service, and to bring the national system up to Northeast Corridor standards. Sen. Hutchison's legislation would

authorize \$50 billion in government-backed municipal bonds for repairs and improvements on the Northeast Corridor and on the national system.

Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation. Standing Committee on Rail Transportation, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 2002.

Addresses the role of intercity rail passenger service in our transportation system and economy, and its future, in an effort to help shape and inform the national dialogue on passenger train service. Finds that rail passenger service provides much needed capacity and redundancy to the transportation system. Finds that U.S. must provide a national intercity rail passenger service in corridors and on long-distance routes, as a public responsibility. Recommends that legislation establish a solid basis for partnerships between the states and the federal government, and stable and sufficient federal funding.

Kuhn, Daniel B. "Long-Distance Passenger Trains: Myth and Reality", prepared for the Standing Committee on Rail Transportation of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, March 6, 2002.

Author states that the long-distance passenger train is very misunderstood, and misconceptions resulted in private railroads attempts to eliminate them in the 1950s and 1960s, and in Amtrak's mismanagement over the past decade. Contrary to common beliefs, long-distance passenger trains resulted in Amtrak's greatest ridership and revenue growth during Amtrak's most successful decade, the 1980s. Studies show future growth prospects. Author states that attempts to shift the burden of funding long-distance trains from the federal level to the states constitute a highly ill-advised effort. States should fund corridor-type trains running predominantly on intrastate routes; multi-state long-distance trains are a responsibility of the federal government.

Kunka, Jenny. "CBS crew gets in on the blizzard while filming Amtrak segment", *Golden Triangle News* (Cut Bank, Glacier and Shelby, MT), May 29, 2002, www.goldentrianglenews.com

Despite blizzard which closed Highway 2 and Interstate 15, Amtrak ran without delay.

Mann, Jim. "Park helps fuel local economy, study confirms", *The Daily Inter Lake* (Kalispell, Montana), May 21, 2003.

A new report commissioned by the National Parks Conservation Association says Glacier National Park and surrounding public lands have fueled economic growth in Flathead Valley.

Measuring and Valuing Benefits and Disbenefits: Summary. Transit Cooperative Research Program, Transportation Research Board, National Research Council. TCRP Report 20, 1996.

Assesses state of the art in measurement and valuation of transit benefits and disbenefits. Categorizes transit benefits and disbenefits. Describes the dimensions of transit's economic impacts. Describes the measurement of and valuation of economic impacts. Provides examples of transit benefits and disbenefits.

"Modern Passenger Trains: A National Necessity", National Association of Railroad Passengers, June 2002.

The conventional approach relies on highways and airways to meet the nation's expanding demand for transportation. The bolder and wiser approach upgrades and expands the nation's existing rail system. Federal investment to modernize the rail system will return substantial benefits, adding needed capacity, providing choices, stimulating technology advances, increasing energy efficiency, saving lives and reducing the negative impact that growing transportation demand has on air quality and the environment.

"One man's vision is another's bad dream", Transit Update, *Railway Age*, July 2002, page 16.

David Gunn's views as expressed to Senate Appropriations Committee on June 20, 2002. "I cannot imagine a country such as ours without a national passenger railroad system. ... [N]o passenger system in the world operates without some form of government subsidy. ... The federal government must decide what role rail should play just as it does with highways and air."

Phillips, Don and Richard Morin. "Amtrak Subsidy Support Strong, Survey Shows", *Washington Post*, August 5, 2002, page A-1.

A *Washington Post* poll shows that Americans favor continuing federal subsidies to Amtrak, and "a substantial percentage would increase federal funding so the ailing passenger railroad can increase service". All sections of the country are solidly in the Amtrak camp. The administration probably would have difficulty abandoning Amtrak. Fifty-one percent of those surveyed said that support should be kept at current levels, and 20 percent said increase aid.

Phillips, Don. "White House Offers Amtrak Plan", *Washington Post*, April 30, 2003, page A6.

Bush administration "unveiled a six-year plan in which federal government would pay about half the capital costs for passenger routes, mainly new short-distance corridors between urban areas, and states would assume liability for operating costs nationwide."

Under the plan, "states would be allowed to form compacts to continue operating long-distance trains, with the states paying all operating costs."

"Pulling Out All the Stops: The Real Cost of Losing Passenger Rail Service in New Mexico", The Great American Station Foundation, May 2002.

This paper focuses on passenger rail stations in New Mexico and partially describes the impacts of losing passenger rail service. The Great American Station Foundation hosted a forum of community and transportation leaders. The study, based primarily on interviews with those leaders, profiles seven potentially affected New Mexico cities, emphasizing the train station (depot) and development of long-range transportation plans. The interview process developed several consistent themes, summarized as follows:

- Amtrak service provides a value to communities.
- The Amtrak station is a vital part of the community's identity and image.
- Train depot buildings are inspiring landmarks in the community.
- A vibrant, comprehensive intermodal transportation facility is a primary development strategy for all seven communities.
- Amtrak passenger service is an essential component of the regional and statewide tourism industry.
- Rail freight service is necessary to the health of existing industries and to the prospects of generating future job-supporting businesses.
- Sustainability and revitalization of stations and historic downtowns depends on active train depots.
- Citizens hold a strong latent interest in using the train, if only Amtrak service were more frequent, convenient and reliable.
- In comparison with heavily-subsidized air and highway modes, long-distance passenger rail service has not "been given a fair chance" to develop as a viable alternative.

Reece, Dave. "Group gets back aboard to help save Amtrak line", *The Daily Inter Lake* (Kalispell, Montana), April 3, 2002.

Jerry Smith, from Galata, Montana, (near Shelby) is leading the charge to resurrect Save Amtrak. In 1995, the group succeeded in getting Amtrak to boost its service from four days a week to seven days a week. National rail system proponents say self-sufficiency is not possible because passenger rail lines are capital-intensive and require government support. In small towns like Whitefish and Shelby, livelihoods depend on the train service. Businesses like Big Mountain (a resort) rely on Amtrak to provide service.

Reece, Dave. "Amtrak struggles to make a profit", *The Daily Inter Lake* (Kalispell, Montana), March 31, 2002.

The Amtrak system is losing money and is in peril; Congress must decide its fate and one option is cutting out the Empire Builder. Services are being curtailed, and baggage is no longer checked at Whitefish, one of the busiest stops. It would be cheaper for the federal government to keep Amtrak running than to shut it down, says the assistant general manager of the Empire Builder, because of the payments necessary for retirement of Amtrak employees. Montana's tourism industry could be heavily impacted if Amtrak were shut down. There was a 28 percent drop in Montana tourism in 1994 when Empire Builder service was reduced from seven to four trains per week. Daily service has since been reinstated. Roughly 10 percent of the business of Big Mountain Resort (in Montana) comes to Whitefish on Amtrak, says the resort's marketing director. Roughly 30 percent of the business at the Izaak Walton Inn, at Essex, comes on Amtrak or comes to watch the trains. Elimination of Amtrak service would have dire effects at Shelby; workers and passengers buy goods and services at stores in town.

Runte, Alfred. "Trains for parks: a second chance", *National Parks*, March-April 1994 volume 68 page 30.

Train service to western US national parks both reduces the impact of visitors on the environment and encourages a more thoughtful attitude toward such wild places. The Glacier, Denali and Grand Canyon parks offer at least limited rail service.

Vantuono, William C. "Separating fact from fiction", *Railway Age*, May 2003, page 27.

David Gunn, Amtrak President and CEO, speaks on Amtrak issues. With regard "[t]o those who believe Amtrak's long-distance trains are the company's biggest money losers: 'Getting rid of individual trains saves next to nothing--it doesn't do a damn thing.'"

Will, George. "And Amtrak Keeps Rolling Along", *Washington Post*, June 8, 2003, page B7.

Deferred maintenance cannot be deferred forever. The idea that Amtrak can end its deficit is "fanciful", according to David Gunn. Congress will not subsidize the Northeast Corridor without "legislative logrolling to guarantee continuing subsidies of long-distance trains (routes of at least 500 miles) beyond the corridor, where five-sixths of Americans live." Amtrak needs subsidies ranging from \$1.8 billion to \$1.5 billion for the next five years. Gunn states that the marketplace "has been completely distorted by government investment" for airlines and highways. 71 percent of the American public supports subsidizing Amtrak at current or increased levels. Amtrak is here to stay.

Appendix C

Summaries of Interviews of Mayors and Others

Larry Bonderud, Mayor, City of Shelby, Montana

The Empire Builder absolutely helps the City of Shelby. There are 44 Amtrak jobs in Shelby, a crew base and helper district, earning an average of \$44,000 – \$50,000 per year. Station agents are here as well. Shelby sits at the intersection of U.S. Route 2 and Interstate 15, on which bus service feeds the Shelby station. Amtrak is the number one originator for bus services to/from Helena and Butte. Shelby is close to Canada and large numbers of Canadians ride the train.

With regard to the impact if the Empire Builder were terminated: There is no other east to west public transportation system. In addition, we estimate that Amtrak generates \$5 million a year for Shelby, which is a conservative estimate since it does not include the spending multiplier effects. Those effects could be as much as 2.5 to 3 times Amtrak's payroll in Shelby. Loss of service would be a great economic cost to Shelby.

Who uses Empire Builder, and for what reasons? Several different groups use the Empire Builder. About 75 percent of the train's passengers are tourists and the remaining 25 percent are Montana residents. People use it for health care; some travel to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota and others travel to Seattle and Spokane, Washington. College students use the Empire Builder to get to Northern Montana College. Some Montana residents have summer homes and travel to Whitefish on the train.

Express freight shipments include outbound local crafts and inbound farm implement parts.

Marion Culleton, Mayor, City of Cut Bank, Montana

The Empire Builder is an essential transportation link for Cut Bank. Cut Bank's aging population depends on the train because they don't have cars. Though there is a bus that runs to Shelby, it takes a long time, has layovers and is not a good alternative for many elderly people. Many residents have chronic illnesses and use the train to go to medical appointments in Spokane, Seattle and the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Cut Bank has limited medical facilities. Because of Cut Bank's proximity to the mountains, it is difficult to get in and out of the town during the winter and there is a degree of isolation.

Loss of the Empire Builder would be "devastating" for Cut Bank. It is a remote area that greatly depends on the train for transportation and products.

The elderly use the train for medical appointments and to visit family. In the winter tourists use the train quite a bit. Montana residents use the train to go skiing at Big Mountain and Whitefish.

Cut Bank's greenhouse receives products from the Empire Builder. Cut Bank's two grocery stores, Albertsons and IGA, sell flowers as well, so they may receive them from Amtrak.

Byron Ereaux, Mayor, City of Malta, Montana

The Empire Builder does help Malta. A local flower shop relies upon flowers that come off the train daily. Otherwise, the shop would have to send someone 90 miles to Havre or 70 miles to Glasgow to pick up the flowers.

The train also serves as the only transportation link for the elderly. There are no buses, and the airport does not have commercial air service. It also is a vital link for people without automobiles. Even those who have automobiles cannot access the roads during parts of the winter. Plus, people from Lewistown, and Canadians, come down to Malta just to board the train to go to Seattle, which helps. A rural area like Malta needs as much help as possible.

If Empire Builder were terminated, the biggest impact would be economic. The local flower business would be greatly affected by loss of the Empire Builder. Costs to do business would increase. There would also be a general loss of mobility for Malta residents who depend on the train. Canadians and others who travel to Malta to board Amtrak would not come. Loss of Amtrak would mean a decrease in the number of visitors, which could negatively impact local jobs.

The elderly use the train mainly to visit family especially around holidays and birthdays, etc. Montana residents use it for seasonal and leisure travel to go to football games in Seattle or to go skiing in Whitefish. College students in other states like North Dakota use the train to travel back and forth, particularly when the weather is bad. Local schools also use the train as an educational tool, i.e. field trips, and to learn about the train and how it works, in general. A group of schoolchildren rode the train to Glasgow and took the bus back to Malta.

About 25 percent of riders are Montana residents and 75 percent are from outside the State of Montana.

Flowers come to a Malta flower shop via the Empire Builder. Some beef might be moved and maybe lobster, as well.

The area around the station is filled with businesses, but the problem is that the train stops only for a couple of minutes. Thus, there isn't much of a chance for people to

detrain and look around. The Chamber of Commerce is working on some innovative ways in which to draw people to and around the station. For example, people are renting cars at the station to go prairie dog hunting. Further, the ensuing anniversary of Lewis and Clark's expedition is drawing some tourism.

The boarding and deboarding total is greater than Malta's population because of the fact that Malta draws people in from other communities, including Billings and some Canadians as well. People drive in, park their cars and ride the train because there is no other way.

Anthony "Andy" Feury, Mayor, City of Whitefish, Montana

The Empire Builder is definitely a benefit to Whitefish, although not the vital transportation link that it is for other communities along the line. People do use the Empire Builder to get from other Montana towns to Whitefish. Tourism is most important; people come to Whitefish for ski weekends as far away as North Dakota and Minnesota. A lot of people ride the train over to East Glacier. The train is an important part of the community.

Amtrak produces another benefit in terms of its role as a tenant at the Whitefish station. Whitefish would miss the revenue if Amtrak did not rent the space. Whitefish station is one of the original 1920s stations and has been completely restored by the Whitefish Historical Society. Whitefish station is the center point of the north side of Whitefish's downtown area and is one of the prime architectural buildings. There is a library, theater and shopping around the depot. The area has recently been redeveloped.

Though termination of the Empire Builder would have a negative impact on tourism, people probably would be able to find other means of transportation into Whitefish. It would definitely hurt the winter ski business.

William Morris, Mayor, City of Browning, Montana

The Empire Builder is a big benefit to Browning. The bus is not a good alternative and many people cannot afford air fare. Local auto parts are shipped by Amtrak, as well as fresh flowers.

Termination of the Empire Builder would have a big impact on Browning. Cost of express package shipping would go up; supplies in stores would decrease; it would affect mobility of those who cannot afford to travel by other means. It would also hurt the ability to increase viability and productivity of Browning. Unemployment is 50-60% in Browning, so it is important to have a low-cost transportation option.

The elderly use the train to visit family in Washington and Oregon. Blackfeet Indians created a local shuttle service to bring people from downtown to the depot. The shuttle

costs \$1 and is considered local transit. About 60% of the passengers are local and 40% are tourists.

Indians use the train and rely on it for transportation.

Bob Rice, Mayor, City of Havre, Montana

It is imperative that Havre have Amtrak's Empire Builder. Havre is isolated; it is only 49 miles from the Canadian border. Amtrak is a basic mode of transportation for Havre residents. The train is, in fact, the only mode of transportation available to many residents, including the elderly, Indians and other groups. Big Sky air service is not reliable, as the carrier has numerous scheduling problems.

Additionally, there are Amtrak jobs in Havre. Amtrak operates a repair facility at Havre employing five to six people in the administrative office plus additional labor forces at the facility. Also, a local business has a contract with Amtrak to provide food service and catering.

There would be a huge economic impact if the train were discontinued. The train "lays over" for one hour when it comes in, at which time there is a large group of passengers who detrain, explore downtown Havre, get something to eat and spend money. While passengers may not spend a lot of money, when you add it up over one year's time, it is significant. Loss of Amtrak jobs in Havre would be an economic impact as well as local businesses that work with Amtrak.

Second, loss of service would be "detrimental to our lifestyle." Havre residents rely upon the train as a basic form of transportation. All residents know when the train arrives, just as commuters know schedules and wait for a bus or train in big cities with large commuting populations. The elderly rely upon the train to visit family, which would not otherwise be possible.

Everyone uses the train. Perhaps 75 percent of the passengers are local Montana residents, while 25 percent of patrons are tourists. Since Havre is located roughly in the center of Montana, and because it is one of the larger towns on the line, Montana residents travel to Havre to buy groceries, do their Christmas shopping and buy clothing. There were some gentlemen at the local men's store in Havre who traveled from Glasgow to buy some new clothes; Glasgow is too small to have its own men's clothing store, so they come to Havre via the Empire Builder.

Indians use the train, as most do not own automobiles. While there is no bus operating between the Indian Reservation at Rocky Boy, Havre's local taxi service is a common transportation link for Indians traveling between the Reservation and the train station at Havre.

Elderly people also rely heavily upon the train for transportation, in general, but specifically to attend medical appointments in places as far away as the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and Chicago.

Montana residents also rely on the Empire Builder for their own leisure travel. Some Montana residents have summer homes along the Hi-Line and use the Empire Builder to access these vacation spots.

College students use the Empire Builder to travel between their hometowns and Northern Montana College in Havre.

The Havre station is right in the middle of downtown Havre. Businesses around the station depend on train patrons who wander in during the train's layover. They know when the train comes in and try to meet potential needs of passengers. For example, a pizza place recently opened near the station and sells pizza by the slice to accommodate rail passengers.

William Zeller, Mayor of Glasgow, Montana

The Empire Builder is Glasgow's link to the outside world. A sixteen-passenger plane is not a great alternative. The elderly greatly depend upon the Empire Builder. The local florist would go out of business, as it would be prohibitively expensive to fly in his flowers. The Montana League of Cities and Towns is holding a convention in Kalispell, and we are all planning to ride the Empire Builder to the convention.

The impact if the Empire Builder were terminated would be "devastating." Loss of approximately 15 Amtrak jobs would result in a loss of funding for local schools since there would be fewer children (funding level is allocated per child). It would also depress the housing market, as there would be more homes on the market. People also ride the Empire Builder to Glasgow to see first-run movies, and loss of the train would hurt the movie theater's business.

The elderly use the Empire Builder. Indians use the train. Schools use the Empire Builder to take ski trips. It is estimated that 75 percent of the passengers are residents and 25 percent are tourists.

The Empire Builder benefits the agriculture industry by serving as a transportation link for agricultural product development interests. Glasgow is a highly-agricultural part of Montana and companies like John Deere bring professionals in to test and market new agricultural products. The people come in a "fairly constant flow". People come to Glasgow via the Empire Builder to purchase farm machinery.

The Glasgow Amtrak station is right in the middle of downtown. The train makes a short stop, so there is no real opportunity for tourists to spend money in Glasgow. There is a car rental firm just about one block away.

The following was received from Henri Headdress, Transportation Planner for the Fort Peck Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, on June 23, 2003:

The Fort Peck Indian Reservation is located in the Northeast corner of Montana. We are approximately 40 miles from the North Dakota border on the east and approximately 30 miles from the Canadian border to the north. The Empire Builder travels through the entire length of our Reservation and stops in Wolf Point. We use this service extensively for travel. It is convenient for our people to use this service and is an affordable means of transportation. With unemployment hovering about 65% on the Reservation, many folks have no vehicles to get to their respective destinations. We have the Big Sky Airlines located in Wolf Point, but is expensive to travel on. We have no bus service in this part of the state, we have to travel approximately 110 miles south to Glendive to catch the Greyhound Bus.

In FY 2002, 6,584 people from our area traveled on Amtrak, that is 18 people per day on average and Wolf Point ranks #25 out of a possible 45 stations.

The Fort Peck Tribes travel department figures are approximately 25 people traveled on Amtrak during a one year period.

We have 3 major Government entities or Offices located on the Reservation these are:

1. Bureau of Indian Affairs
2. Indian Health Service
3. Fort Peck Tribal Offices

These agencies travel on the Empire Builder for business and medical purposes. The Elementary, Jr. High, and High Schools, Headstart Program, College use the empire builder for there children on school related trips and business.

The express package service provided is used by the people and businesses located on the Reservation. In a meeting held recently, concerning the discontinuation of the Empire Builder attend by various businesses, agencies and the traveling public a number of issues were discussed. At this meeting one floral business owner who uses the rail service to deliver fresh flowers, stated that his flowers used to be delivered to Wolf Point, now doesn't. He has to travel to Havre, which is 210 miles from here to pick up his flowers, and as a result he has to charge more for them to make up for the cost of delivery.

I recently traveled on the Empire Builder to Portland, Oregon for a business meeting. I met a young lady from Billings, who was traveling to Portland for a medical appointment. She had to travel approximately 210 miles to Malta to

catch the train and when she returned her husband traveled the 210 miles to pick her up. They could not afford a plane ticket, she took her young daughter and to drive that far wasn't an option.

If this service was discontinued it would have a negative effect on all the people on the Reservation and those in the surrounding area who use the Empire Builder. Many locals use it for pleasure as well. We would lose jobs, tourists who may want to visit our Reservation. In a struggling economy in this area it would only make things more difficult. We are losing our young people to better paying jobs in other parts of the country and this would be just another reason for them to leave.

Discussion with Business Establishments of Amtrak Tourist Benefits

Because of the importance of tourism to Montana, and the importance of the number of Empire Builder patrons who are tourists traveling to and from Montana, a number of commercial lodging and other tourist establishments in and near Glacier National Park were contacted. When revenue figures associated with Amtrak travelers were asked of these business establishments, they were provided confidentiality. Therefore the following, based upon phone conversations, and e-mail, is summarized and does not identify specific tourist establishments.

Business #1. In former years, virtually everyone who stayed with us arrived by Amtrak. There are still "a lot" of our visitors who come by Amtrak. We don't have a figure, because it's not something we track. Our own employees use Amtrak to travel to this establishment to work. College students use Amtrak to come here for work; we pick them up at the station. If the Empire builder were eliminated at least 15 percent of our business would go away, about \$900,000-\$1,000,000.

Business #2. About 85 percent of our patrons travel by Amtrak. Many would come even if Amtrak service were cancelled, but the impact on us would be "dramatic". Many love to come by train. Our guests include many rail fans. The Empire Builder is "a great benefit to Montana! It would be such a shame if it were cancelled."

Business #3. Amtrak brings us a total annual revenue of \$1,634,000. This would be lost if the Empire Builder were discontinued. This figure does not take into account spending in gift shops, so adding this the total would be almost \$2 million annually. A number of our seasonal employees arrive by train.

Business #4. We would lose \$10,000 or more were it not for Amtrak.

Business #5. Amtrak service brings us \$779,920 in revenues annually. We are aggressively trying to increase use of Amtrak. "It's a huge factor for us."

Sheila Bowen, Executive Director of the Whitefish Chamber of Commerce.

Termination of Empire Builder service would be “a huge loss to our community”. We polled our members; the overwhelming majority agreed.

Joe Unterreiner, Executive Vice President, Chamber of Commerce, Kalispell, Montana

We are a major destination. Amtrak is “a big part” of our business, “a key asset”. It would be “a huge loss if we didn’t have it.” Amtrak plays a big part in bringing people to this area. Whitefish is a major ski resort destination. Many leave Seattle on Friday, arrive here 7 a.m. Saturday, enjoy two days skiing, and return to work Monday morning. A shuttle meets the train. West Glacier is a major jumping off point.

A letter to RLBA signed by Mr. Unterreiner and Carol Edgar, Executive Director, Flathead Convention and Visitor Bureau, states the "Amtrak's Empire Builder line has a significant and beneficial impact on the economy of Northwest Montana", that two major visitor attractions "are both reliant on Amtrak service: Glacier National Park and Big Mountain Ski and Summer Resort. ... Amtrak is a vital transportation link for both residents and visitors."³⁸

³⁸ June 27, 2003, Kalispell Area Chamber of Commerce letter to RLBA.

Appendix D

E-Mails and Faxes Received from Montana Citizens

Note: It was not intended that public input be part of this study. However, a Montana newspaper encouraged comments, and e-mails were sent to the consultant. The e-mails are included in this appendix.

Dear Sir, I am writing this in support of continuing the Empire Builder Service along the Hi Line here in Montana. It is the only means of transportation for many of our senior citizens located here. It is also the main source of flowers to be brought in to the local florist, woe be to me if I am unable to buy flowers for my wife, and the many good friends that I have, and as tokens of esteem for our departed friends. It is also the best way to bring in the remains of people that have passed on elsewhere but desire to be buried in their home town along the hi line. I am a member of Albedoo Shrine Temple and I sponsor 6 to 10 kids to the Shrine Hospital in Spokane for medical treatment. For many parents this is the only mode of transportation that they have, many do not even own a private vehicle, and what would I say to a small child that needs orthopedic care, that he can not get it unless he finds another way to get to the hospital, it would be a sad day for me.

I have never responded to requests for public input but I feel I need to let you know how strongly I feel about the passenger rail service on the hi-line. This service is a vital part of Montana's capacity to interact with the other states. There is considerable distance to get out of the state to visit relatives or for kids to go to college and the railway affords people the opportunity to travel when they otherwise would not be able to. I went up to the train station in Shelby twice this summer to get relatives and it would not have been possible for them to come out otherwise. Over the years I have used the train many times myself. I would hate for us to lose an affordable option of travel. Montanans on the whole are not rich and we can get around with the train. PLEASE DO ALL YOU CAN TO CONTINUE PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE IN MONTANA. Thank you.

There is very little doubt that Amtrak is a very important transportation link for a great many people of Northeastern Montana. Everyone cannot get to Billings and other air hub cities to use air transportation. As a Shriner, our little club uses Amtrak exclusively for transportation, of children and parents, to the Shrine Hospital in Spokane. I have friends with relatives on the West coast and Amtrak is their major form of transportation.

I am writing you in regards to the study you are conducting on Amtrak's Empire Builder which passes through Havre, MT. Amtrak is a vital transportation option to us living in this relatively remote part of the state. Along with Big Sky Airlines (which has two routes per day on a 18 passenger plane with destination to Billings MT.) Amtrak is the only mode of transportation in and out of our area. We do not even have a bus service in our town. I cannot put a dollar figure to what this type of transportation means to my business however I use both of them to get to various meetings around the state. Amtrak is very crucial to the economic health and the future of our town. Even though I cannot put a dollar figure on what Amtrak means to me it is extremely important to our community and thus impacts me greatly. We cannot afford to lose such an important transportation option, it is difficult enough to get people in and out of Havre let alone vital goods.

I cannot tell you how much it means to me and my family to have Amtrak available in Montana. Each year we ride back to Minneapolis to visit my children's grandmother. We all enjoy the trip which is more economical than flying and more fun for our family. Please let Congress know that we depend on regular train service and that the money used to subsidize Amtrak is leveraged many times over by providing new jobs, reducing shipping costs, and by providing individuals families a cost-effective way to travel.

Since 2000 my husband and I have travelled about 27,000 passenger miles via Amtrak. From the train, you see America instead of clouds...which brings me to my point: There's an esthetic value to train riding that one can get by no other means. Practically, you get a lot of bang for your travel buck, and it's a mode of transportation that's pretty invulnerable to extreme weather and terrorist attacks. It's infuriating that the government and current administration do not see the benefit of federal support of long distance passenger rail travel, at the same time they're pouring revenue into airlines and airports. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

My husband and I used to live near Havre, MT. I want to express my opinion about the Amtrak situation. Please, please keep the Amtrak stop in Havre. Our family has used Amtrak services forever and since moving to Odessa WA, I have talked with several people who have traveled on the Empire Builder. Many have gotten off the train and toured the town of Havre. They have toured the Underground Havre, the museum, and shopped at our local grocery stores. So, please, don't stop services.

We are an elderly, semi-handicapped couple who have traveled on the Empire Builder to Mn., Mi., Ca., and Ill., for medical treatment and to visit children. It has been a life-saver. We don't know our needs for the near future but hope and pray we will have access to train-travel as we do need it. Because of physical problems we are unable to fly and age makes driving long distances not a viable option. Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.

My son goes to school in Minnesota. He regularly rides Amtrak for his trips home, as it is the only affordable method of transportation, short of a car, which he does not have. Why is it that this country subsidizes highway transportation massively and air lines massively but is unable to support a national rail passenger system? Supporting some level of functioning system is just part of the basic infrastructure we need if we are to remain a country rather than turning into a archipelago of private ghettos.

One of the many reasons we need, no, must have the railroad is for economic reasons. We live in a forested rural interface community. There are over three million acres of forest that will either have to be thinned or will die of beetle infestation or fire. That salvage will someday have to be transported to distant forest co-generators to produce electricity and heat. I realize that the Dept of Transportation wants the Trucking industry to haul ALL of the freight into and through Montana but perhaps its not just the most economical way. I wonder how many truckers would stop at the small community on the hi line to pick up child to transport them to the Shriner Hospital in Spokane.

Noted the article in the Havre paper re Amtrak. As a rider of Amtrak for many years and one who would rather take the train then fly or drive, it does not make any sense to spend 3 billion a month in Iraq, billions subsidizing highways and airports and airline companies and not support the rails. Going on the Empire Builder in April I noted how many people used the train and who they were. There are a lot of people with limited means who depend on the train and who need the system to travel and to help them earn a living, rather than get a direct subsidy from the govt. One of the main problems with keeping minimal train service is the lack of support from politicians, especially the ones whose state the train services. These politicians who should be named for there lack of support should be thrown out of office by the older population of the US. Best regards.

Though I am no longer a resident of Montana, I am still a home owner, and have been since 1976. I visit Montana every other year to check on my property. Sometimes I fly, but often I take the Empire Builder. To lose this valuable transportation opportunity is unthinkable. Not only to those who use it as I do, and to the many Montanans who need it for their daily lives, but also for the many tourists who travel across our state, view the glorious fields of grain, the mountains and rivers along the way. I've seen the look of awe on their faces as they view these sights, and the great expectations they have when leaving the train to take a rental car from East Glacier and explore on their own. Don't take this away from Americans who love the west and the marvelous train called the Empire Builder. It's part of America. Don't discard it.

Please relay my enthusiastic support for continuation of Amtrak in northern Montana. My daughter and son-in-law operate their business out of Whitefish, and I live in Great Falls. While in the summer the drive between our towns is one of the most spectacular in the country, in the winter it is one of the most treacherous. I have personally experienced white outs from blowing snow near East Glacier, white knuckle blizzards, sheets of ice on the road, and herds of elk on the winding highway. On several occasions I have been stranded in Cut Bank because the road bordering the southern tip of Glacier Park was too hazardous. This past year a snow avalanche closed the road. We now use Amtrak to provide transport between Whitefish and Shelby during the winter. As a result, we were able to schedule a family reunion in Essex in February, more frequently visit one another in our respective cities, and arrange for a skiing vacation in Big Mountain. These types of activities are good for families and for the regional economies. I am also aware of how this line is used by elderly people as far away as Helena to transport them to the Mayo Clinic for specialized medical care. Thank you for including comments from the public in your assessment.

The Empire Builder line has been used by my family for many trips to Washington, and North Dakota. I have been very concerned about the possibility of losing this service. I really appreciate Amtrak during the winter when I have had to travel. I do not like to be on mountain passes by myself when the weather is below zero, and snow is coming down. Instead I have traveled in warmth and comfort aboard Amtrak and felt safe and secure. I have arthritis and have used the disabled seating on the Empire Builder, and the comfort and ease of travel has been wonderful. I would be very sad to see this service eliminated from the residents of the northern tier of this country. My husband and myself have traveled to California and North Dakota on separate occasions and have enjoyed every trip and felt very fortunate to have this means of travel available. Please continue in your efforts to keep Amtrak available to those of us who pay taxes, and don't live in metropolitan areas. Thank you.

As a former resident of MT, I have ridden the Empire Builder at least 16 times over the past 15 years. Starting when I arrived in MT when I was transferred to Malmstrom AF Base. Believe it or not, I don't like to fly! My wife and I now live in Florida; and we have already bought and paid for our next vacation, which is in March 2004. We are taking a round trip on Amtrak from Orlando, FL to Whitefish, MT; so my wife can visit her 3 kids (2 are in MT, 1 is in MN) and 12 grandkids. The Empire Builder is a **MAJOR** factor in our trip! It needs to be retained and expanded. Thanx for your time and patience.

I use Amtrak at least 3 times a year to go from Shelby MT to Kalispell MT to see my family. It would be a hardship for myself and countless others along the hi-line of MT to lose Amtrak. I love the service. Thank you.

Regarding the railroad, I lived in the "Railroad" town of Havre for 12 years and got to know many of the "railroaders" personally. From what I could determine, it appeared that each time the employees/union asked for more money, the supervisors of the railroad would just automatically grant it as all they had to do was go to the government and ask for more tax-payer money. This resulted in enormous wages/salaries compared to private industry in the area. No "business" could be run like that and survive. Stories of employees using "company" materials and time for personal projects were common. And "alcohol" consumption was legend, even on the job. At the time, I believed that the railroad was necessary for national security in times of emergency, the railroad could be used to transportation. Now I believe that this is no longer true. With airplanes, highways, trucks, etc. the railroad should not longer be subsidized with tax dollars. The railroad should be privatized and left to survive on its own. The tax-payer has suffered long enough with this burden. Get rid of it.

I understand that you are taking comments on the affects that the Empire Builder has on the hi line of Montana. I live on this route and so feel compelled to provide a few thoughts. Northern Montana is very rural and, without the Empire Builder, would be totally isolated. The nearest airports of any size for this part of the state are Billings and Great Falls, which are quite a drive for the small towns along the Empire Builder route. The small air carrier service to the smaller areas has a horrible reputation. Years ago, a close family member had a heart attack in Billings and I tried to catch a flight from Havre to Billings having not booked my ticket two weeks in advance. The ticket would have been well over \$300. Boy, it would have been nice to not have had to drive that 5 hour drive in the emotional turmoil I was feeling. I know that you can get on a train and pay for your ticket that day. Granted, it may not be the cheapest fare possible, but it is not that out of line. There is no bus service from Havre, or many other small northern areas. For many areas, the Empire Builder is the link to medical centers, such as the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN or the Children's Hospitals in Washington. For those that are very sick, driving and flying are not always options. The Empire Builder can provide special amenities to such people. They even have a handicapped sleeper. It is also the delivers fresh items such as flowers to shops. Without this convenience, the floral shops would suffer as they would have to drive to Great Falls daily for their deliveries. It would not take too long for these businesses to dry up do to the new expenses incurred. The funeral homes use Amtrak to ship deceased bodies. Without this service, small towns in Eastern Montana would have more expenses and other problems transporting the deceased. There are businesses along the way that rely on Amtrak itself to buy their products along the route. Box Cars in Havre has built their business around chicken dinners. Then there is PJ's the restaurant, casino, bar that handles an onslot of Amtrak passengers every time the train stops in Havre. These are just a few examples of the businesses that the Empire Builder affects. As rural America dries up and we lose business after business, it is heart wrenching that we would let the Empire Builder disappear. How many small businesses in rural Montana would follow? And as we lose our local businesses we are required to travel further and further away from home to meet our needs. But Amtrak would no longer be there to help us travel. Losing the Empire Builder would be just one more blow to the already struggling rural

communities between Minneapolis and Seattle. It's a blow that these communities cannot withstand.

Without Amtrak the people on the high line or anyplace in montana would not have any way to go east or west. The train is cheaper than taking a plane that you can't always get on. The train is the best way to see the country and not have to worry about watching the road. Without our train system a lot of the towns would perish. Please don't shut down our best way of transportation that Montana has. The headstart systems always use the train for a field trip for small children to have a new experience. Just think what they would be missing if we didn't have the Amtrak train. This is a part of our history we need to keep.

This is my comment on the Amtrak issue. We in nothern Montana need the train to keep running. It brings a lot of business to the valley. We need all the tourists that we can get here since the timber and other resource industries have been halted in the last few years. We just lost Stream and another mill. How much more can we take before we just give up and all go on welfare.

Even as air travel becomes more of a hassle for everyone, Montana's air service is slowly going away. Passenger trains will continue to increase in importance for those of us who choose NOT to fly in an era when flying is no longer fun or safe. Transportation in a state the size of Montana is always an issue, and driving is not an option for some people. Or, there are times when public transportation is preferred for various reasons. Amtrak is a vital part of Montana's human transportation needs, and we should actually have TWO routes. The southern route should never have been abandoned, since the northern route is so FAR north. But, since we can apparently have only one Amtrak route, for reasons which are incomprehensible, we absolutely MUST retain the one we have. America is behind most of the developed world in rail transportation, especially of people. The present Amtrak route is well-maintained and efficient, and is quite scenic (in certain areas). Our highways are barely keeping up with their deterioration, and new routes are needed, which we will probably never see. Amtrak's necessity is therefore INCREASING, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Given a choice, I would prefer to ride Amtrak to Seattle than fly there. While we're at it, why not restore north-south connecting service to Shelby from Great Falls and Helena? It could be done with an RDC unit (or its modern equivalent).

Hello, I love Amtrak and my family would use it a lot more if it was closer to Great Falls. Is there any chance it could ever get closer to the center of the state for another pickup and drop off point? Thank you.

I believe the Empire Builder is very important to Montana's tourism, transportation and economic development, particularly along the Hi-Line, and most particularly for residents of that area who are unable to drive long distances for various personal and financial reasons. The Hi-Line has no other form of transportation and the Empire Builder should continue its service from the West Coast and from the Midwest through northern Montana to serve the people who live in this remote area. It is also beneficial to many businesses in the area. Thank you.

I always thought Amtrak should ADD more train service, going North and South, thru the Great Falls area. There are plenty of people who have no wish or desire to step foot on an airplane. Especially in these present times when you never know what will happen up in the air. Riding the train should be more publicized. If it weren't for the Empire Builder, I would never get to see my family back in Illinois. There are so many people that have never even ridden a train, because it just hasn't crossed their minds. I would be willing to bet, that once they tried it, they would never travel any other way. What better way to relax and cross the country, than by train. Not to mention the fantastic scenery between Chicago and Seattle! With some creative marketing, I would think you could create such a demand on the highline that you would actually have a need to add extra cars to the train. Please...do not take away this wonderful mode of transportation. Instead, market it. Retirees, students, fisherman, hunters, family vacations...the possibilities are endless. Thank you.

I am sure others have sent this article on to you. I have taken this train from Portland Oregon to Chicago. I believe it has a major impact on Eastern Washington, Montana, North Dakota and Minnesota. After 9/11, to talk about not funding this train makes no sense. There is no doubt in my mind this train should be continued.

As Senior Citizens we would like to comment on Amtrak. Amtrak does a lot of business for our town of Havre Montana and it is the only way that we can get to Spokane, Seattle, or Portland. And we surely want to keep it in our town. In every country in the world the Government provides transportation for the poor and disabled. We would like to recommend that you publish and get on the radio with a Phone Number, as many poor people and Senior Citizens have no computer and they would call as most have telephones.

I would like to comment on the question of Amtrak or the Empire Builder. Since my husband and I are retired, the financial aspects may not affect us as much as others. However we do live in a small town where Amtrak workers have purchased homes. In the past year, we have taken Amtrak to Grand Forks, North Dakota and to Reno, Nevada. We will soon ride Amtrak to Portland, Oregon and plan another trip to Reno in October. These are trips we might miss if it were not for Amtrak. The reasons are important to us. We both truly enjoy riding the train. The bus is tedious and the only

freedom is an occasional stop. My fear of flying has increased with every flight I have taken. I have had such nightmare flights, I feel I should warn people going on the same flight that they are in for a terrible experience. The other choice would be driving. Both of us are in our seventies. We do not get tickets for careless driving or speeding, but are on the highway with many who should be receiving the tickets. In addition to that, we find we tire more easily and prefer to let someone else do the driving while we enjoy the scenery. Amtrak is no longer as special as it was in the thirties and forties, but still provides a wonderful trip. I have previously written to our congressmen. Both of them know how important Amtrak is to Montana. Our government spends millions and billions of dollars. Some of the causes I truly believe and some I have questioned, but hope they are smarter than I and are doing the correct thing. I believe that subsidies (written into law) will be the correct thing. This would allow for enough help to keep the cars in first class condition, clean bathrooms etc. Please consider the senior citizens who still love to travel--the safe way. Thank you.

I'm writing to support Amtrak's continued services in the state of Montana. As a college student in Minnesota and a native of Montana, I'm a passenger on Amtrak at least twice a year, travelling during breaks. It is not only an efficient and economic means of travel for me, it is the safest--especially during the winter months in Minnesota, North Dakota, and Montana. When I travel on Amtrak, I see the diverse group of people who are benefited by this mode of transportation. College students, families, couples, and senior citizens can all find comfortable ways to travel on Amtrak (especially with Amtrak's friendly, accommodating service!). Some of these people would not otherwise be able to travel to Montana without the convenience of the system--taking valuable tourist dollars away from Montana's economy. Not only is Amtrak beneficial for Montana's tourist economy, it also helps support many small town economies on the Hi-Line. Many of these towns rely on the business that Amtrak brings (Whitefish's skiing economy, for example), and the business that Amtrak corp. gives to these small towns by purchasing meals, etc. It is absolutely necessary to preserve Amtrak in these small areas. So many people are affected and benefited by Amtrak in Montana. I hope you hear many more responses from Montanans who realize the value of having another effective mode of transportation in our state. Thank you for your time!

I am a long time resident of the Hi Line. I live in Rudyard. I hope you will be able to do all you can to retain the Amtrak train, because it is an integral part of our local economy. I have been an Amtrak passenger only twice in the past thirty years. I would like to be a more frequent rider, especially as I get older and driving long distances is more difficult for me to manage alone. However, the biggest obstacle for me is that Amtrak doesn't stop in enough of the smaller towns to be accommodating to local riders. If I have to drive 45 miles to Havre or 60 miles to Shelby just to board the train, I might as well drive the entire journey. Please consider more stops to attract local riders. My most recent Amtrak trip was from San Luis Obispo, California, to Portland, Oregon, and a return trip. The service was excellent, as was the food. An elderly cousin and I made that trip and enjoyed it tremendously.

As a life long native of Montana's great plains, and a former member for 8 years of the Montana Highway Commission, I feel compelled to encourage the continuation on every way possible, of our major public transportation system. We do have Essential Air service from Billings, Montana, but it is often questioned and tenuous. We have absolutely no bus or other public transportation service, in any direction aside from Amtrak. With energy prices on the rise, it behooves us to enhance and promote every mode of public transportation, including Amtrak. The rail lines are here, let us make maximum utilization of the facilities in place. We have an inadequate highway system, for our vast expanse of area. Thank you for your kind attention.

I have lived in Montana all of my life and as a small child always dreamt of riding the train. Now that I have the opportunity to take short trips, Amtrak may not always be there for me. In 2000, I decided to go back to college at MSU-Northern which is approximately 200 miles from my permanent home. As often as I can, I go home for the weekends. During the winter, I find comfort in riding on Amtrak instead of driving my car because of the unpredictable roads and weather. I can still do reading and studying while enjoying my trip home because on Amtrak I do not worry about the erratic weather conditions. It eases my mind and stress level a lot too, when I don't have to fight the weather, traffic or something happening to my automobile. There are also many elderly people who rely on the train for transportation, some for enjoyment and others maybe who don't want to jeopardize anyone on the highway by driving. God only knows we have a high mortality rate due to car accidents in Montana. I realize it does take a whole lot of money to keep passenger trains such as Amtrak to stay alive, but it is also realistic to say people here in Montana need and want Amtrak. Montana's economy is hurting and if we lose Amtrak, we would not only lose jobs but money from the tourist trade. I'm sure if Amtrak tickets would go up, people would still pay the price (within reason) to travel on Amtrak because they would feel safe and worry-free. Please do everything you can to preserve Amtrak passenger and rail services.

I have lived in Montana since 1972, coming from my hometown in Wisconsin. For over 31 years I have used Amtrak to travel back home to visit my family. Amtrak is a godsend for the people of northern Montana who have to travel several miles to just get to a train depot and even farther to catch a plane. From our isolated ranch we traveled 75 miles just to reach a train depot in Malta or Havre, Montana. In 1998, I moved to Havre, Montana and the convenience of having a depot here to travel either east or west is one I do not care to be without. Travel by plane I would have to drive to Great Falls (110 miles away) or to Billings, which is over 300 miles from Havre. Being a single woman I do not care to drive the treacherous winter roads in Montana or spend the extra time and money to stay overnight to catch the air flights. Please do not let Montana lose the Amtrak service it provides for the people. In the past ten years Amtrak train station services have been cut drastically on the Hi-Line to where there is only carry-on luggage in some towns. It is hundreds of miles to drive between each

station. Why does Montana have to carry such a burden? Is it possible to consolidate other stations in other states where towns are closer together to help alleviate some of Montana's Amtrak expenses? Montana's economy is already hurting and taking Amtrak away means loss of tourist income for our smaller towns that are having a hard time staying alive now. Many jobs will be lost if Amtrak closes. I would not mind paying a little more for my ticket if it meant saving Amtrak in Montana. Please add my name to the list of supporters to keep Amtrak intact.

I wanted to take this opportunity to comment on the value of Amtrak's empire Builder line in Montana. Amtrak represents an extremely important alternative transportation method. I annually travel to Wisconsin in the winter months. The Empire Builder is a safer alternative to driving (especially so in the winter months) and much more economical than air travel. Cities and towns along much of the Empire builder route are poorly served by other forms of transportation. Air travel is fine to the major cities but the present hub system and lack of competition to smaller cities results in high fares. Daily Amtrak service is simply the best way to travel to Wisconsin. I find it difficult to understand how the Federal government can find the means and resources to provide funding for most transportation services including the airlines and automobile travel yet a national rail transportation service must operate at a profit. To meet the needs and wants of the greatest variety of citizens the Federal government must maintain a diverse transportation program and this definitely should include long distance rail travel.

A random survey while waiting in line in the Dallas airport revealed a consensus that if there were high speed trains, such as they have across all of Europe, we would prefer trains over the airline lines and hassle. But since the government already supports the highway system and the airlines, as well as every nation that needs help they are blinded to the need for a good rail system. The only transportation across Northern Montana East to West is the AMTRAK. People in the small towns such as Chinook must catch a ride to Havre, board a train to Shelby, and then take a bus to Great Falls for their medical treatments. Many elderly in those communities no longer drive, and because of their age, they require a lot of medical care. We can rebuild any other nation (after we destroy it or whenever they need help). Let's not destroy our rail system -- rather upgrade it so it never needs to be rebuilt.

Amtrak's Empire Builder passenger train is vital to Northern Montana, an area with few other transportation alternatives and severe weather. Though I no longer reside in Montana, I am a native of Cut Bank, Montana and know the importance of the train to the communities it serves. June of 2004 will be the 75th anniversary of the Empire Builder. Thanks for your time.

It is very important to keep Amtrak running in rural Montana. In Libby, MT, we are an isolated community with no bus service. Amtrak is the only public transportation from our town. We are trying to build tourism as a major industry here, since mining and timber and mills have been closed or nearly shut down. The train is a major item in economic development to this community. There must be a way to keep it running.

Hi, I was told to send an email to this address about Amtrak. I was also told that people were thinking of closing down Amtrak. This, I hope does not happen. I use the train almost every summer and every other Christmas. I go by train in the summer to see my mother in Washington. I also go to Glasgow, Montana to visit my grandparents for Christmas. I live in East Glacier Park, Montana. Without the train still running, my town would be.. well.. crap. We need tourists here. We just do. And Train is the only way for them to get here, without having to drive. I'm really not happy with how this Email turned out.. but.. I hope you understand. That we need the train.

I understand you require comments on the Empire Builder and AMTRAK by Friday of this week. I also appreciate you are interested in the Montana residents opinion. I hope therefore you will forgive my intrusion from my office desk here in Nottingham, England. We have made the mistake here of messing with our rail system to the detriment of its passengers. Had we supported railroads our system would have been one to match any in the world. I hope every US administration at both Federal and State level will continue to support AMTRAK and the Empire Builder. When we have used AMTRAK we found the standard of service to be as good as any in the world. The second point and one with more relevance to your enquiry is about tourism. There are a multitude of company's here who offer vacations with AMTRAK train content. There is also a significant growth in the number of Europeans who visit America other than Florida every year. Trains like the Empire Builder offer a great opportunity to see a good portion of your great country. If you lose this train then it takes away an option that a lot of visitors like. On a train one can see and enjoy the journey in a relaxed way. Driving from Chicago to Seattle means concentration on the job in hand and you miss too much. Flying means you see nothing at all. I think AMTRAK is doing a great job and that these long distance trains are a real asset to both the local community's along the route and to tourism. I hope when we visit next we will have the opportunity to travel on the Empire Builder. Lastly let me make the point I am a member of the Great Northern Historical Society and I think the route used by the Empire Builder makes it one of the most exciting train journeys available anywhere in the world.

Amtrak is a lifeline for many on the hi-line. As our population gets older train travel will become even more important. Our granddaughter travels to Seattle to spend time with her Mom, as do her grandparents who live in Glasgow, MT. She also can get to Glasgow from East Glacier where we live. Summer time that is. In winter she can board in Browning or at Essex. Tourists coming to Glacier Park ride the Empire Builder to vacation in Glacier National Park. People receive items necessary to their business.

Airlines receive federal dollars, as do our highways. They are standard yearly budget items and are not left hanging in suspense to see if they get funding as Amtrak does. Tax dollars should be used to help fund these services. There is no way we as individuals can do it, and there doesn't seem to be a way that private industry can do it alone either.

This letter is in response to your survey request regarding Amtrak service in Montana: Amtrak provides services to businesses all along the Northern tier of Montana. This includes florists, funeral homes, innumerable suppliers and many businesses related to tourism, outdoor sports and hunting and outfitting. One business in my community of Havre provides a catering service to Amtrak. Loss of even that one business would mean a loss of jobs and income in this community. Multiplied by the loss of jobs and income of the current Amtrak employees in the State, would significantly damage an already faltering economy. Amtrak provides transportation to many persons, many of them elderly or infirm, seeking medical help in the Spokane/Seattle areas to the west or the Minneapolis/Rochester area to the east. Availability of transportation is a significant issue to many persons in Montana. Tourism is Montana's second largest industry. With the increased interest in the Lewis and Clark events, access to points of interest can be an increasingly important factor to Amtrak as well as the State. Multiple service businesses along with others can profit from this influx. With Montana' economy dragging at present, it seems a poor idea to put more demands on the State or cut back on the industry and service that could bring more tourists, money and jobs into this historically significant area.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on rail passenger service in the Treasure State! I am celebrating my twenty-fifth anniversary of Amtrak riding. My first ride on "The Builder" was twenty-two years ago. I am former president of the Great Northern Railway Historical Society. My interest in the railroad has brought me to Montana dozens of times for study in Helena and Butte, exploring in Anaconda, Deer Lodge and Missoula, speaking at the annual history conference, and crossing the continental divide in a dozen places. I love Montana and spend part of my vacation in your state every year! Naturally I spend a bit of cash in Montana. Rooms, travel, and of course lots of film! I have written historical articles on Butte and Havre for our society bulletin, The Goat. Our GNRHS convention is in Havre next month. There will be hundreds of us attending. In past years, we have convened in Great Falls, East Glacier, and Whitefish. Many of us are train riders, of course! Please register me as a strong supporter of Amtrak service in Montana. And call me if you would like to see my pictures!

We understand you are seeking comment on the value of Amtrak to MT residents. We travel on the Empire Builder and find it to be relaxing, enjoyable and most of all, affordable. It seems to be the most well-kept and friendly-staffed of all the Amtrak trains we have used. Commercial transportation in Montana is very limited at best.

Airlines bully us with limited scheduled flights and high fares with almost never-to-be found specials. Buses are uncomfortable and too slow. The best choice for us to visit friends and family scattered across the country has been Amtrak. We are retired and on limited income. The loss of Amtrak would be quite a blow to us. We urge you to pass these thoughts along and to do what you can to insure funding to maintain Amtrak in Montana. Thank You.

Please keep Amtrak running the east/west route. Otherwise those of us who don't care to drive those directions in Montana winters or even in the summers, it's so nice to be able to board Amtrak in Shelby and have a nice restful trip to Spokane, Seattle, Portland and points east, too. For years I've been riding this train, not only west, but to Havre and points east when I didn't have a car or other transportation. 50 years ago when I was going to college in Havre it was the **ONLY** transportation we had to get there for quite a few years. Not many had their own cars at that time and forget the bus, it took hours and lots of layovers. Montana needs this transportation and it's important. Many of the folks who ride Amtrak feel the same way and it has been their only way of direct transportation to their destination. **THANKS FOR KEEPING "OUR TRAIN" CARRYING PASSENGERS ON THE EAST WEST ROUTE. WE DESPERATELY NEED IT!**

Sir, My sister needed to travel home and her only means of transportation from Plentywood Montana was Amtrak and she had to go 90 miles to get to the train. We have no bus service or plane service to many many areas of Montana. This is the only way we can travel. I use the train to go to Kalispell for realtor meetings because of the drive thru the mountains and the weather we encounter is very unpredictable. The trains are there for us rain or shine and it is a vital asset for our community and state. I have elderly relatives that can not drive any more and go to and from the coast. It is affordable and minimal hassle.

I live in Edmonds, Washington, and am a vice-president of the Great Northern Railway Historical Society (GNRHS). As you may be well aware, the Empire Builder train service gets its name from the train service of the same name operated beginning in 1929 by the Great Northern Railway, a primary corporate predecessor to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe. I saw an on-line article about your study of Empire Builder service in Montana from the Great Falls Tribune, and decided to share a couple personal observations. The annual convention of GNRHS will be held this summer (in mid-July) at Havre, Montana. Many of the 200+ convention attendees will be travelling to the convention aboard the Empire Builder, my wife and I and our 8-year-old son included. This will probably be the only out-of-state trip we take as a family this year. When making our plans to travel to Havre, my first choice (given my preoccupation with the Great Northern) was of course to take the train. Driving there from the Seattle area in our own car was not practical for us. However, I also looked into taking an airplane. The only reasonable option was to fly to Great Falls (there is no public air service to

Havre), rent a car for a week, and use it to drive the 115 miles each way between Great Falls and Havre. Still, I priced this option, and was flabbergasted to learn that my family of three could actually ride the train to and from Montana, AND pay extra for a family-use sleeping compartment on the Empire Builder, all for LESS than the cost of flying and renting the car. Personally, I'll always take the train (over other travel options) if there's any way to swing it, but this will be pleasant for my wife and son, too, as they can get up and roam the train to their hearts' content, enjoying the beautiful Montana scenery at "see-level", as the Amtrak advertisements used to brag. We will each have comfortable berths to sleep in overnight, and all our meals are included in the price. If you ever try it, you'll never forget the enjoyment of eating a relaxing breakfast in a dining car while rolling along past rivers and beaver ponds in northwestern Montana. As a small but significant example of the level of interest in the Empire Builder service across Montana, Amtrak started an Interpretive Guide service onboard the trains, staffed by knowledgeable volunteers. More recently, the National Parks Service has partnered with Amtrak to organize and manage this program. It is extremely successful and popular with patrons of the Empire Builder. Glacier National Park was established in 1910, and since that time, passenger trains of the Great Northern, Burlington Northern, and then Amtrak have provided daily train service to the park throughout the summer season. This is virtually the only national park remaining in the country where someone can take a train to it from any of a number of major metropolitan areas (Seattle, Portland, and Spokane in the west; Chicago and the Twin Cities (Minneapolis/St. Paul) in the east). In August of this year, I will again use Amtrak's Empire Builder to travel to Montana (specifically, Glacier National Park) for a three-day vacation trip with my son. He will get a chance to ride a horse for the first time, and I know he and I will spend a terrific time together on a little "guys-outing" before he grows old enough to abhor doing anything with his "old man." Please consider this anecdotal input about the value of Amtrak service in general, and the Empire Builder service across Montana in particular. There is a very significant reason why constant rail passenger service across Montana has persisted since rails were first laid across the Hi-Line in the 1890s. I'm sure you must have spent time in that area. You must have seen that a reliable rail transportation system is vital to the continued economic health and social structure of rural northern Montana. I don't know if the scope of your present study is limited to the impact of passenger rail service in Montana, but I can assure you that the Empire Builder has equally vital impact to communities all across the Pacific Northwest. I sincerely hope your study finds not only a strong argument for the continuation of the present service, but also for a variety of upgrades to the infrastructure on this route, so that it can provide even better service to this part of the country. I hope, too, that any study of the impact on Montana of a loss or reduction of service would identify the significant negative impact on many, many more people than just Montanans. Thank you for your time and interest.

We read your article in the G. F. Tribune and decided to respond. We lived in Havre for many years (my husband was born and raised there) and Amtrak service is very much needed for the people along the Northern Tier of Montana. There are no interstates, no major airports, and no dependable bus service. Many folks, especially older folks and

middle aged folks who need to go to the major hospitals in Seattle or the Mayo Clinic and also to the major hospitals in Minneapolis/St. Paul rely on the train as they are not able to drive. It seems real strange to us that our country can spend billions in foreign countries (where we are not wanted) and yet our only passenger rail system is in dire straits and we don't know from year to year or even month to month if the service will be available. We need the Amtrak service from Chicago to Seattle -- and the other parts of the country undoubtedly want it too.

It is my understanding that you are interested in how Amtrak affects people, particularly Montanan's. Well, I live in California but visited your fine state for the first time last year (I am 51). I was certainly impressed with the wide open spaces, beautiful scenery and cleanliness of the state. I traveled the western portion of Montana by auto and went mainly to see Glacier Nat. Park. The road over the pass (Highway to the Sun?) was closed so I didn't get to see all that I wanted. I want to return to see more of the park soon. Next time, to avoid the long drive, I plan to take Amtrak. I really enjoyed my stay at the Izaak Walton Inn in Essex. I will certainly stay there again, especially since Amtrak stops right at the hotel. I plan to rent a car and just go exploring the region.

I am a staunch supporter of Amtrak. I support all of the rail passenger service, even though I am a Republican, and would like to see more (e. g. the southern tier of Montana)! I live in Shelby, MT. Amtrak is my only outlet to the rest of the world. As a 'senior' and a retired Army Aircraft Crewmember, I will not set foot on a commercial "death tube". I take the "Empire Builder", and connecting trains, to my destinations. There is no other way! Amtrak has been 'short-changed' since its inception in the '70s. Now is the time to make things right. We need to stop throwing money at the corrupt airlines and give a bit to Amtrak. It is a relaxing, safe, and enjoyable way to travel. The food service is excellent, too! Privatizing Amtrak is a non-starter. The most valuable routes would be cherry-picked and the rest of the country would lose its service. States CAN help by diverting funds from stupid initiatives like "Essential Rural Air Service". I am going to New Orleans on the "Empire Builder/City of New Orleans" the last of September. I sure hope that I can get back home in October.

We are seniors and depend on Amtrak to visit friends and relatives in Montana and North Dakota, both for its convenience and price. It would be a shame to let it die.

I am responding to your request for comments on the impact of Amtrak on me personally. I use Amtrak on average about twice a year, and have since about 1993. My usage of Amtrak is mostly personal preference because I love train travel, but there have been times when it is a necessity in order to get someplace. My main example of this is when I have taken a group of youth from our church to a winter youth conference in Green Lake, Wisconsin. This conference is held between Christmas and New Years, a time of the year when it is impossible to depend on the highways being clear and

open. Driving that far on good roads is a three day drive each way, meaning we would have to leave Great Falls on Christmas Day, which parents won't go for, and arrive back home after school has restarted from Christmas break, which means missing a day of school. The possibility of closed or slippery roads is so great at that time of the year that driving is just not practical. The ride on Amtrak from Shelby, MT to Columbus, WI is just a little less than 25 hours, we are guaranteed to get there and back regardless of the weather, and we are all rested when we arrive. Having Amtrak available allows us to be able to make this trip every other year, to the benefit of the youth attending. (By the way, I have already purchased tickets for this trip again this coming December.) I also traveled to Houston, TX in 1998 in July. If I would have had to drive for four or five days in 100+ temperatures that trip would not have been made either. To me rail travel is one way to reduce highway traffic congestion and conserve fuel, since I believe that the amount of fuel burned per person is less on a train than it is in an automobile, assuming that the train is running near capacity. This also saves a little wear and tear on the roads, saving some tax dollars. One other point, maybe not directly on the subject you requested: I have heard that the United States is the only industrialized nation on earth that doesn't subsidize their national rail system completely. Other nations seem to see the benefits of rail transportation, why don't we? In 1999 our federal budget was \$1.702 trillion. Recently Amtrak received \$2.2 billion, which is only .129% of the 1999 national budget, or \$1.29 for every \$1000.00 the country spends. Our nation spends far more than that amount on Highways and Airports. I'm sure it is because of politics, but it does not seem at all fair. Please keep Amtrak intact and running.

My wife and I live in Glasgow, where I am a practicing attorney. I am 80 years old and she is in her 70s and we both have health problems. Glasgow has a fine small town medical establishment, but when my wife needed back surgery, we traveled to Kalispell to obtain the services of a recognized skilled surgeon. When I needed cancer treatment and diagnosis, we traveled to Billings, which we did by car because there is no railroad or bus service - it's either private automobile or exorbitantly priced airplane travel. Now that it's more difficult for my wife to drive me when I need medical attention, it's no longer practical to drive back and forth to Billings so I have had my recent consultations with medical specialists in Kalispell also. If the weather is nice and if I am in good health, it's practical for me to drive back and forth to Kalispell, and to take my wife to her appointments. It's not practical for her to drive this trip alone, and our only safe comfortable commercial transportation is with Amtrak. I have just had specialized medical treatment in the Flathead within the approximate last month, and I have just returned from the Flathead to Glasgow on Amtrak earlier this month. There is neither airline nor a bus nor any other commercial transportation between Glasgow and the Flathead, and without Amtrak, we are at the mercy of weather and of our ability to drive, and if Amtrak shuts down, we will be deprived of the ability to consult with medical specialists in whom we have faith. Please keep Amtrak running - it's the only commercial transportation available to us between Glasgow and the Flathead. Please keep in mind that all other commercial transportation, whether airline, but or private automobile are all generously subsidized by our Government - highways are never

expected to pay their own way, and neither airports nor airline navigation and scheduling or airport towers are expected to pay their own way. It's ridiculous to expect Amtrak to pay it's own way - it's a necessary service for people like us.

I fully support the Empire Builder running along the Hi-Line and in fact would like to see the train service expanded across the state of Montana and other states. I was in Europe this spring when a wildcat strike by the air traffic controllers and train workers shut Paris down. Amsterdam had the wonderful high speed train service that took me right into Paris in under four hours. I wish here in the United States we had such train service and I do believe the government should support such a system. The debacle after 9/11 should have taught us all a lesson when people were stranded all over the country because of the airlines shut down. Hopefully someday there will be a train from Bozeman to Denver or Seattle to help ease our dependence on cars or planes. Thank you.

My opinion on the importance of Amtrak in response to the request from the Montana Dept of Transportation etc. This country must have coast-to-coast railroad transportation for people. The less populated areas are no less deserving of an adequate system than the East Coast. The railroad system is part of this country's infrastructure. Let the whining about subsidies stop! It's difficult to name a system that is not subsidized. We are the wealthiest country in the world, at least at this moment. Are we less capable than Europe to maintain an efficient network of passenger rail? To even consider shutting down rail lines which are essential for people to get from here to there is mind boggling. Where are our priorities?

Just a comment or two on how the passenger train serves our community and the communities on the hi-line. We have persons coming from Helena, Great Falls, and several other cities to catch the train, there are also persons out of Canada that take the passenger train out of Shelby. It helps our businesses, we have employees that live here and in Cut Bank. As a business owner this service helps us keep going in both the summer and winter seasons. We do use this service....please try and keep it going.

We wish the government would grant Amtrak the \$1.8 billion for this session. I am 70 years old and do not like to fly and unable to drive long distances to visit family and friends who live in all 4 corners of the U.S.A. Amtrak ridership has jumped about 25 to 30 % in the last 2 1/2 years. Isn't this an indication what the people are wanting? It is only fair that another form of transportation is given to the public with the same consideration that our government is giving to the airline industry. Let's be honest and treat everyone equal.

As a Amtrak employee who relies on Amtrak for a living and seeing first hand how important the Empire Builder is to Montana. It is literally a lifeline across the Northern Tier of States and everything that can be done to keep it running should be pursued.

This is in response to the request of the Montana Departments of Transportation, Commerce and Agriculture as to the importance of Amtrak to Montana. I am a Senior Citizen and feel that for a growing number of us Seniors, Amtrak is very important to us all personally. The pleasure of travel via Amtrak for visiting distant family members is essential to our well being -- as is the travel that brings those same people to visit us. As a current example of this, my sister whose roots are in Montana traveled from her home in Spokane via Amtrak on No. 8 to Wolf Point July 25th and will be returning on July 2nd. Each arrival and departure requires a 200-mile round-trip drive from Plentywood to the Amtrak station at Wolf Point. These trips to Wolf Point are made 3 or more times each year and almost each time, we find others from NE Montana also there to meet the train. My memory includes those many years when Culbertson was our train depot for both the Western Star and the Empire Builder. It is understandable that there are only 11 stops along the nearly 700 miles of Hi-Line, but the possible discontinuation of the passenger service is not comprehensible. Travel by Amtrak is needed for health reasons when medical treatment is necessary from both within Montana and from out of state--either East or West. As we become older and the ability to use our personal cars for these longer trips is no longer possible because of vision problems etc.--**Amtrak is essential.** The railroads helped build the nation Westward and the railroads are needed now by the third and fourth generations of the Pioneers who came West using Immigrant Cars to locate on their homestead acreage. The railroads are needed not just for moving the wheat etc. to market but to provide passenger service for the people on the land. This need certainly justifies whatever subsidy is necessary to keep Amtrak in operation.

My husband, Tony, my family and I have been traveling the Empire Builder since 1968. We have purchased many tickets throughout the years. We have traveled to Disneyland twice with family and friends, to Cannon Beach by way of Portland and to Spokane and Seattle on many occasions. Our daughter now lives in Seattle and uses Amtrak for visits to our home in Shelby. Many of these trips would not have occurred without the Empire Builder because of road conditions and we would never have traveled to California by car because of the traffic. It is 85 miles from Shelby to the airport in Great Falls and it is quite expensive to leave a car for several days in the parking lot at the airport. Also, airfare is almost prohibitive, and some flights by Horizon/Alaska Air have been cancelled due to low ridership. We will continue to travel Amtrak several times a year as long as our health allows and our daughter will continue to ride the Empire Builder from Seattle to Shelby and back during most months of the year because of the four mountain passes between Seattle and Shelby. My husband and I own businesses in Conrad and Shelby both containing gift shops as well and have customers who are either about to board Amtrak or have just arrived. The continuation

of the Amtrak rail system in our area is essential to the viability of business on the Hi-Line and for the opportunity to travel for elderly citizens, as well as whole families.

Just a brief note: Amtrak means literally millions to our state. Thanks for asking. Amtrak, just a brief short months ago, was the only way to travel, and I mean that literally. When we have extreme weather conditions, like 70 below wind chill and blizzard conditions, planes are grounded, buses don't run, roads are closed and cars go nowhere, but Amtrak still runs every day. It's the only mode of transportation still running. Amtrak purchases supplies from every single manned station in Montana, including Wolf Point, Havre, Shelby and Whitefish, maybe not every day, but every community served by Amtrak and those as far away as 300 miles or more, both north and south, benefit from Amtrak service. I am employed by Amtrak in Havre, MT, and I see the benefits of Amtrak service every day, not just my paycheck, but college students, the elderly (who can't drive or who are physically impaired), those who are mentally impaired, single Mom's or Dad's with little ones, families on vacation, emergency situations, those who take the week-end to go to Whitefish for skiing, etc. etc. It is a reasonable and viable way to travel. We in northern Montana have limited access to travel options. Amtrak provides a very important option and sometimes, the only option. Please consider the economic impact on this state as well as the social impact. Amtrak passengers purchase numerous items from local businesses enroute the train. At the Amtrak station stop in Havre, Mt, many times the passengers have 30 to 60 minutes to mill about. I can name at least one dozen businesses that benefit from the short stop in Havre, MT, and because of that service stop, people have actually moved here to take up permanent residence, or brought their families back to stay a few days. We have so much to offer, and as the Lewis and Clark celebration comes upon us, we see increased passenger counts, and many more coming to Montana to vacation. Rental cars, restaurants, motels, gas stations and many more benefit from Amtrak passengers coming into Montana. I wouldn't have a clue to begin to estimate the economic impact of this state because of Amtrak, hopefully your study will be able to put together some realistic numbers, besides just the two plus million in employee benefits. Sorry, guess this is isn't so short, but just wanted to share my thoughts and feelings. AMTRAK is vital to Montana, and not just northern Montana. We have passengers from Billings, Bozeman, Missoula, Helena, Calgary, Lethbridge, Swift Current and many many others board at Havre, MT. Thanks for asking and thanks for listening.

Just want to give my input on AMTRAK. Our family uses AMTRAK and would not like to see it taken away. This is the only means of transportation that we have in this area and it is VERY important to us. THANK YOU!

We would hate to see Amtrak cut off completely or downsized. We haven't used it a lot but did 3 times in 2002 for medical treatment in Minneapolis for Macular Degeneration lazer treatments. I hope your efforts help.

The Amtrak is very important to my husband and myself. It is also important to the people in Sheridan County as this is a remote part of the country and very difficult to get anywhere without that transportation. Please list us as wanting to keep the Amtrak in Montana.

Please keep the Amtrak for people like us. We live in Plentywood and use the Amtrak whenever we go to Kalispell and the state of Washington to visit our two sons and families.

I have just heard that there is a possibility of no Amtrak service to Montana. I'm writing in hopes that this doesn't happen. I have enjoyed three different trips to northeastern Montana from Spokane with my small children. The trips on Amtrak were an absolute blessing to us. Driving, bus or flying were not an option to us.

Just after returning from our latest trip last month, we enjoyed a Discovery Channel special on Glacier Park and on how integral Amtrak was to their existence. I don't know how dated the program was, but the statistics were listed as about 60,000 people using Amtrak yearly to come to Glacier. I hope this is brought into the consideration for your decision. Thank you for your time.

When I was just a young boy growing up in the 1960's my mom and I used to ride the Great Northern Passenger train quite often between Eureka and Whitefish even then I used to ride my bike down to the train depot to watch the trains come in, but in the late 60's early 70's they had built the Libby Dam and the train rides were discontinued. I missed riding on the trains after that. But for the last three years that's how my family and I have been vacationing is on Amtrak. And this year in late September we are taking the Empire Builder out to Chicago then taking the Lake Shore Limited to Buffalo New York with final destination to Washington, DC. Even in the next three years I have our vacations planned out on Amtrak. The reason we take Amtrak is my job consists of a lot of driving. So when my vacation comes about I like to ride the train. It is relaxing to me and you meet new and interesting people. Plus the scenery is fantastic. Every time we ride the Empire Builder it is always packed with people. Once when coming back from Chicago there were only about 250 people on board, however there was not enough food to feed all on board. They had ordered ahead to pick food up at the next stop. We drive to Kalispell quite often and do quite a bit of shopping there. It might sound kind of silly, but on the way back we usually stop at the Whitefish train depot and watch the Empire Builder come in. I guess I am a train fanatic. Every time we stop to watch the train there are always quite a few people getting off and on in Whitefish. We can see into the train windows and there are always lots of people on it. Lots of older folks do not like to fly and I know that I do not like to fly so if they take the train off, it

would be rather difficult to get to our destinations. And the Empire Builder moved a lot of freight as well, because we have seen them load and unload allot of freight boxes in Whitefish. I know down the road there will be quite a few people that will wish to ride the Empire Builder and get the thrill of their life. I know that I love the Empire Builder so lets not see it vanish from Montana, Illinois, Idaho, Washington and Oregon. Thank you for taking to time to read my concerns.

Since I don't have e-mail, I'm sending this on my friend's computer. Please do not take Amtrak away from this area! We are very limited in our choices of public transportation and Amtrak is the most accessible transportation we have.

Thanks for the opportunity to express ourselves concerning losing our Amtrak service. However, most of us in Plentywood don't have access to e-mail. A phone number would've been good. We have no bus service. I have one doctor, and one dentist. WE NEED OUR AMTRAK!

Rail service is very important to our area. We live in a remote region. Even though the closest place to board Amtrak is nearly 100 miles away, it is still our closest public transportation. Without Amtrak, our region would be even more isolated.

Amtrak is very important to this area as it is our only form of public transportation. Please keep this service in our area.

Thanks for a chance to comment on the possibility of losing our Amtrak service. It would be a BIG loss for us. Especially for the older people who are not able or shouldn't be driving. I fear many of them would be further cut off from family who have moved east or west. It's also used for medical trips. It's 1 1/2 hours to Williston which is the nearest Amtrak station- 2 1/2 to Wolf Point. We have no bus service anymore. We could fly out of Regina (two hours) but have to go through customs twice maybe if our destination is in the U.S. and that isn't much fun nowadays. Or we could fly out of Sidney or Williston, but the planes are small and connections may not be that simple for older folks, plus the cost is prohibitive to many. Minot or Billings are the next airports. Anyway, we'd hate to see this service lost or even reduced.

AMTRAK service is very important to my family, friends and relatives. We use it to travel to Washington state, Minneapolis, and LaCrosse, WI.

I believe it would be a hardship on our area (eastern montana) of the State if another source of transportation was discontinued. We have no bus service either, so many

people drive to either Williston, ND or Wolf Point, MT to get on the train. I realize everyone is trying to cut taxes and expenses etc. but this would be a hardship for many here in eastern MT. Thank you for taking opinions about amtrak service.

We are writing in support of the Amtrak Service through Montana. We strongly believe that this service should not be canceled because of its importance and efficiency. Without this service we will be without public transportation causing other issues to arise. Thank you for taking the time to read this message. We hope that the Amtrak Service will still be available for all to take advantage of.

Here are our observations about AMTRAK. We like it very much. The employees do a good job, and the equipment is very satisfactory. We use it to travel to Glacier Park, Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, Washington DC, and New York City, plus other places nearer to us. It is very important to us when weather is bad for driving or flying, but we like to use it on nice days more than anything as we are true fans of trains and Amtrak. We know many businesses in our area that depend on it to bring both goods and people. It improves the quality of life for us here out in the open West, and we should sooner see less aid given to highways and air service, if needed, to keep AMTRAK solvent and serving the population. Public transportation in general and Amtrak, specifically, are hallmarks of a civilized country. Thanks for soliciting remarks on this important issue.

Hi. My husband and I live in Antelope, MT. We live in the very Northeastern part of Montana. And we do NOT want to see this area lose Amtrak. My son, who was stationed at FT Lewis, Washington, and is now in the Reserves there, has traveled home by way of Amtrak. It was easier for him to travel by train than to fly, and he was unable to drive at that time, for he just came back from 2 years in Korea. So travel by Amtrak was great. Because of our vastness of our beautiful state different ways of travel are already limited. We have used the Amtrak station in Williston, ND, and Wolf Point, MT. If you take it out, where would we go then? And if there is a problem of flying, what are we to do? When I first moved here, I traveled by Amtrak from New York to Montana, and what a wonderful ride it was. I traveled with my small boys, and felt safe and comfortable. Now I would like to take my grandchildren for a train ride. If you remove services from here, what then? Please do not stop service to this area. We really do appreciate Amtrak, and it would be a great discomfort and loss for this area.

We really need this service. As my family gets older they have relied on passenger service. Even tho we drive 90 miles to pick them up. Eastern Montana and Western ND both have an aging population that cannot drive for vacations, deaths, weddings etc.

My wife and I would like you to know that we believe Amtrak across the highline in Montana is an essential service which is replicated nowhere else in the country. We recently had occasion to use that service to Portland, and Eugene, Oregon. The train was quite full, many of the passengers we spoke to had gotten on in the twin cities and were going to Seattle. Our daughter, who lives in the twin cities, has used the services for business several times in the last few years since she travels to Spokane. We do not believe the airlines are a reasonable substitute since they are crowded and inconvenient, particularly if you are traveling with children (the case for my daughter). We are puzzled by the lack of parity between the airlines, trucking industry and the passenger rail service in the amount of financial support they receive from the federal government. This appears to be an inequity which is applied only to rail passengers. Thank you for your attention to our concerns; we look forward to the outcome of your work.

I am the President of the Shelby Area Chamber of Commerce in Shelby, Montana. Our members have requested that I contact you to express our support for Amtrak and the Empire Builder, which passes through Shelby twice daily. Many of our merchants depend on the Empire Builder for delivery of supplies and the downtown merchants depend on those travelers for meals at restaurants, nights at local motels and shopping visits by Amtrak travelers. Also, a local motel recently added a rent-a-car service, primarily due to Amtrak travelers desiring local transportation after they leave the train. Amtrak also has an additional significant local financial impact because many Amtrak employees reside in the Shelby area and their families are employed by businesses in the area and their children attend area schools. Thank you for your time and consideration!

Amtrak in Montana has been a very important mode of transportation for many years for many Americans who live in remote areas, cannot drive, or cannot fly to their destination. To decrease service or stop this very vital service would be a great injustice to many who rely on this mode of transportation. Please support funding for this important issue. Thank you.

Please keep Amtrak going on the HiLine. We are so isolated and are an aging population. Amtrak is our link to the rest of the country. Please keep it going.

Having traveled over 21,000 miles on Amtrak in the last 10 years, I think it would be a real shame to get rid of this means of public transportation in our (or any) area of the country. We live in the Northeast corner of Montana and there is NO public transportation within 90 miles. The only one is Amtrak, and if it is taken away there would be no public transportation in our area. This is a real inconvenience, esp. for elderly people. Our ambulance plane regularly flies in from Billings, a distance of 365 miles. We would recommend keeping this mode of transportation. I know of no other

means that would be feasible. By the way my wife has traveled the same trips as I have, so you can double the miles in the first sentence.

I just wanted to write a quick note to let you know that Amtrak IS important to the people of Northeastern Montana. My family of 4 has used it for trips to Minneapolis and Seattle and we have also had people come visit us via train when they wouldn't have been able to otherwise. We had an exchange student from Sweden that we brought on it, and she was so impressed with Amtrak! Please keep Amtrak running! Thank you.

I do hope the Amtrak is not taken out of our area, here in northeast Montana. I ride the train every chance I get and enjoy it very much. Our service is limited for airplane, so its nice to know we can go east and west on the train. We need this transportation desperately. Thank You.

THIS CAN NOT HAPPEN. MY GRANDDAUGHTER IS A PATIENT AT SHRINER'S IN SPOKANE, WA AND THIS IS THEIR ONLY MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION. MANY PEOPLE IN NE MONTANA RELY ON THIS TRANSPORTATION. WE CANNOT LOSE AMTRAK.

This communication is in support of whatever is necessary to retain Amtrak service in Montana. It is a service that has been a part of our family life for over 75 years and as we get older it remains as an even more important service to us now.

Amtrak is becoming more and more essential to the welfare of our older citizens for long distance travel and there are no options of airtravel or bus in most cases. The personal car is also less and less a choice because of the restrictions of aging places on us. I sincerely support and encourage whatever financial support is necessary to keep Amtrak on the schedule it is now operating under.

My family owns grazing land, oil wells, fruit orchards and homes in north western Montana. We rely on the Empire Builder for business and leisure and feel strongly that the Empire Builder helps maintain the value of our investments. The Empire Builder ships commercial goods and delivers grandchildren to our doorstep. The Empire Builder allows us to travel to visit our grandchildren at our pace. We are uncomfortable with the pace and mechanization of airports and unsure of our ability to navigate through huge airline terminals. We support Montana and the Empire Builder and our existing lifestyle.

I realize I am late with this message, but I hope you can find something to do with it. I am a regular Amtrak rider, as is my family and as many friends as I am able to convince to visit me in Montana. That's quite a few, coming from both the West Coast and further East. My neighbor's daughter's family also visits from there. We all think the train is a great way to travel. Compared to the subsidies for airlines and highways--subsidies which make large profits possible for many different kinds of private companies--the Amtrak subsidies amount to peanuts. Per passenger the subsidies may be comparable, but they're still not much of the total national budget. The High Line needs the Empire Builder. Lots of people depend on it for business and visiting family. It saves wear and tear on the roads, and in the winter, especially, it's a much safer way to travel. But these are not the most important reasons for the government to support passenger trains. They are part of our history and I am so glad that my children and grandchildren have been able to enjoy this cultural resource. They provide a way to see the country--the landscape, the weather, crops, small towns--the real America that airplanes just fly over. Trains make a connection between time and space that planes compress. They keep us in touch with what's real. And trains bring together people who would never be so close to one another for a period of time in a kind of intimacy. Train passengers are diverse and interesting, and on the train they have time to share their experience--old folks and babies--African American families from Chicago, Hutterites and Blackfeet from the Plains, and just plain old ladies like me, all moving along the rails together. You can't beat it! Let's not lose it!

Please relay our support for continuation of the Amtrak Empire Builder. We live in Whitefish, Montana, three blocks from a beautiful and historic train depot. When guests come to visit via the train we pick their luggage with a wheelbarrow and walk home, along with a 2 block detour down Central Avenue. This summer our train depot was painted to its restored beauty. It is a valuable landmark for our community for many reasons. Almost every morning we hear the Amtrak blow its horn as it departs our cute little town. My husband and I will often say " There goes the Amtrak!". The train brings a vital group of visitors year round to our community and is a regular part of how friends and family have come to visit us. I know that we and our town would be devastated at the loss of our East and West bound trains, linking us to the rest of the world. Thank you for including comments from the public in your assessment.

Hello. I hope this reaches you in time to be included in the Empire Builder analyze. My son rides the train from Havre to Malta and then back to Havre generally once a month. He is a student at the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB) in Great Falls, MT. We live in Malta, MT. There is no other way short of us driving to Great Falls and bringing him home for him to make the once a month scheduled trip. MSDB schedules a bus to transport the students on the Hi-Line with the public school buses from Great Falls to Havre on a Friday and then the return trip from Havre to Great Falls on Monday. We struggle to keep the family unit functional with his schooling in Great Falls and the other children going to school in Malta. The Malta Public Schools are unable to get an intprepreter so that our son could go to school in the local district. The train is necessary

for our family to be able to see each other without my losing time at work. Without the train I would loose 2 work days each month.

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