



Governor Bill Richardson Announces Commuter Rail Project Moving Forward

Governor signs agreement with BNSF Railroad, announces plans to purchase rail cars

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ALBUQUERQUE- Governor Bill Richardson today announced plans to begin commuter rail service between Belen and Bernalillo by next fall are on schedule. The Governor also signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad that paves the way for the state to secure use of BNSF tracks for the service. In addition, he announced the state is in the process of negotiating a contract to buy 10 train cars, and anticipates finalizing the purchase by next week.

“We have made considerable progress toward turning the dream of commuter rail into reality,” said Governor Richardson. “I am confident we will, in short order, be able to complete the final agreements for use of the track, movements of the trains, improvements to crossings and construction of platforms.”

The Governor said agreements for building rail stations have been reached with most local governments located along this corridor. The state is continuing discussions with Sandia Pueblo regarding locating a potential station there.

Governor Richardson made the announcements at a news conference today at his Albuquerque office, joined by New Mexico Transportation Secretary Rhonda Faught and Lawrence Rael of the Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments.

The Belen to Bernalillo service is the first phase of the Governor’s commuter rail initiative, which will eventually run from Belen to Santa Fe. Plans are to have the entire route operating within four years.

The Belen to Bernalillo corridor currently serves over 30,000 daily commuters. Currently, the traffic count on the I-25 Corridor through Albuquerque and the Big-I is about 170,000 vehicles per day.

“Getting people out of their vehicles and onto commuter rail makes sense,” said the Governor. “It’s also about safety, and putting more money back in the pockets of our citizens. Commuters taking the train will save thousands of dollars each year on gas, vehicle maintenance and insurance costs. And fewer drivers will mean, hopefully, fewer accidents, and less stress.”

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