

Senate Finance

04/09/2024 02:00 PM

SB24-190 Rail & Coal Transition Community Economic Measures

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Elizabeth Haskell For Colorado Municipal League	The Colorado Municipal League supports SB 190. CML encourages the state to provide adequate funds for strong, multifaceted programs to promote the economic vitality of Colorado that encourage the diversification and expansion of local economies, including support for existing business, creation of new jobs, regional partnerships, and promotion of tourism and are closely coordinated with local governments.

April 9, 2024

Chair Mullica and Committee,

We are writing on behalf of the Mountain Rail Coalition (MRC) to express our strong support for SB24-190, providing rail and coal transition community economic opportunities through freight tax credits to businesses that use freight rail transportation and operator tax credits to railroad operators to maintain rail line access.

Mountain Rail Coalition members have been advocating for the continued use of Union Pacific's Northwest Colorado rail line since the announcement of coal-fired power plant retirements in Routt and Moffat Counties. We believe that in Northwest Colorado, passenger rail will provide much needed transportation alternatives for commuters, residents, and visitors; support a just transition for coal impacted communities; improve access to attainable housing for employees in tourism-based communities; reduce traffic congestion and degradation of existing transportation infrastructure; and assist with the statewide effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on our already overburdened highway systems. With CDOT's recent commitment of funds to create a Mountain Corridor Service Development Plan, the members of the MRC steering committee came together with representation from Routt, Moffat, and Grand Counties and began to formalize as a Coalition. Once membership is fully established, the MRC will have representation from all communities along the Northern Rocky Mountain rail corridor to support the creation and development of regular mountain passenger rail service from Denver's Union Station through Grand County and Routt County and into the City of Craig. Our purpose is to serve as a liaison between communities along the mountain rail corridor and state and federal entities. We write to you today in this spirit.

The MRC believes that SB24-190 supports the necessary build out and operation of mountain passenger rail by incentivizing transportation of freight and the maintenance of the rail infrastructure along the mountain rail line. Senator Roberts, Representative McCluskie, and Representative Lukens know firsthand how important economic diversification and innovative transportation solutions are for the mountain communities of Colorado. We applaud their efforts to introduce a bill that incentivizes businesses along possible Just Transition rails to utilize proposed new rail for common business freight, in addition to passenger rail.

We are tourism-based economies that rely on equally stable local companies to thrive. The opportunity before us to leverage transitioning rail infrastructure into an impactful and effective innovative transportation solution for passenger and freight in our communities is unmatched. This bill also builds on current efforts to take advantage of a once in a generation opportunity where state and federal funding align with community support.

In closing, we reiterate our strong support for SB24-190 and are available to speak with you about the importance of this bill to our communities and economy.

The Mountain Rail Coalition Steering Committee,

Sonja Macys, Chair
County Commissioner, Routt County

Nick Kutrumbos, Vice Chair
Mayor, Town of Winter Park

Michael Buccino
City Councilor, City of Steamboat Springs

Randy George
County Commissioner, Grand County

Rob Perlman
EVP, Alterra Mountain Company

Mathew Mendisco
Town Manager, Town of Hayden

Jennifer Holloway
Executive Director
Craig Chamber of Commerce and Moffat
Visitor Center

Tim Wohlgenant
Executive Director,
Yampa Valley Community Foundation

Sarah Jones
Director of Social Responsibility
Steamboat Ski & Resort Corporation

Sky Foulkes
COO, Winter Park Resort

