



October 20, 2010

CHAMA, NM – Governor Bill Richardson Wednesday directed the New Mexico Transportation Department to make up to \$1.1 million available to help pay for repairs to the Lobato Trestle on the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, damaged in a fire last June.

DOT will use up to \$1.1 million in federal transportation enhancement money eligible for the restoration of historic rail bridges. The State Transportation Commission is expected to approve the funding as part of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan.

“I am committed to helping the residents of Chama, where the local economy depends on regular service of the historic railroad,” Gov. Richardson said. “I have always supported the Cumbres and Toltec as an essential part of our history and the regional economy.”

Access to the federal money was facilitated by the invaluable assistance of Senator Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M. and Rep. Ben Ray Lujan, D-N.M., in whose district the New Mexico portion of the 64-mile line is located. Railroad officials had been in communication with both members of Congress – as well as with Gov. Richardson.

The new funding will be used to cover the actual construction repair on the trestle. Already available funding was fully committed in the cost of the design engineering for the repair, and the purchase of steel girders and wood for the deck of the trestle. Securing the funding makes feasible the targeted plan that the trestle can be back in service by next season’s opening day of May 28. This year’s season wound up last week.

The Chama area tourist economy was hard hit the latter part of this summer when the rumor spread that the railroad was entirely closed. In fact, passengers were transported by motor coach to Cumbres Station, where they boarded the train for the trip to Osier or on to Antonito, Colo., the other end of the two-state line.

“We are most grateful for the support of Governor Richardson and Secretary Giron and the New Mexico Congressional Delegation especially Senator Jeff Bingaman and Representative Ben Ray Lujan for their leadership and support in providing access to Federal Enhancement Funds to support the restoration and repair to Lobato Trestle” said J. Leonard (Lenny) Martinez, C&TSRR Commissioner Chairman. “I also appreciate the support of their staffs in working with us in moving our request for financial support forward” Martinez added.

Elmer Salazar, President and CEO of the C&TSRR operations company added, “we’re very much appreciative of Senator Bingaman, Rep. Lujan and Governor Richardson’s support in providing the funding for repairs to Lobato Trestle. Having the railroad fully operational next season is critical to restoration of the regional economic base in Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado, and specifically, in getting the business community in Chama back to normal operations for next year.” The contract for repair project design, plus a component for historic preservation documentation, is projected to cost \$90,000. It is projected that repair design will be completed in time for letting a contract to fabricate the replacement steel girders by December 1 – projected cost: \$800,000. Anticipated delivery date is March, 2011.

Also to be ordered on December 1 are the ties and wooden components necessary to rebuild the deck of the Trestle – projected cost \$100,000. Arithmetic discloses that if the wood and steel come in at the projected cost, we will have expended all funding currently on hand at that point.

March 1, 2011 is the target date for letting a contract for installation of the girder spans, deck and track to complete the repair project. This project includes the cost of building a road from the highway over to the trestle site to move in the crane to place the spans. Projected cost of this phase is \$920,000. Though it is quite expensive, it should be completed in a matter of weeks once work starts – making it possible to have everything in place and ready to go by the planned opening date of May 28 next year.

Transportation Commission Chairman Johnny Cope and Transportation Secretary Gary L.J. Giron both said they were in full support of the trestle repair funding. “The State Transportation Commission is committed to preserving the viability of the historic railroad and the area it serves as a unique tourist attraction,” said Cope. “The Cumbres and Toltec railroad – and its predecessor, the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad – have been a staple of Northern New Mexico for 120 years and we are going to do our best to secure funding for the needed repairs.”

The railroad is jointly owned by the two states. It is governed by a two-state commission, which contracts with the Cumbres and Toltec Railroad Management Company to operate the line.

The word on the funding came only minutes after the Commission and management company wrapped up their end-of-season employee meeting in Conejos, Colo. The 64 mile Historic Attraction Railroad line that runs through Chama, New Mexico and Antonito, Colorado has just completed its 40th Anniversary Season, reporting a 28% operating loss due to the reduced ridership triggered by the trestle fire.