



December 16, 2010

ANTONITO, Colo. – Necessary funding for repair of the fire-damaged Lobato Trestle on the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad was essentially completed with the news this week that Colorado Governor Bill Ritter Jr. has allocated an additional \$95,000 of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding to the project.

In addition, Gov. Ritter announced the allocation of \$385,500 in ARRA funding to cover Colorado's half of the projected operating fund shortfall for Fiscal Year 2010-11 (the 2011 season). The shortfall stems from a 35 percent reduction in 2010 operating income, directly attributable reduced ridership related to the trestle fire.

"We are deeply grateful to Gov. Ritter and the State of Colorado for this significant support at our time of deep need," said C&TSRR Commissioner Lon Carpenter of Grand Junction, Colo., who will become chairman Jan. 1. "Were it not for the emergency assistance from both states, the trestle fire could have proved to be a fatal blow."

Fire damaged the Lobato Trestle, about four miles out of the Chama, N.M. terminal, the night of June 23. The heat of the blaze damaged the steel girders supporting the rail bed such that all spans will be replaced. The trestle, built in 1883, is believed to be the oldest railroad bridge still in service in New Mexico. It will be repaired in a way to retain its historic character.

The railroad transported a train set by truck past the damaged trestle and ran service the balance of the year from the Cumbres Station, high point of the 64-mile mountain railroad, to the lunch stop at Osier, Colo. Service from Antonito, Colo. to Osier continued as before the fire. However, despite the quick redeployment of equipment to continue the abbreviated service from Cumbres, the report spread that the entire railroad was shut down, triggering the drop in riders and revenue.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation, on the instruction of Governor Bill Richardson, has allocated \$825,000 to help fund the repair of the trestle. Contributions from private donors – including a generous \$20,000 from the Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad – added \$100,000 to the repair budget. Colorado ARRA funds totaling \$135,000 were previously directed to the Trestle project. Insurance on the trestle will add \$360,000 – and the balance of the estimated \$2.042 million repair bill will be covered by redirecting track rehabilitation funds previously granted by the two states to the repair project.

"The C&TSR Management Company is working closely with Commission staff on coordinating the repair project," said Elmer Salazar, Management Company president.

"Our crews are poised to move equipment and tools by rail to the repair site next spring. The timing is tight, but we are confident we will have the trestle back in service for the start of the 2011 season."

The railroad still faces an anticipated shortfall in operating funding for next year, as it works to build back its ridership. The Commission and Management Company continue to explore alternatives to deal with that shortfall.

The C&TSRR is a remaining remnant of the once far-flung mountain railroad network of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad. Its coal-fired steam locomotives preserve an authentic 19th-century transportation experience set in some of the most spectacular mountain scenery in the entire southwest. It is jointly owned by the two states of Colorado and New Mexico.

It is governed by a four-member commission from the two states and operated by a not-for-profit operating company. Crews for the line come largely from multigenerational railroad families in Chama and Antonito.