

September 5th, 2024

To the Governing Bodies of:  
Salt Lake City,  
Salt Lake County,  
And the State of Utah,

## **Letter in Support of the “Rio Grande Plan” for Salt Lake City**

Greater Denver Transit (GDT) fully supports the Rio Grande Plan, a citizen-authored infrastructure project that proposes to grade-separate the railroads that cut through Downtown Salt Lake City and to reactivate the historic Rio Grande Depot as the city’s central train station.

Greater Denver Transit is a grassroots advocacy supporting the transformation of the Denver metro’s transit system into a world-class transit network that delivers on the mobility needs of our region. Our vision for a world-class transit network is characterized by complimentary rail and bus services that are fast, frequent, reliable, and accessible. One of the core mobility needs we focus on is providing more robust local connections to regional and longer-distance services, including Amtrak’s California Zephyr which connects Denver with our neighbors in Salt Lake City through the Rockies: a connection which is ripe for improvement.

On June 27th, 2024, members of our organization rode the California Zephyr to visit Salt Lake City and were given a comprehensive tour of the Rio Grande Depot site and the existing Salt Lake Central rail and transit interchange. With most of our members already familiar with the Rio Grande Plan before visiting, following the tour and a thorough review of all the documents and plans available, all members were in unanimous agreement that the Plan promises the most effective way to revitalize the western side of Downtown Salt Lake City with safer and more convenient connections between long-distance, regional, and local transit services.

In addition, GDT is extremely pleased to see lessons learned from Denver’s FasTracks and Union Station projects already being incorporated into the design, namely a through-track solution that will deliver higher capacity, convenience, and reliability for riders than that of a stub-end configuration.

Moving the rails below-grade will eliminate dangerous and traffic-halting grade-crossing conflicts, increase the efficiency of passenger rail across the entire Utah network, and help heal Salt Lake City’s east-west divide. Utilizing the Depot will more closely integrate the hub of the greater state rail network into the core of Downtown and the Utah Transit Authority TRAX network servicing the greater Salt Lake region.

The benefits of the Rio Grande Plan will reach far beyond Salt Lake City. The streets and railroads will move residents and visitors more efficiently and seamlessly into Downtown, and with fewer railroad crossings, everyone will have greater access to several key destinations, including Salt Lake City International Airport, the Delta Center, Temple Square, and the medical, educational, and research resources at the University of Utah. Connecting communities by rail demonstrates a long-term political and fiscal commitment by the state government to communities across the state, large and small. This aligns well with the Federal Railroad Administration’s Long-Distance Study, Amtrak’s “Connects US” plans, and LinkUtah’s statewide strategic vision.

The Rio Grande Plan is an ideal candidate to receive federal funding earmarked for reconnecting communities by improving transportation infrastructure. Also, with large amounts of capital already slated for Salt Lake City for the National Hockey League, the National Basketball Association, and the upcoming 2034 Winter Olympics, the Plan is a way to help share these investments with all Utahns. Now is the time to change the rail infrastructure of the city and state, and Utah should begin with the Rio Grande Plan. GDT fully supports the implementation of the Rio Grande Plan, and urges Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, the State of Utah, and the US Department of Transportation to formally support this innovative and transformative grassroots project.

With best wishes,



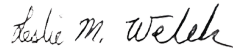
James Flattum, GDT Co-Founder



Richard Bamber, GDT Co-Founder



June Churchill, GDT Lead



Leslie Welch, GDT Lead



Joel Noble, GDT Member



Ryan Keeney, GDT Member and YIMBY Denver President



Joseph Meyer, GDT Member



Robert Bryan, GDT Member