

Once-in-a-Generation Opportunity for Colorado: Take Action Today to Support Progress Towards Building a Trail on The Tennessee Pass Corridor

Opportunities like this don't come along very often.

Union Pacific Railroad has proposed merging with Norfolk Southern, creating the nation's first transcontinental freight railroad. Because this merger requires approval from the federal Surface Transportation Board, regulators have the authority to require conditions that serve the public interest.

Bicycle Colorado and Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance believe one of those conditions should benefit Colorado for generations to come.

We're asking the Surface Transportation Board to require Union Pacific Railroad to work with the State of Colorado and local communities to explore the future of the Tennessee Pass rail corridor—including its potential as a world-class trail through railbanking, a proven process that has successfully preserved hundreds of rail corridors across the country while protecting the opportunity for future rail service.

Click [here](#) to ask the Surface Transportation Board to require Union Pacific Railroad to explore the use of the Tennessee Pass rail corridor as a trail.

Importantly, we are not asking the Board to convert the corridor into a trail today. We're asking for something much more reasonable: a commitment to re-engage in a collaborative planning process to explore this extraordinary opportunity.

Yes, *re-engage!* This request has historic precedent. Nearly thirty years ago, when Union Pacific sought support for its merger with Southern Pacific, the [State of Colorado requested](#) that Union Pacific participate in a feasibility study to explore converting the Tennessee Pass rail line into a public trail. Union Pacific agreed, and a [letter of intent](#) was signed by Governor Roy Romer and Union Pacific Chairman Richard Davidson. Colorado State Parks completed the Heart of the Rockies Scenic Trail Feasibility Study with support from Great Outdoors Colorado, local governments, agencies, and communities along the corridor.

We are building on this past work.

The Tennessee Pass corridor is one of Colorado's most spectacular transportation assets. Stretching through the heart of the Rockies, it has the potential to connect communities,

celebrate Colorado's railroad history, expand outdoor recreation, and strengthen rural economies.

Across the country, rail-trails have proven to be powerful economic engines. They attract visitors who stay longer, spend money at local restaurants, hotels, bike shops, outfitters, and small businesses, while providing residents with safe places to walk and ride. Communities connected by destination trails have experienced new investment, stronger local economies, and improved quality of life.

This is about more than recreation. It's about rural economic development, preserving an irreplaceable transportation corridor, honoring Colorado's history, and investing in future generations.

Please take just a few minutes to send a letter to the Surface Transportation Board urging it to include a condition requiring Union Pacific to work with Colorado to explore the future of the Tennessee Pass corridor.

Together, we can help ensure this once-in-a-generation opportunity is not missed.

Take action today. Click [here](#) to send your letter and help shape the future of the Tennessee Pass corridor.

July X, 2026

Surface Transportation Board
Washington, DC

Re: Union Pacific–Norfolk Southern Merger – Public Interest Considerations for the Tennessee Pass Rail Corridor in Colorado

Dear Chairman and Members of the Surface Transportation Board:

I write regarding the proposed merger between Union Pacific Railroad and Norfolk Southern. I urge the Board to include, as a condition of any merger approval, a requirement that Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern work collaboratively with the State of Colorado, affected local governments, and community stakeholders to explore the future public use of the Tennessee Pass rail corridor, including building upon the 1996 Heart of the Rockies Historic Corridor Trail feasibility study by evaluating opportunities for railbanking and reassessing the corridor's potential for trail use.

This request is modest. I am not asking the Board to require the railroads to abandon the corridor or predetermine its future use. Rather, I am asking that, as a condition of the merger, the railroads commit to good-faith dialogue and planning with Colorado communities regarding one of the state's most extraordinary assets.

Requiring the railroads to engage in a collaborative planning process is a reasonable, measured, and forward-looking condition that advances the public interest while preserving flexibility for the future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,