

# **Tracks Across Borders Scenic & Historic Byway Approved by CDOT**

The Tracks Across Borders Scenic & Historic Byway (TABB) was OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED as Colorado's newest scenic & historic byway by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) in their meeting on April 16, 2015 -- the first byway to be added to Colorado's Scenic Byways since 2005. New Mexico's State Transportation Commission is expected to approve a corresponding New Mexico byway designation on May 21, 2015.

The byway route will follow the old route of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG) that ran between Durango and Chama, NM until the late 1960's, highlighting one of Colorado's greatest stories – the creation and development of the D&RG, the state's first, and ultimately the nation's largest, narrow gauge railroad system. The route passes through two reservations (the Jicarilla Apache Nation and Southern Ute Tribal lands), two states (Colorado and New Mexico), and three counties (Rio Arriba, Archuleta and La Plata).

"The byway was only made a possibility thanks to the conceptual support of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the Jicarilla Apache Nation," said Dan Love, Colorado Commissioner for the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad and champion of the byway." The state-to-state byway will pass through both reservations.

As reported in the Southern Ute Drum of October 17, 2014, "We used to talk and have meetings with the Jicarilla Apache [Nation] about this," Southern Ute Tribal Chairman, Clement J. Frost said. "The council and the Tribe have been in support of this for a long time." Southern Ute Tribal Planner Apprentice and new TABB Commission member, Edward B. Box III said, "The byway was first proposed in the 1970's shortly after the stretch of railroad from Chama to Durango was shut down." The project didn't really get underway until 2004 when Dan Love became the champion and chief proponent.

Though there are some preliminary tribal concerns, such as possible trespassing by non-tribal members on tribal land and road maintenance, Box believes there will be benefits for the Tribe, tourism and its economic boost being number one. "The [byway] can increase tourism to our reservation, casino resort and museum," he said.

Archuleta County should also benefit from increased tourism to newly designated Chimney Rock National Monument, Navajo Lake State Park, Arboles and Pagosa Springs.

An eleven-member TABB Charter Commission, representing key constituencies, has been appointed, and, once the TABB designation in New Mexico is complete, the TABB Commission will be chartered to create the business, fundraising, marketing and operations plan for the new byway.

Dan Love said, "I want to thank each of the Colorado Byways Commissioners and CDOT Commissioners for all the efforts made in reaching what, for us was a monumental achievement,

in designating the Tracks Across Borders Byway. We wish to extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to each and every person, community, and organization that has supported official designation. The TABB Commission looks forward to your continuing efforts and involvement in making Tracks Across Borders a premier byway in Colorado and New Mexico."

Watch for more news following the New Mexico designation, including plans for an 'across borders' ribbon cutting event!