



Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad  
Abilene, Kansas • Est. 1993

**Testimony of Abilene and Smoky Valley Railroad  
House Committee on Transportation  
Proponent for HB 2501 – February 7, 2024**

Chairman Francis and members of the Committee

On behalf of the Abilene and Smoky Valley Railroad Association Board of Directors I want to thank the Committee for considering this bill. Kansas has a number of outstanding static steam railroad locomotives and rail car displays and museums. The A&SV RR is fortunate as we have an operating steam locomotive, the 1919 ATSF 3415 4-6-2 Pacific Class, the only one operating in Kansas.

It is one thing to view an old, rusty, cold steam locomotive sitting in a park somewhere. It is quite another when you view a steam locomotive with a fire in its firebox. It truly becomes a living, breathing behemoth with smoke, steam, clanks, and clunks, bells, and whistles that can move itself down the track at speeds approaching 100mph. An operating steam locomotive is truly a sight to behold. Nationally, there are less than 200 operating steam locomotives left from an estimated stable of over 75,000 that were built by 1930. The ATSF 3415 is one of about 6,800 Pacific-class locomotives built for US and Canadian markets, and one of a handful operating today.

Our 1919 ATSF 3415 is a tribute not only to the industrial might and engineering of the early 1900s, but it is also a tribute to the volunteers who came to Abilene Kansas, moved it from Eisenhower Park to our property, rebuilt it and placed it back in operation. The ATSF 3415's Kansas ties run deep as well; Not only because of it's Kansas-based ATSF railway ownership, but because it spent its career moving passengers and freight from Chicago through Kansas City and Amarillo at speeds up to 80-miles per hour. It operated over 1.8-million miles before it was retired from service and given to the city of Abilene in 1953.

The attraction of the ATSF3415 brings passengers and admirers from across the globe is truly amazing. Last September we hosted an 18-hour photo charter for 30 photographers from across the United States (Maine to California) who came to Abilene just to enjoy photographing and riding behind the ATSF3415. Here is a link to see and hear the ATSF 3415 in action: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-c3tdo3W1os>.

House bill 2501 declaring the ATSF3415 as the state steam locomotive would forever highlight the importance of steam locomotives in building Kansas, Kansas agriculture, and Kansas communities. The ATSF 3415 is history in motion that we need to maintain for future generations.

Thank you,

Ross K Boelling, President and General Manager  
Abilene and Smoky Valley Railroad  
200 SE 5<sup>th</sup> Str; PO Box 744  
Abilene, KS 67410  
Website: [ASVRR.ORG](http://ASVRR.ORG)  
Email: [gm.asvrail@asvrr.org](mailto:gm.asvrail@asvrr.org)  
Telephone: 785.263.1077



479 MAIN AVENUE • DURANGO, COLORADO 81301-5494  
PHONE 970-259-6505 • FAX 970-259-3570  
[www.americanheritagerailways.com](http://www.americanheritagerailways.com)

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

American Heritage Railways is a company that owns two historic / scenic railroads and partners with over 50 other rail operations helping to insure their cultural heritage is preserved for generations to come. We create great experiences that promote preservation and education.

For nearly two years now we have had the pleasure of working with the Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad. It is so exciting to see the tremendous progress the ASVR is making in becoming a true economic driver for the entire region surrounding Abilene and Dickinson County. Ridership is up, revenue is up, and the positive reception by the local commercial community is mushrooming. ASVR's General Manager, Ross K. Boelling, and his crew have shown more energy and creativity in growing the railroad's presence than has been seen in many years.

The Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad is just now beginning to recognize its potential. The future is more than just people riding trains. It's about new jobs, tremendous positive financial impact on the communities and tourism growth that will help every business of every kind in the region. For this reason, it is important that local and state governments support the ASVR in every manner possible from public recognition to financial assistance for long term capital projects. The return on the investment of time and money will be enormous. The rewards will be history preserved for generations to come.

At American Heritage Railways, we are committed to the preservation of history because history is the road map to the future. The Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad is a great piece of Kansas State history and deserves to be nurtured and cared for now and forever.

Please call and let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely Yours,

Allen C. Harper  
Chairman / CEO



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