



**Gilpin County  
Colorado**

**Commissioners**

Marie Mornis,  
District 1

Susan Berumen,  
District 2

Sandy Hollingsworth,  
District 3

**County Manager**

Ray Rears

**County Attorney**

Bradford Benning

**Address**

P.O. Box 366  
203 Eureka Street  
Central City, Colorado 80427

*Located in the Historic  
Gilpin County Courthouse*

**Phone**

Main: 303.582.5214  
Fax: 303.582.5440

**Website**

[www.gilpincounty.  
colorado.gov](http://www.gilpincounty.colorado.gov)

**Facebook**

Gilpin County Colorado

October 17, 2023

Governor Jared Polis  
Office of the Governor  
136 State Capitol Building  
200 E. Colfax Avenue  
Denver, CO 80203

Director Shoshana M. Lew  
Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)  
2829 W Howard Pl  
Denver, CO 80204

Dear Governor Polis and Director Shoshana M. Lew,

RE: Moffat Tunnel Use Expansion

The Gilpin County Board of County Commissioners writes to express strong support for the expansion of uses for the Moffat Tunnel. As you are aware, Union Pacific's 99-year lease to use the 6.2-mile Moffat Tunnel for a nominal annual fee of \$12,000 is set to expire on January 6, 2025. This provides a unique opportunity for the state to shape the future of this vital transportation asset. We believe this historic landmark, with its rich legacy and origin in Gilpin County, should serve the public and not be solely for profit.

We are aware that discussions surrounding the Moffat Tunnel's lease renegotiation are in their early stages, and we are pleased to see that the state is actively involved in this process. The potential expansion of uses for the Moffat Tunnel, including the possibility of commuter rail service, holds immense promise for our community and the region at large.

We are encouraged by the efforts of leaders in our region to support the increase of passenger rail in Colorado. The recent tours of the rail lines across the region involved local officials from counties including Gilpin, Grand, Adams and Moffat, and cities including Steamboat Springs, Arvada, Winter Park, along with state lawmakers, and CDOT representatives, reflects the growing momentum for both commuter and tourist-oriented passenger rail. This shared regional vision has the potential to make a significant impact on our communities and the state as a whole.

While we acknowledge that there is a broader regional desire to expand the uses of the Moffat Tunnel to include passenger rail service, and we are eager to work with our neighboring communities for mutual benefit, our primary focus is on the far-reaching impact such expansion could have on Gilpin County, home to the tunnel's East Portal and historic Rollinsville, the "company town" built up around the project's construction.

Several key considerations have led us to believe that this expansion of use is in the best interest of our county and the state as a whole:

1. **Economic Development:** Firstly, expansion of use offers the potential to significantly boost economic development. The introduction of passenger rail service, in particular, holds promise in stimulating economic growth in a county that is highly dependent upon unstable and unpredictable gaming revenues. This could have positive effects on industries like heritage tourism and outdoor recreation, while simultaneously creating opportunities for local businesses to thrive.

2. **Housing Access:** Passenger rail service could help address workforce housing shortages, a pressing concern in Colorado. By connecting communities and offering a reliable transportation alternative, we can provide greater access to housing options in neighboring communities, offering commuter options to areas like Gilpin County, where housing development possibilities are limited, and improve the quality of life.

3. **Front Range to Western Slope Travel:** Reviving passenger rail service connecting the Front Range and Western Slopes of Colorado would offer a convenient, rapid, and dependable means of accessing the state's abundant natural resources, including the ski resorts in the mountains. This efficient transportation option would promote the growth of the skiing industry and related businesses by reducing travel time and easing access for both residents and visitors, thereby contributing to the economic vitality of the region.

3. **Roadway Congestion Relief:** The Moffat Tunnel's expanded uses, especially passenger rail, can alleviate the congestion on major roadways such as Interstate 70, U.S. 40, and CO 119. This is vital for the efficient movement of people and goods in our region.

4. **Environmental Benefits:** The introduction of passenger rail can contribute to the state's transition away from coal and reduce the impact of hazardous shipments, as witnessed with the Uinta Basin Railway oil-train project.

5. **Ecosystem Preservation:** By reducing road traffic and mitigating the need for new transportation infrastructure, the Moffat Tunnel expansion can help preserve the local ecosystem, which has a long history of being abused for its natural resources.

In conclusion, these considerations emphasize the tremendous potential that expanding the uses of the Moffat Tunnel, particularly through the introduction of passenger rail service, offers to both Gilpin County and the broader state. It aligns with our vision for sustainable economic growth, affordable housing, traffic relief, environmental conservation, and overall community development.

We kindly request your support in ensuring that the Moffat Tunnel serves the public interest and contributes to the growth and sustainability of our communities, and we look forward to working collaboratively to turn this vision into a reality.

Thank you for your continued service to the people of the State of Colorado and for your attention to this matter.

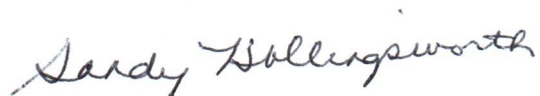
Sincerely,



Marie Mornis  
Commissioner



Susan Berumen  
Commissioner



Sandy Hollingsworth  
Commissioner

CC:

Colorado Transportation Commission  
State Rep. Meghan Lukens  
State Sen. Dylan Roberts  
Bob Wilson, CDOT Spokesman  
John Putnam, CDOT Negotiation Lead