

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BNSF GRANTS STAY-OF-DEMOLITION TO NP DEPOT

MILES CITY, MT., AUGUST 17, 2009: BNSF Railway agreed to stay the demolition of the historic Northern Pacific Depot in Miles City as the community explores the feasibility of an adaptive-use renovation of the decaying structure. News of the agreement followed a Friday morning meeting between BNSF General Manager Rick Bartoskewitz, Director of Government Affairs Barbara Ranf, Mayor Whalen, Preservation Officer Amorette Allison, and Miles City Grant Administrator Steve Craddock. During the meeting, both delegations recognized the value of renovated depots to the economies of historic districts across the West, as well as the need to reduce liability to BNSF through prompt resolution in negotiating the future of the blighted structure.

"This is the best news I've heard in years!", exclaimed a beaming Allison, who has sadly watched the once-grand terminal run down since the last passenger train left the station in 1979 and through botched attempts at private ownership.

BNSF General Manager Bartoskewitz said, "The railroad wants to be a good neighbor to Miles City and we'll work closely with the mayor to move toward a timely resolution concerning the depot."

FINDING INSPIRATION FROM A WESTERN NEIGHBOR

Just two days prior, Steve Craddock of the City's planning staff, coordinated a tour of the Billings Depot facility with Billings Depot, Inc. founders, Harry Gottwals and Dennis Deppmeier, for a delegation of a dozen interested citizens from Miles City, including the mayor. The group examined the renovated facility, studied a scrapbook of snapshots documenting the Herculean restoration, and interrogated the organizers of the successful project.

"The benefits of adaptive-use projects such as the Billings Depot extend beyond the railroad property lines to the entire downtown historic district. Try to imagine what Montana Ave. would feel like today if the Billings community hadn't come together since 1993 to make the Depot project happen", said Whalen. "We'll find a way to make something similar work for downtown Miles City but we need to move quickly."

The railroad agreed to provide the City with several specific documents relating to the environmental and structural condition of the property as a next step. Meanwhile, the City has already begun its search for a project "champion" to lead the feasibility study that the City Council authorized unanimously by resolution.

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