

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands

Witness Statement

**STATEMENT OF
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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS OF THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
CONCERNING H.R. 2932, A BILL TO AUTHORIZE THE GOLDEN SPIKE/CROSSROADS OF
THE WEST NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA.**

OCTOBER 5, 1999

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to present the position of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 2932, a bill to authorize the Golden Spike/Crossroads of the West National Heritage Area.

We support the concepts presented in the legislation; however, we believe designation of a heritage area is premature and recommend that the committee defer action on the bill. We would like to work with the committee on refining the language to ensure that the limited resources of the National Park Service are efficiently used to assist the efforts to protect the important resources of this area.

H.R. 2932 would authorize a Golden Spike/Crossroads of the West National Heritage Area. It also calls for a study of a national heritage corridor from Ogden to Promontory Point. The bill outlines the management of the heritage area, authorizes the expenditure of federal funds for grants, provides for technical assistance from federal agencies and requires the creation of a management plan for the area.

Northern Utah has a rich natural and cultural heritage. A primary focal point of this heritage is the development and completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. This history is commemorated by Golden Spike National Historic Site, established in 1965. However, the story of railroading and its subsequent impacts on surrounding landscapes and communities goes beyond the park's boundaries. That bigger story has been recognized for many years and has been the subject of many plans and actions, and told in a number of ways and by a variety of organizations. What is missing is the framework or umbrella within which to comprehensively tell this important story and provide for the continued protection of the cultural resources and natural landscapes. The creation of a national heritage corridor that includes Ogden could provide that umbrella.

The National Park Service supports the proposal to study a heritage corridor that follows the course of the Transcontinental Railroad through Utah. We also support the protection of the resources proposed for the heritage area, but believe designation is premature and not in keeping with the standards set for previous

heritage areas, which are supposed to locally driven. We recommend the study be completed and the findings presented before any type of designation takes place.

A National Heritage Area is a place where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity. Heritage conservation efforts are grounded in a community's pride in its history and traditions, and its interest in seeing them retained. Preserving the integrity of the cultural landscape and local stories means that future generations of the community will be able to understand and define who they are, where they come from, and what ties them to their home. Heritage areas are designed to protect large, regional landscapes and resources that tell the story of its residents. The area in Ogden, Utah, is one of the focal points for the story of America's continental railway system. But there are many other places in and around the region that contribute a great deal to that story, and should be included to most effectively tell the complete story.

We would recommend that this legislation focus on the bigger story, that of the national heritage corridor. Much work has been done to evaluate resources along the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific\Southern Pacific Railroads, across the state of Utah and even beyond, by a variety of organizations. This work needs to be brought together and a strategy developed for long-term use and protection. Partners need to be identified and a common vision developed. This can only succeed if the participants are willing. It is obvious that the city of Ogden is interested in pursuing this concept, and will be a strong participant in the success of this corridor. But it is extremely important that the existing cooperative entities including the Bureau of Land Management, Union Pacific Railroad, the cities of Corinne, Mariott-Slaterville, Brigham, and Harrisville, the counties of Box Elder and Weber, and the National Park Service all be a voice and participant in the preservation of this heritage corridor.

The National Park Service would be happy to make available whatever kind of guidance and assistance that may be needed by all interested parties-local, state, federal and private-to focus on the protection and interpretation of the story of railroading in America, as preserved in this part of Utah.

We appreciate the committee's interest in this legislation, and look forward to working with you. I would be happy to respond to any questions that you may have.

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