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Fall 12-8-2021

### **SB54-21/22: Resolution Endorsing the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority**

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Mary Melissa Glueckert

Lauren O'Neill

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1                                   **The Associated Students of the University of Montana**  
2                                   **Resolution Endorsing The Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority**  
3                                   **November 12, 2021**

4                                   **SB54-21/22**

5                                   **Authored by: Canyon S. Lock, ASUM Vice President; Mary Melissa Glueckert, ASUM**  
6                                   **Senator; Lauren O'Neill, ASUM Senator;**

7  
8       Whereas, The primary purpose of the Associated Students of the University of Montana  
9       (“ASUM”) is to advocate for the general welfare of students at the University of Montana  
10       (“UM”);

11  
12       Whereas, On November 10, 2021, Jordan Hess, Director of ASUM Transportation, and David  
13       Strohmaier, Missoula County Commissioner, presented to the Senate about the benefits of the  
14       Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority;

15  
16       Whereas, The Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority seeks to “preserve and improve abandoned rail  
17       service for agriculture, industry, or passenger traffic” with an emphasis on reinvigorating rail  
18       service in southern Montana<sup>1</sup>;

19  
20       Whereas, Passenger rail services through southern Montana ended in 1979<sup>2</sup>;

21  
22       Whereas, It is estimated that transportation costs account for approximately 17% of an average  
23       postsecondary student’s budget who commutes to school, and is the second highest monthly cost  
24       for UM students<sup>34</sup>;

25  
26       Whereas, Transportation costs are burdensome to many UM students;

27  
28       Whereas, Due to the rising housing crisis in Missoula, many UM students are unable to live in  
29       Missoula, and therefore must commute every day from various towns across Montana<sup>5</sup>;

30  
31       Whereas, Expansion of Big Sky Rail Services would allow many students to travel to and from  
32       UM’s campus and the city of Missoula by rail;

33  

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<sup>1</sup>*About- We are the BSPRA.* Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority. (n.d.). Retrieved November 28, 2021, from <https://www.bigskyrail.org/about#:~:text=Big%20Sky%20Passenger%20Rail%20Authority%20The%20purpose%20of,be%20practicable%20and%20necessary%20for%20the%20public%20welfare>.

<sup>2</sup> Hanners, R. (2008, March 13). *Resurrecting the Southern Montana Rail Line.* Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. Retrieved November 28, 2021, from <https://www.ble-t.org/pr/news/headline.asp?id=21486>.

<sup>3</sup> Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University, "2019 #realcollege Survey School Report" (2020). ASUM Renter Center Publications. 5. [https://scholarworks.umt.edu/renter\\_center\\_pubs/5](https://scholarworks.umt.edu/renter_center_pubs/5).

<sup>4</sup> *Living Expense Budget 2020-21.* Education Professionals. (2021, July 7). Retrieved November 28, 2021, from <https://professionals.collegeboard.org/higher-ed/financial-aid/living-expense/2020>.

<sup>5</sup> Bridge, B. (2021, April 5). *Montana's unaffordable housing crisis.* Montana Business Quarterly. Retrieved November 28, 2021, from <https://www.montanabusinesquarterly.com/montanas-unaffordable-housing-crisis/>.

34 Whereas, The Big Sky Rail Services would expand access to on-campus education at UM,  
35 particularly for students who live in rural Montana or do not have access to other modes of  
36 transportation;

37  
38 Whereas, Many students bring their cars to campus in order to commute between their home  
39 town and the UM campus;

40  
41 Whereas, On October 18, 2021, the Senate passed SB36-21/22: Resolution Encouraging UMPD  
42 to Adopt a Parking Violation System Similar to Missoula Parking Commission, which  
43 recognized student concerns surrounding parking issues on the UM campus<sup>6</sup>;

44  
45 Whereas, Greater access to the passenger rail in southern Montana would likely result in fewer  
46 students bringing cars to campus and, by extension, more available parking on the UM campus;

47  
48 Whereas, On November 10, 2021, the Senate passed SB42-21/22: Resolution Urging the  
49 University of Montana Foundation, The University of Montana, and Students to Form a Working  
50 Group to Explore Fossil Fuel Divestment, which established ASUM's concerns regarding the  
51 climate crisis<sup>7</sup>;

52  
53 Whereas, Electric trains are a more sustainable and affordable means of transportation than  
54 motor vehicles<sup>8</sup>;

55  
56 Therefore, Let It Be Resolved, That ASUM hereby endorses the Big Sky Passenger Rail  
57 Authority;

58  
59 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, That ASUM requests that the Big Sky Passenger Rail  
60 Authority be carried out with sustainability in mind, and that current and future rail services in  
61 Montana be made electric;

62  
63 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, That ASUM encourages the Montana Associated Students  
64 ("MAS") to pass a resolution endorsing the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority;

65  
66 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, That this Resolution be sent to David Strohmaier,  
67 Missoula County Commissioner and Chair of Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority Board of  
68 Directors; Jason Stuart, Vice Chair of Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority Board of Directors; Bill  
69 Berg, Secretary of Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority Board of Directors; Jerry McDonald,  
70 Treasurer of Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority Board of Directors; Jacob Kunze, MAS President.

71  
72

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<sup>6</sup> Glueckert, Mary Melissa and Ververis, Nicholas, "SB36-21/22: Resolution Encouraging UMPD to Adopt a Parking Violation System Similar to Missoula Parking Commission" (2021).

<sup>7</sup> Lock, Canyon S., "SB42-21/22: Resolution Urging the University of Montana Foundation, The University of Montana, and Students to Form a Working Group to Explore Fossil Fuel Divestment" (2021).

<sup>8</sup> Julin, K. (2021, November 24). *Battery-electric trains can deliver environmental justice, cost savings and resilience to the U.S.* Phys.org. Retrieved November 28, 2021, from <https://phys.org/news/2021-11-battery-electric-environmental-justice-resilience.html>.

73 Passed by Committee: December 5, 2021

74

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76 Passed by ASUM Senate: December 8, 2021

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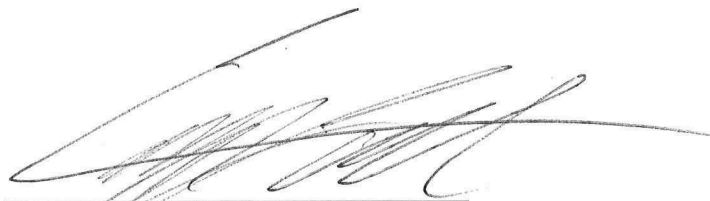


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80 Elizabeth Bowles,  
81 Chair Relations and Affairs

82

83 Passed 14Y-3N-2A.



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Canyon S. Lock,  
Chair of the Senate