



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0863-2019, **Version:** *

Res. No. 863

Resolution recognizing May 10, 2019 as the 150th Anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad.

By Council Member Holden

Whereas, Transcontinental Railroad was completed on May 10, 1869 when the Central Pacific Railroad Company and the Union Pacific Railroad Company linked railroad tracks at Promontory Summit, Utah; and

Whereas, One of the earliest proponents for the construction of a transcontinental railroad was New York City businessman Asa Whitney, a native of North Groton, Connecticut, who in 1845 presented a proposal to the United States Congress for a railroad spanning from Lake Michigan to the Pacific; and

Whereas, While Mr. Whitney's initial proposal failed, it set in motion the idea of a transcontinental railroad that would be championed in the 1860's by engineer Theodore Judah who lobbied to secure the passage of the Pacific Railroad Act in the United States House of Representatives on May 6, 1862 and in the United States Senate on June 6, 1862; and

Whereas, On July 1, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed into law the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862 which authorized the Central Pacific Railroad Company, co-founded by Charles Crocker born in Troy, New York and the Union Pacific Railroad Company, controlled by Wall Street investor Dr. Thomas Durant, with building a transcontinental railroad that would link the United States from east to west; and

Whereas, To encourage the rapid completion of the railroad link, the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862 approved generous financial subsidies and land grants to the owners of both railroad companies; and

Whereas, Work on the railroad link began in 1863, with the Central Pacific Railroad Company starting

to build their tracks in Sacramento moving east, while the Union Pacific Railroad Company started building westward at Council Bluffs, Iowa near the Missouri River where railroad lines were already operating in the eastern part of the country; and

Whereas, For six years the workers of both companies toiled to lay down the rail beds, tracks and other necessary infrastructure as they raced towards meeting somewhere near Salt Lake City, Utah; and

Whereas, The workers of Central Pacific Railroad Company were initially comprised of Irish immigrants from New York City and Boston, but due to recruiting difficulties, eventually evolved into an integrated workforce that included more than 12,000 Chinese laborers who worked under brutal working conditions and were ultimately viewed by the company as conscientious, sober and hard workers; and

Whereas, On May 10, 1869 the two companies linked their rail lines with a final “Golden Spike” at a rail bed in Promontory Summit, Utah marking the completion of the nation’s first transcontinental railroad; and

Whereas, The completion of the nearly 2,000 mile Transcontinental Railroad marked a pivotal milestone in the transportation history of the United States as it connected the Eastern and Western regions of our country and helped spur the further economic expansion of the west; and

Whereas, According to Congressional records, the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad reduced travel time across the nation from several months to one week; and

Whereas, On June 4, 1876, seven years after the completion of the transcontinental railroad a train known as the Transcontinental Express arrived in San Francisco, California, approximately eighty-three hours after leaving New York City; and

Whereas, The Transcontinental Railroad is considered as one of the most important engineering and technological achievements of the 19th century; and

Whereas, In 1965, the United States Congress passed legislation to create the Golden Spike National Historic Site to commemorate the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad link in Promontory, Utah; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York recognizes May 10, 2019 as the 150th Anniversary of the Completion of the Transcontinental Railroad.

LS 10,560
RA
5/2/2019