

GWR-UP Interchange “One More Connection between Windsor and Greeley”

Nearly two and a half months after it's opening, OmniTRAX and Union Pacific celebrated the formal ribbon cutting of the GWR-UP Interchange this morning in north Greeley.

A group of representatives and staff from both railroad companies, Weld County residents and representatives of Windsor, Greeley and the Weld County came out Thursday for the ceremony, tours of the Great Western Industrial Park and a look in the historic Yellowstone Car No. 1.

Great Western Railroad, which is part of OmniTrax, received its first 100-car unit train at the new interchange Feb. 2. The ribbon cutting was delayed due to harsh weather.

“It's a historic handoff for us,” OmniTRAX CEO Kevin Shuba said.

The interchange and related railway improvements between it and Windsor was Great Western's largest improvement project of 2015, coming in at \$15 million.

“This is just one more connection between Windsor and Greeley,” Greeley Mayor Tom Norton said. “We appreciate the private investment to allow us to this. It's a public-private partnership.”

The partnership between the Great Western and Union Pacific will help provide railway access across the region and country while also decreasing highway traffic, Shuba said.

“It really is designed to be much more efficient,” he said. One rail car can haul about four truckloads of goods.

That conversion makes a big difference on the impact of Weld County roads with nearly 85 percent of businesses in Windsor's Great Western Industrial Park opting to use rail rather than trucking.

In 2015, those customers generated about 30,000 carloads of goods, taking more than 100,000 trucks of local highways by using rail.

“I've always felt railroad and trucking go together,” Norton said.

Shuba said the interchange should increase rail travel efficiency in the area by 25-30 percent.

The greater connectivity of northern Colorado should also attract more business to the region, Shuba said.

“In Weld, we have a strong and driver local economy,” Weld County Commissioner Mike Freeman said at the ceremony. “Being able to transport (via rail) ... is a huge component to our economic growth.”

Union Pacific Public Affairs Director Sara Cassidy stressed the safety of the interchange and pointed out the companies' willingness to work with local municipalities such as Windsor and Greeley and first responders to ensure public safety.

“We appreciate the opportunity to do what we do and safety is our top priority,” she said.