

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**REGARDING SENATE BILL 349
RELATING TO INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE**

February 7, 2024

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

I am Cory Davis, Director of Multimodal Transportation and Innovation for the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT). I am here today to provide testimony on Senate Bill 349. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and to provide comments.

A key principle of the Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program is supporting more transportation choices for Kansans, including the potential for expanded passenger rail services in the state. Passenger rail service provides an optional mode of regional transportation for those not able to or interested in driving cars or flying. Passenger rail service can also act as a catalyst for economic development and business growth to further stimulate the Kansas economic engine.

For the past several years, KDOT has supported the advancement of expanded passenger rail services through the Heartland Flyer Extension; an extension of the service that currently connects Fort Worth, Texas to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The Heartland Flyer Extension would connect the regional hubs of Oklahoma City and Wichita, and eventually tie to Amtrak's national passenger rail service, the Southwest Chief, at Newton. As the lead state Agency for the development of this proposed service, KDOT continues to advance the Heartland Flyer Extension through the following action:

- Creation of a Service Development Plan (SDP) for the Heartland Flyer Extension connecting Newton, Wichita, and Arkansas City to the existing service in Oklahoma and Texas. This plan includes the following key components: operational analysis, capital investment needs, financial analysis, and an implementation plan. The final product, expected in late Spring of this year, will be a critical roadmap for KDOT, Oklahoma DOT, Amtrak, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), and other key stakeholders to move the service towards operation.
- In addition to the ongoing activities with the Service Development Plan, KDOT was awarded \$500,000 from FRA through the Corridor Identification Program. This program expands our



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partnership with FRA and identifies the Heartland Flyer Extension as a project in the FRA's project pipeline. We are currently coordinating with the FRA to finalize agreements to formalize the funding award. Once these agreements are completed, we will coordinate with FRA to ensure our SDP is compliant with FRA requirements.

- As appropriate work with the FRA and other Federal Agencies to identify potential grant opportunities, including those in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, that could help pay for the future construction of the service.

Senate Bill 349 would establish an intercity passenger rail program and would require the secretary to fund the program at \$5M per year. These funds would come from unencumbered funds in the state highway fund, the state general fund and/or special revenue funds. The funds in this program would then be used on qualifying projects like the Heartland Flyer that continue to advance passenger rail service in the state. To meet the intent of the bill, the agency will need to establish an internal structure to manage this program and the associated funding.

KDOT supports the continued advancement of passenger rail service in Kansas, including Senate Bill 349.