

February 7, 2024

Honorable Mike Petersen, Chair
Senate Transportation Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 Southwest 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

SB 349 Passenger Rail Service Program (K.S.A. 75-5089, as amended)

Senator Petersen and Members of the Committee

- 1) My name is Mark Corrison. I serve on the board of directors of the Northern Flyer Alliance.
- 2) I respectfully present this proponent statement in support of SB 349. The Northern Flyer Alliance represents over 60 cities, county commissions and civic organizations in Oklahoma and Kansas.
- 3) This Alliance has petitioned the state of Kansas with 99 resolutions and letters requesting extension of the AMTRAK Heartland Flyer from Oklahoma City to Newton, Kansas. Representatives from several Alliance communities are present today.
- 4) SB 349 will amend K.S.A 75-5089, a statute establishing authority for a Passenger Rail Program in 2010.
- 5) At that time key planning and development processes, and a funding mechanism were incomplete. Planning continued with a Service Development Plan in 2011.
- 6) In late 2022 the Federal Railroad Administration announced a new Corridor Identification and Development Program. Corridor ID is a competitive Federal-State partnership to fund new intercity passenger rail service. Two months ago, on December 8th, the Kansas Department of Transportation received notice that their application for a Heartland Flyer Extension was selected, along with 68 other projects across the country.
- 7) The Heartland Flyer Extension has now entered the Corridor ID development pipeline and the project is eligible for an estimated \$99m grant under the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Development.
- 8) KDOT's application states full commitment to using public and state funds to comply with the total cost-share requirements to extend operation of AMTRAK's Heartland Flyer to Newton.
- 9) Passage of SB 349 is critical for KDOT to fulfil the financial and contractual obligation with the FRA in order to maintain the development schedule. Any delay in meeting the project timeline could result in the Heartland Flyer Extension being preempted by another project or losing out entirely.
- 10) Furthermore, several corridor communities with stops have active local planning underway for this long-anticipated project. The Heartland Flyer Extension will directly transit 14 Kansas legislative districts and impact another 30 districts in South Central Kansas.
- 11) Future AMTRAK development is dependent upon legislative action taken now. Please advance out of Committee SB 349.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of SB-349.