



SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION: Testimony October 29, 2012
Barbara S Burns, Community Advancement Coordinator, City of Newton KS

Distinguished members of the Special Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share testimony regarding the importance of passenger rail service through Kansas. My name is Barbara Burns, and I serve as Community Advancement Coordinator for the City of Newton.

Newton is a committed member of the Southwest Chief Rural Rail Partnership. In the face of a tight local budget, the Newton City Commission unanimously voted to commit \$15,000 to the Partnership. Newton long has been a pivotal point in transcontinental rail passenger service. I appear before you today asking for your focused energy and support in making rail passenger a safe and sustainable factor of economic growth in Kansas. The support of the Kansas Legislature is instrumental in our efforts to inform Washington of the need for a multi-decade plan for rail passenger service through Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico.

We ask you to consider the following key points regarding Amtrak's Southwest Chief line that connects thriving Kansas communities with the rest of the nation:

- **Passenger rail requires regional interaction.** Newton/Harvey County is committed to broad regional collaboration, as evidenced by successful partnerships on recent highway projects. Rail passenger requires stepping across the usual governmental boundaries.
- **Passenger rail requires the courage of a multi-decade commitment.** Winning the race is a matter of moving steadily toward the finish line. Let's keep the Southwest Chief moving through western Kansas, Colorado, and beyond.
- **The safety of Kansans is at stake.** The price to repair and maintain the track is shocking, but the social price of broken track is unthinkable. The current route must be upgraded & safe.
- **Expanded and enhanced rail passenger bolsters local/regional economies.** Trains connect us to the rest of the nation. As baby-boomers age, trains provide safe, accessible, affordable, and convenient travel. College students and professionals are beginning to prefer trains over the often unsatisfactory airline experience for long distance travel needs. Towns located along the Southwest Chief line will benefit from increased passenger traffic. The iconic and stately Historic Newton Depot, located in our vibrant and preserved downtown, is a welcoming and impressive venue for travelers arriving and departing Amtrak.

Representing the City of Newton and our elected governing body, I ask you, as caretakers of the future of our state, to consider rail passenger a cause bigger than Newton,

Hutchinson, Dodge City or Garden City. The preservation of the Southwest Chief through our state is a game-changer. Rail passenger is a regional asset; citizens for miles around each major rail stop depend on and benefit from access to passenger rail.

Let's improve the infrastructure we have, and energetically work with Washington to secure rail passenger service through Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico for future generations. This is an opportunity to make a significant, memorable, and lasting difference in the future strength and role of Kansas in transcontinental transportation.

Thank you for allowing my written statement.