

House Appropriations Committee Hearing on FORWARD  
Feb 18, 2020 Rm 112-N, Capital building, Topeka, KS  
**Testimony**

1. The Northern Flyer Alliance speaks today in full support of FORWARD, known as House Bill 2588 and Senate Bill 375. We especially are supportive of its clearly identified and first-ever inclusion of passenger rail program development, including the Heartland Flyer Extension and the maintenance of its partner long distance corridor, the Southwest Chief.

BACKGROUND:

The Northern Flyer Alliance is a not-for profit league of community organizations, city councils, county commissions, and citizens dedicated to intercity passenger rail expansion between Fort Worth and Kansas City along a corridor connecting Oklahoma City, Wichita and Topeka and more than a dozen cities.

The governing boards of the Northern Flyer Alliance and its partner the Friends of the Northern Flyer Alliance act as the agent, advocate and legislative lobby for more than multiple city councils, community and civic organizations in two states. The Alliance coordinates the efforts on behalf of its members through education, legislation, commission of studies, planning, conferences, public events and programs.

The Northern Flyer Alliance (NFA) traces its origins back to 2007 and to a series of public forums organized by a group of founding members that brought together public officials and members of the public to discuss intercity passenger rail development in response to widespread public interest. The NFA took on the task of representing this interest and conveying formal requests received from city councils and organizations in the form of resolutions, petitions, formal letters and related forms of requests to state and federal officials. During this process the Northern Flyer Alliance was formally organized as a not-for profit 501c4 lobbying organization, and shortly thereafter, the Friends of the Northern Flyer Alliance (FNFA) formed as a 501c3 educational organization. Together the NFA and FNFA are able to continue their mission and objective to expand intercity passenger rail service been Oklahoma City, OK and Newton, KS.

**Over the last 5 years the Alliance was grown from a few cities and members into an influential organization that** has sponsored dozens of public meetings and annual conferences. Its members have spearheaded grass roots advocacy of constituents to state legislators, **drafted legislation that created the Kansas Passenger Rail Program Act of 2010, secured major grants for planning and development studies, advised and assisted the departments of transportation in several states, and have helped moved the initiative from an idea to the current stage of development.**

2. NFA requests that the legislative resolution (RS-????) be approved in both the House and the Senate, and distributed to the Kansas Congressional Delegation as well as the USDOT Secretary of Transportation, Elaine Chau.

On January 22 of this year, Senator McGinn held a Passenger Rail Luncheon in the Senate Ways & Means Committee Rm. Of the many featured speakers, of special note was the presentation of Ray Lang, Senior Director, Government Affairs at Amtrak. Ray spoke of the desire and perhaps necessity of Amtrak to request 100% funding for the development of the Heartland Flyer Extension in the 2020 Reauthorization

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Bill, presumably due to pre-released information from BNSF who is currently performing a final cost study of the extension to Newton, KS.

This Resolution will make sure Kansas' entire Congressional delegation is aware of the state's desire to partner with Amtrak in its endeavor to obtain 100% federal funding for this important extension into Kansas.

As the Resolution states, numerous studies by Universities in Texas and Kansas have determined the economic benefit of Amtrak's Heartland Flyer passenger rail service and its Extension to be at least 3 to 1 for every dollar spent.

According to studies already completed, an additional 200,000 people will ride the Heartland Flyer once it is extended to Newton where it will connect with the Southwest Chief. Therefore, Amtrak views the Heartland Flyer Extension as vital to the long term viability of the Southwest Chief.

Moreover, Amtrak will only seek federal funding for states that demonstrate an interest in expanded passenger rail. Therefore, passage of this Resolution along with FORWARD will demonstrate that desire and interest.

3. NFA requests that appointments be made to the Kansas Rail Advisory Committee as provided in K.S.A. 75-5043.

This was a Kansas Statute that passed into law all the way back in 1991. While not implemented in recent memory, this Rail Advisory Committee was designed to advise the Secretary of Transportation on rail and passenger rail related issues. This will be important as Kansas pursues a passenger rail program for the first time in its history.

4. NFA also requests that the Kansas Legislature recognize that the Kansas Department of Transportation was authorized to coordinate with the States of Texas and Oklahoma for an extension of the Heartland Flyer with connection to the Southwest Chief by way of passage of the Passenger Rail Program Act of 2010, formerly known as Senate Bill 409.

Senate Bill 409 became law in March, 2010. It was an Act establishing the passenger rail service program in Kansas. Section 1(b)(1) states that the Secretary of Transportation may enter into agreements with Amtrak, other rail operators, local jurisdictions and other states for the purpose of developing passenger rail service, serving Kansas and other states interconnected or positioned on a current or proposed route.