

**PROPONENT TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

**REGARDING SENATE BILL 86
RELATING TO FUNDING FOR PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE**

February 6, 2025

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 in support of Senate Bill 86. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and to provide comments.

KDOT is committed to the expansion of passenger rail services in Kansas. Passenger rail services provide a valuable mode of transportation for those not able to or interested in driving or flying as their mode of transportation. Passenger rail service can also act as a catalyst for economic development and business growth to further stimulate the Kansas economic engine. This service will provide an important linkage between Kansas and our partner states to the south, Oklahoma and Texas and connects to a national passenger rail service, The Southwest Chief, operated between Chicago and Los Angeles running through Kansas. Should additional routes providing passenger rail services be established in Kansas, the state would follow the rules and regulations tied to State Supported Passenger Rail Services.

KDOT's focus on passenger rail service expansion is illustrated through our advancement 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 Investments Needs, Financial Analysis, and an Implementation Plan. The final version of the SDP, expected later 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 toward operation. The agency is committed to continuing its work with our partner cities in Kansas along the identified route and our partner states of Oklahoma and Texas toward making the Heartland Flyer Extension operational.

In December 2023, KDOT was awarded \$500,000 from FRA through the Corridor Identification Program to expand on our ongoing efforts, including the Service Development Plan. The program expands our partnership with FRA in advancing passenger rail service in the state. More specifically, this identifies the Heartland Flyer Extension as a project in the FRA's project pipeline. KDOT has successfully completed Step 1 of the Corridor ID program and is now in the process of submitting its Service Development Plan to the FRA for review after presenting the SDP's preliminary findings to the public in December 2024. Once the FRA has completed its review, KDOT will work with the agency to incorporate their feedback into the Service Development Plan before the FRA completes a final assessment. KDOT will then seek

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FRA's guidance in advancing the service through other grant programs included in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that support the environmental review, preliminary engineering, infrastructure improvements, and operating costs. KDOT will continue to identify federal funding and approval needed to move this service toward the goal of operation.

The agency is using the financial analysis completed during the research phase for the Service Development Plan to outline a comprehensive list of all required subsidies for each funding partner, both near and long term, including a breakdown of potential federal funding to support the service. In coordination with Oklahoma and Texas, KDOT will work with Amtrak and FRA to advance toward the project's next steps.

KDOT hosted a public meeting in December 2024 to share the preliminary results of the SDP and a recording of the meeting is available at www.ksdot.gov.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 86. I am happy to answer any questions at the appropriate time.