

February 6, 2025

Honorable Rick Billinger, Chair
Senate Ways and Means Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 Southwest 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

SB 86 Passenger Rail Service Program (K.S.A. 75-5089, as amended)

Senator Billinger 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 submit this proponent statement in support of SB 86.
- 3) The Alliance represents over 60 cities, county commissions and civic organizations in Oklahoma and Kansas. These communities have petitioned the state of Kansas with 99 resolutions requesting extension of the AMTRAK Heartland Flyer from Oklahoma City to Newton, Kansas. Representatives of some of these communities are present today.
- 4) SB 86 amends K.S.A 75-5089, a statute establishing authority for the Passenger Rail Program Act of 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 development of new intercity passenger rail service. There are 64 active Corridor ID projects across the country. The Heartland Flyer Extension is one of the 64 Corridor ID projects.
- 7) The Kansas Department of Transportation recently completed a mandatory, FRA approved, Service Development Plan satisfying Step 2 requirements. The next step involves preliminary engineering for the project, which is eligible for an 80-20 Federal-State partnership grant.
- 8) KDOT's application for Corridor ID 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) The intent of this bill is to use the Passenger Rail Revolving Fund so that no future funding is taken from state highway or intermodal projects. Transfers to the revolving fund are allowable from Federal, private, state and local funding sources. We request that the chief source of transfers will be from the State General Fund whereby tax revenue generated by the Heartland Flyer will flow back into the state general fund.
- 10) Passage of SB 86 is critical so that KDOT may fulfil the financial and contractual commitment to the Corridor ID program to maintain the development plan, which is ahead of schedule. Any delay in meeting the project timeline could result in the Heartland Flyer Extension losing its lead and advantage.
- 11) Furthermore, several corridor communities that anticipate new rail service 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.
- 12) In closing, we recommend the \$5 million fund request. Thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of SB-86.

Mark A. Corrison

Mark Corrison, Board Member
Northern Flyer Alliance, Inc