



Proponent Testimony for SB 86
February 6, 2025
Written Only

Dear Chairman Billinger and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for listening to SB 86 as it will improve the lives and mobility of many Kansans. In addition, it will provide new opportunities and improvement for Interstate-35 that supports our economy by moving commerce in and out of our state and across the country.

As many of you know, I have been an advocate for extending the Heartland Flyer from Oklahoma City to Newton. The Heartland Flyer would close the gap in the middle of the United States after being removed in 1979. This extension will greatly improve passenger travel for many citizens who are either unable to drive, do not wish to drive a vehicle and business travelers that prefer to spend their travel time working while traveling. This is crucial to our Kansas economy and would promote commerce and expand travel opportunities in the states from North to South and East to West.

I have been a commissioner for Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission, MIPRC for the past 12 years. MIPRC is a coalition of Midwest state leaders which work to develop a 21st century intercity passenger rail system. This group partners to coordinate interaction between Midwest state and local officials and public and private sectors. With the help of this coalition, Kansas Department of Transportation was a recipient of Federal Railroad Administration, FRA, grant to develop a surface transportation plan for the Kansas portion to complete the gap between Newton, Kansas and Oklahoma City.

Because of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, BIL, over a billion dollars was prioritized to support rail infrastructure including passenger transportation. Because the Heartland Flyer was the recipient of a Federal Railroad Administration, FRA, grant it puts the Heartland Flyer extension south to Oklahoma City in a good position to receive the 5-year assistance from Amtrak.

The reason SB 86 is important is that it will be a proactive solution to fund the Kansas portion of the track and provide an interest-bearing funding stream for the future.

Sincerely,
Carolyn McGinn