

February 4, 2025

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

Proponent statement in support of SB-86

Senator Billinger and Members of the Committee

We wish to submit this written statement in support of Passenger Rail Service Program bill (SB-86.)

My husband and I are following the bi-state effort to extend the Amtrak Heartland Flyer from Oklahoma City to Newton, Kansas for many years. There have been countless (and this is no exaggeration) news reports and articles about the prospect of expanding passenger rail service in the state. From all indications the extension of the Amtrak Heartland Flyer corridor through south central Kansas will improve transportation and economic vitality in the region, with no significant complexity as a transportation infrastructure project. Last year I learned that the Heartland Flyer Extension was recognized by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in the first round of Corridor ID Program projects.

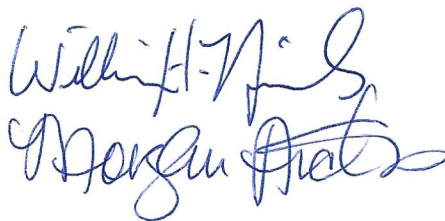
The Kansas Department of Transportation, in partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, is acting as project lead for the Heartland Flyer Extension and has completed the mandatory Service Development Plan. A budget request of \$5 million is provided for in this bill, which will ensure that the passenger rail revolving fund holds funds required for this federal-state partnership. SB-86 bill includes provision for incremental transfers of \$5 million for 3 years that is critical for start-up operations in 2029.

When we heard that Kansas may be in the development pipeline of getting additional Amtrak trains, we immediately appreciated the advantage this would provide to two of our three children who are attending universities in Kansas. If additional Amtrak trains are added in Kansas, perhaps serving the University of Kansas, or Emporia State, or Wichita State, then this option may attract our third child who will be considering where to go to college in a few short years. I am sure that there are likely many other families living in Kansas and the region that would be attracted to this form of safe, economical and convenient transportation. We currently juggle the costs of 2 children away at school, with 2 cars, and the care and maintenance, licensing, insurance, parking fees, and down time of a car parked on campus. These are expenses that could better be spent on their education and expenses while at college.

I ask that the Senate Ways and Means vote in favor of SB-89 and advance this legislation out of committee.

Respectfully,

Morgan and William Nicks
14312 S. Blackfoot Drive
Olathe, Kansas 66062

Handwritten signatures of William H. Nicks and Morgan Nicks in blue ink.