

**Written Testimony Before the Kansas Senate Ways & Means Committee
In Support of Senate Bill 86 (SB86) and passenger rail extension in Kansas
Submitted by Derek Sparks, Greater Oklahoma City Chamber – 2/6/25**

Chairperson Billinger, Vice Chair Claeys, Ranking Member Pettey and members of the Senate Ways & Means Committee,

I am submitting the following written testimony on behalf of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber, a large regional economic development organization located in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Our Chamber has been a long-standing supporter of extending passenger rail service from Oklahoma City to Newton, Kansas and played a significant role in restoring service on the Heartland Flyer from Fort Worth, Texas to our community in 1999. It is a high priority to see the full service restored to our friends in Kansas. We applaud the partnership the State of Kansas has shown in working with counterparts at the Oklahoma Department of Transportation to move passenger rail extension closer to reality.

Specifically, I am writing today **in strong support of SB 86**, which is a critical funding source for a passenger rail extension into Kansas. We believe the transfer of \$5 million in unencumbered funds each year to the passenger rail service revolving fund is an elegant solution, especially given the federal requirements that states must provide matching dollars.

In conclusion, this is only the second occasion that our Chamber has made our voices heard within the halls of Topeka. We are doing so because we believe it is imperative that this important transportation mode be re-established given long-term population growth trends, the need for greater transportation options for Kansans and Oklahomans, as well as the opportunity to connect along the tremendous high-growth megalopolis stretching from Laredo, Texas to Kansas City.

Thank you for your consideration of SB 86 and opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Derek Sparks
Director of Government Relations
Greater OKC Chamber