

**Testimony Before the Kansas Senate Ways & Means Committee In Support of the Heartland Flyer Extension
Presented by Deborah Fischer Stout/Northern Flyer Alliance, Inc.2/6/2025**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of the Heartland Flyer Extension.

Upgrading Kansas' Resume: Why Passenger Rail Is the Right Move Right Now

In a world increasingly defined by competition on every front - mobility, connectivity, and economic opportunity are more important than ever. Passenger rail completes the loop of transportation options that are needed to effectively compete with other states, helping Kansas meet those challenges while binding communities together and fueling economic vitality.

Last year, in an act of foresight and leadership, the Kansas Legislature made a vital investment in the Passenger Rail Revolving Fund, allocating \$5 million toward expanding our state's passenger rail system. This historic move was more than a nod to business opportunities; it was a strategic move, needed for Kansas' future.

Passenger rail represents more than transportation. It is an engine of economic growth, and a lifeline for communities striving to stay connected in an age of both rural isolation and urban sprawl.

The Price of Delay:

Here's the bad news: waiting comes with a BIG price tag. Construction costs continue to rise rapidly.

Every year we delay isn't just wasted time; it's raising costs. Inaction isn't just harmless, it's expensive. Every decade we delay, it costs more. A LOT more. Delaying action is *literally* increasing costs to Kansas taxpayers for a form of transportation we need to compete with other states for both people and business.

Why We Need Passenger Rail Now

- **It Boosts the Economy:** Trains connect small towns and big cities to big opportunities, increasing the state's GDP. Train stations themselves are economic hubs which boost local economies and property values. Whether it's business, tourism, or daily commutes, everyone wins when there's better transportation.
- **It's Inclusive & Accessible:** Not everyone has a car. Passenger rail gives students, seniors, and everyone in-between a way to get where they need to go.

Kansas Deserves Better

Kansas has a choice to make. It can either remain a bystander to the transformative changes that passenger rail offers or seize this opportunity. Our neighbors in Missouri, Colorado, Texas, Michigan and Wisconsin are not waiting to connect their cities and grow their economies with rail transportation. Neither should we.

Financial support for the Heartland Flyer Extension is not just a commitment to a mode of transportation; it is a declaration that we won't let surrounding states take our people, jobs and development.

Thank you,



Deborah Fischer Stout
Northern Flyer Alliance, Inc.