

February 6, 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

Please accept this written statement in support of Passenger Rail Service Program bill (SB-86.)

I have followed 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.

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

Respectfully,

Mary S Blythe

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