



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE INTERIM LEGISLATIVE BUDGET COMMITTEE  
OCTOBER 9, 2012  
MATTHEW ALLEN, CITY MANAGER  
CITY OF GARDEN CITY, KANSAS**

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Madam Chairwoman and members of the Committee thank you for allowing my written testimony to be presented regarding passenger rail service. I am Matthew Allen, City Manager of Garden City, Kansas. The City of Garden City is part of a coalition -- the Southwest Chief Rural Rail Partnership comprised of Kansas cities working together to preserve the Southwest Chief through Kansas. Those cities include Newton, Hutchinson, Dodge City and Garden City. For over a century passenger railroad service has transported the citizens of Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico to locations around the country. Currently those three states are linked by Amtrak service along the Southwest Chief line, which operates between Chicago and Los Angeles. Passenger ridership along this section of the Southwest Chief steadily increases as more and more Kansans take advantage of the convenience passenger rail provides.

Citing maintenance costs and budget priorities Amtrak is contemplating abandoning passenger service through western Kansas, eastern Colorado and northern New Mexico. Amtrak is asking for state and local funds to support maintenance and upgrades. The funds are needed for upgrades to ensure passenger safety.

Just as cities are financially strapped we understand the State has many demands for financial assistance and specifically the state rail fund has very limited dollars available for rail projects. That is why we have undertaken the initiative to formulate the Southwest Chief Rural Rail Partnership -- to bring this matter to the attention of federal officials in Washington and at Amtrak.

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We are working through the Kansas congressional delegation to help explore federal options for solutions and to find out more information from Amtrak on what its specific needs are and to help prioritize the most critical repairs and upgrades so that we can present a specific plan to federal officials who will be directing Amtrak funding or who may be overseeing the grants process.

We will need the State's support to keep passenger rail accessible to the western part of Kansas. As these communities work to identify and secure federal support and funding we will need the State to be fully engaged and supportive.

The economic impact of Amtrak ceasing operations along this section of the Southwest Chief would be substantial and disruptive to the communities and states served by the line, including the loss of jobs.

We have support from the Kansas Congressional delegation and look forward to working with them, BNSF, Amtrak and Colorado and New Mexico to solve this problem. With everyone working together we'll get the job done.

Thank you for allowing my testimony.