

Passenger Rail in KS

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To: Goter, Dale

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Recently you contacted the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to seek advice on how to prepare Kansas to be competitive for Federal funding of passenger rail improvements. This email serves as advice in this regard. The Kansas Department of transportation (KDOT) has been planning for improved passenger rail service. Recently KDOT completed a Service Development Plan (SDP) for expanding passenger rail service in two key corridors: 1) A new day-time service that would connect Kansas City, MO with Fort Worth, TX at speeds up to 79 mph, and serve the markets of Lawrence, Topeka and Wichita KS, in addition to Oklahoma City, OK and 2) A new overnight extension of existing *Heartland Flyer* service that would connect Oklahoma City, the *Heartland Flyer's* current northern terminus, to Newton, KS, and therefore facilitate a connection to the *Southwest Chief*.

In order to build upon the Service Development Plan, FRA recommends that KDOT complete the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for each of these services. Completion of Service Development Planning and NEPA will ensure project readiness for implementation and is consistent with requirements in past FRA program guidance.

Based on the work completed to date, FRA recommends that an Environmental Assessment for each of the service improvement Projects identified in the SDP would be appropriate. Each EA should focus on analyzing both the operational effects along the respective route and individual component project impacts such as stations, track modifications, etc.

Additionally, KDOT can engage in some ongoing activities to help ensure project readiness if/when Project funding becomes available:

- Ensuring that the SDP remains current by revisiting it periodically to identify any need for updating. If time elapses after completion of the NEPA documents, refreshing them periodically is also recommended. This will help ensure KDOT's readiness to pursue funds if/when they become available.
- Developing an implementation plan based on the SDP. The SDP presented different option for service improvements, each with different costs/risks. KDOT can work with local entities and localities to resolve issues with the proposed implementation plan, and conduct the proper capital/financial planning needed to support the service once operational. KDOT can also continue to build coalitions/support for the project that could help streamline delivery in the future.
- Maintain contact with FRA Regional Management team, especially as it related to potential funding opportunities for either the completion of NEPA documents or for construction.

Thank you.

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