

Chair, Senator Mike Petersen

Senate Transportation Committee

Hearing on SB 349 Passenger Rail Service Program

Written Testimony from Mayor, City of Guthrie, OK. 2/7/2024



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Dear Chair Petersen and Committee

I join with the citizens of Guthrie, Oklahoma and North Central Oklahoma in expressing our great enthusiasm and excitement as we envision the expanded use of passenger rail service along the I-35 corridor from Oklahoma into Kansas. The selection of a Federal Railroad Administration planning grant for the expansion from Oklahoma City to Newton is a great step forward in this process. While the initial discussion and perception of the benefits for the proposed expansion reflected the opportunities for significant national access, the more recent discussions have also focused on closer access to services and opportunities in the more immediate locale and region. These discussions have been enhanced by the potential for expanded networking of the passenger rail service in Kansas as reflected in Senate Bill-349.

The citizenry in Guthrie and the surrounding rural areas are delighted about the opportunities for alternate travel modes to the sites opened by the extension of the Heartland Flyer and further enhanced by the potential for additional passenger rail service networks throughout Kansas. The anticipation to attend major college and professional sporting events in Kansas via passenger rail is another significant topic of discussion among local residents. The coordination of the Heartland Flyer with additional rail networks would also provide safe and convenient access to world class art and entertainment venues throughout Kansas. The opportunity for college students, attending academic institutions in Kansas, to have access to timely and economic transportation to and from the Guthrie area is also a desirable outcome for our residents and family members. Additionally, the potential to explore scheduling and pricing comparisons for national and international air transportation from Wichita and Kansas City creates an exciting supplement to the standard departure from the Oklahoma City/Will Rogers Airport.

Clearly, the concept of expanding the Heartland Flyer from OKC to Newton, Kansas would provide robust passenger rail travel options for Guthrie citizens to explore both the East and West Coast opportunities. Additionally, the interlocal connectivity of passenger rail throughout Kansas as envisioned and supported by SB 349, significantly adds to our excitement and potential travel prospects!

Congratulations on your visionary approach to passenger rail systems. The Guthrie community enthusiastically supports your vision and greatly applauds this initiative.


Steven J. Gentling, Mayor

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