Governor Laura Kelly

State Capitol

300 SW 10th Ave., Ste. 241S

Topeka, KS 66612-1590

RE: Heartland Flyer Extension Federal Funding

Governor Kelly~

It has come to our attention that federal funding for the Heartland Flyer Extension may be in jeopardy.

The reasons?

1. Inflexible scoring process in the IKE Transportation Program. The Heartland Flyer Extension is identified in that program. However, it was not scored during the recent 2021 round of local consult meetings. Consequently, **it was not approved** as a project that could be referred for Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) grant funding under the Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act (IIJA).
2. The opportunity for federal development grants includes a federal match and several years of graduated operational support, but those grants are not open ended nor offered exclusively to Kansas. Other states are aggressively seeking similar passenger rail expansion projects. ***In other words, the competition is very stiff.***
3. ***Kansas does not have the option to force the FRA grant schedule to conform to the IKE process timeline*** which appears in this case to be inflexible. The $36 billion available at this time in the IIJA for passenger rail projects may be fully allocated and dispersed in two years – the amount of time it will take for the Heartland Flyer Extension to move through “the process” of being eligible for a state match. If Kansas must wait for its own two-year identification process before it will apply for federal funding, it may force a more costly funding appropriation in the state legislature, significantly dimming its prospects of becoming a reality. ***This is not congruent with KDOT’s stated objective of developing multi-modal projects.***
4. Furthermore, according to IIJA, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) must hear from the states along the Heartland Flyer and Heartland Flyer Extension (this would be state DOT’s, but the addition of the voices of the Governors adds more weight) that the states through which it runs want it to be identified as a “corridor”. ***If this has already been communicated to Governor Kelly’s office, we are restating its vital importance.***

***Once the FRA identifies the route as a “corridor”, that single act opens federal funding opportunities.*** ODOT officials are currently seeking federal guidance on the subject.

Kansas must not miss out on a once in a lifetime federal funding opportunity. And thank you for your leadership in moving this project forward after so many years of waiting for federal funding opportunities. It is within our reach. We only need to take the necessary steps quickly.

Sincerely,

cc:

KDOT Amtrak

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