

## Kansas State Passenger Rail Expansion Development

### **I: Origins:**

Interest in Intercity Passenger Rail expansion began as “Visioneering Wichita” planning initiative for regional development that followed a series of public meetings in 2004. This took root when a small group of citizens and community leaders began to meet, organize and study how passenger rail service could be restored in the state of Kansas. The group became associated with other organizations promoting expansion of passenger rail service north through Texas and Oklahoma. An alliance developed to promote the concept for Northern Flyer Amtrak service that would either connect with or become a part of an expanded Heartland Flyer service.

Awareness of passenger rail the initiative grew steadily and by early 2007 media attention on television, radio and in the newspapers began regular coverage of the expansion effort.

### **II: Formal Development:**

**2007:** The alliance also began to hold public meetings across the state. In late July, 2007 one such meeting was held in Wichita, attended by a few state legislators, and, Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) officials. The first official action taken was a letter of inquiry submitted by KDOT to Amtrak Government Affairs seeking guidance from Amtrak for a formal feasibility study of intercity Amtrak passenger rail service for Kansas-Oklahoma-Texas.

The Northern Flyer Alliance through its lobbyist and executive board members began meeting with city councils and commissioners, county legislative bodies, community leaders and the public. Over a two year period over 50 resolutions requesting passenger rail service development were delivered to the governors of three states, the respective legislative bodies and the state departments of transportation.

**2008-2009:** Senator Greta Goodwin secured funding to pay for an Amtrak Feasibility Study which was delayed for a time and got a late start in a queue of similar studies being conducted across the country.

The Northern Flyer Alliance and other stakeholders met with Kansas department of Transportation in Topeka in March to recommend content for a service development study.

**NFA Presentation:** NFA participated in T-Link community and stakeholder meetings in September, 2008 and gave a presentation to at the T-Links meeting on October 15, 2008 urging inclusion of passenger rail development in the Comprehensive 10 year state transportation plan

**NFA Presentation:** NFA met with the Senate transportation Committee to issue a resolution in support of Kansas Department of Transportation effort to study and development an intercity passenger rail program

**NFA Presentation:** The Northern Flyer Alliance gave a presentation to Special Legislative Committee September 29, 2010. The transportation committees received a passenger rail return on investment study (ROI) completed by the University of Kansas School of business that was funded by a private grant.

Senators Dick Kelsey and Ty Masterson introduced SB 409 that authorized a state passenger rail program and dedicated rail fund under KDOT authority and administration. Representative JoAnn Pottorff and Melody McCray Miller introduced HB 2552 that authorized the state of Kansas membership in the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission.

**NFA Presentation:** The Northern Flyer Alliance gave presentations to the Kansas House and Senate Transportation Committee on February 3, 2010 and the Senate Transportation Committee on March 3, 2010.

Following several meetings and testimony by stakeholders both bills passed with super-majorities during the 2010 legislative session.

Amtrak delivered the Passenger Rail Feasibility study in March 2010. NFA met with KDOT, AMTRAK and BNSF representatives in a private discussion of the study and next steps.

KDOT applied for a Federal DOT grant for a Service Development Plan to begin the next required step in the development process. The SDP was funded with a Federal-State match with Kansas and Oklahoma jointly splitting the state match. In conjunction with an SDP requirement KDOT also completed a State Rail Plan with the mandatory sections outlining passenger rail service development. The resulting Rail Vision is included here:

**“The future Kansas rail system will provide safe, reliable mobility for people and goods. In addition, it will contribute to a more balanced transportation system, economic growth, a better environment and energy conservation. The State’s rail infrastructure and levels of service will expand to provide increased transportation efficiency, cost effectiveness, accessibility, capacity, and intermodal connectivity to meet freight and passenger market demands through an investment plan which includes public-private partnerships.”**

NFA attended a stakeholders discussion of the study in July 2010 hosted by KDOT.

**2011:** KDOT applied for a TIGER grant improve freight service on the proposed corridor, but did not receive the award.

NFA participated in Governor’s Summit on Flint Hills development on May 18, 2011.

The Service Development Plan study began in the summer of 2010 and was delivered in late 2011.

NFA met with KDOT on December 1, 2011 to discuss the release of the Service development Plan in a private closed meeting.

**2012:** KDOT was encouraged to seek TIGER IV grants that would facilitate initiation of next phase studies for environmental assessment and clearance and preliminary engineering. The window of application was short and there was not enough time to develop an application following the late delivery of the Service Development Plan.

**NFA Presentation:** NFA testified before the Senate and House Transportation committees on February 3, 2012 and again February 8, 2012, urging KDOT Application for TIGER grant funding for passenger rail development.

**NFA Presentation:** NFA was invited to present to the Senate Transportation budget subcommittee on February 13, 2012.

### **III: Interim Study Committee**

**The several purposes of the interim study committee could include the following:**

1. To plan and prepare and position Kansas for future Federal passenger rail funding. Specifically, to partner with adjoining states to find funding for the last federally required planning studies, including an Environmental Impact Study and Preliminary Engineering. Once completed, the entire corridor from Kansas City to San Antonio will be eligible for HSIPR capital investment when this federal program is funded in the future.
2. Determine how costs have changed due to host railroad improvements that are now complete. Some of these improvements were cost elements inserted in the 2011 SDP.
3. Establish and coordinate the joint planning and development between KDOT-ODOT-TX-Dot for proposed service, as well as CoDOT and NMDOT for maintenance of the Southwest Chief. Improvements made on the corridor from Kansas City to Dallas/Fort Worth also need to be factored as cost reductions in the original SDP.
4. Plan legislation for the 2013 legislative session to finance capital improvement for both existing and proposed passenger rail service in Kansas.
5. Receive proposals for private-public development of passenger rail expansion.
6. Discuss proposed changes to existing Amtrak Service in Kansas, including the implications of both the loss of Southwest Chief service as well as its possible rerouting.

**IV: The following list of City Councils, County Legislature, and Civic organizations formally requested intercity passenger rail service development by the Kansas Department of Transportation and the Governor.**

<u>Cities</u>		<u>Counties</u>	<u>Civic Bodies</u>
Arkansas City	Newton	Chase	Chambers
BelAire	Osage City	Cowley	- Arkansas City
Bonner Springs	Oxford	Harvey	- Chase County
Cassoday	Park City	Lyon	- Mulvane
Clearwater	Peabody	Shawnee	- Newton
Cottonwood Falls	Rose Hill	Sumner	- Winfield
Derby	Sedgwick		
Edwardsville	Strong City		Camp Wood YMCA
Eldorado	Topeka		Grand Central Hotel
Emporia	Udall		Santa Fe Railroad Retirees
Halstead	Valley Center		Sumner County EDC
Haysville	Wellington		National Assoc. Railroad
Hesston	Wichita		Veterans and Retired Employees
Lawrence	Winfield		Wichita Downtown Development
McPherson			Tall Grass Prairie National Preserve
Mulvane			