



18 May 2023

Governor Laura Kelly
Capitol, 300 SW 10th Ave., Ste. 241S
Topeka, KS 66612-1590

RE: Heartland Flyer Extension

Governor Kelly:

Extension of the Heartland Flyer is an initiative the Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce has supported, and we applaud Kansas and Oklahoma for working together to seek Corridor Identification for an extended route from Oklahoma City, OK to Newton, KS. However, we understand there has been a pause in the completion of the Service Development Plan. This pause gives us another opportunity for federal funds currently available, which could **double the economic impact and tax revenue generation** for both rural communities and states by improving the service.

As originally proposed, the current Heartland Flyer would be extended from Oklahoma City to Newton, Kansas establishing a seamless connection between the Amtrak Texas Eagle and Southwest Chief trains that serve Fort Worth, TX, Newton, KS and Kansas City, MO.

We are asking for a **second frequency** that would depart in Fort Worth in the morning and travel northbound to Newton, KS arriving between 4 and 5 p.m.

A **second frequency** on the full Heartland Flyer and its northward extension would do the following:

- 1) Much like Missouri's second frequency on the River Runner, it would allow Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas the opportunity to generate enough tax revenues to fully pay for the new service.
- 2) When Missouri cut service from two trains a day to one, ridership was cut 50 percent, but the cut in cost was only 30-40 percent. A second frequency generates more in tax revenues than it costs to operate the train.
- 3) A single frequency allows for daytime arrival in southern Oklahoma and Texas. A second frequency would allow for daytime arrival in northern Oklahoma and Kansas.
- 4) This second frequency would further Amtrak's stated goal of a second frequency on the Heartland Flyer as identified in the Amtrak ConnectsUS 2035 Vision Statement from 2021.
- 5) A second frequency on the Heartland Flyer and its full Extension north will benefit the region, including increasing ridership on the Missouri River Runner, the Texas Eagle and the Southwest Chief, bringing both economic growth and improved service.
- 6) See Executive Summary of Missouri's Economic Impact Study for evidence of above.

This vital **second connection** is essential for improving Amtrak service in the Heartland of the United States for a rapidly growing mega-region that includes Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. Part of this astonishing growth has occurred during the early planning and evaluation of the proposed Heartland Flyer Extension, which is among the most promising proposed projects of the FRA Corridor ID program. In consideration of this major economic opportunity, we ask that the extension north to Newton be increased to **two frequencies**.

Sincerely,

John Rolfe
President and CEO

Cc: Governor of Oklahoma
Governor of Texas

KS Department of Transportation
OK Department of Transportation
TX Department of Transportation

Pete Buttegieg, USDOT
Federal Railroad Administration