

April 7, 2022

The Honorable Amit Bose  
Administrator  
Federal Railroad Administration  
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Bose:

As chambers of commerce playing a key economic development role in an array of Oklahoma communities, we are contacting you to express our emphatic support for re-connecting passenger rail service between Oklahoma City, OK and Newton, KS, and ensure the I-35 corridor from Ft. Worth, TX to Newton is included in the Corridor Development Plan. This extension is a long-held economic development and transportation objective to re-connect numerous Oklahoma cities north to the national network and points across the nation.

After much effort, "The Heartland Flyer" was re-connected between Oklahoma City and Ft. Worth in 1999 and has served as an important transportation asset. We feel the "Heartland" in the name encapsulates the significance of having enhanced passenger rail opportunities in our region – the Heartland of the nation - connecting both coasts with commerce and travel. A full re-connection of this line would provide increased transportation choices and economic opportunity for our residents and businesses.

Restoring the Heartland Flyer between Texas and Kansas is also an important means of fully connecting the nation's fastest-growing economic development corridor located along Interstate 35 (Laredo, TX – Kansas City, MO) boasting over 40 million population, 10 million jobs, and a 28 percent growth rate. Currently, the gap in rail service between Oklahoma City and Newton must be addressed to ensure we take advantage of the opportunity to enhance our links with this enormous and growing economic super-region.

We believe this is a historic moment, given the unprecedented funding levels included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), to make the case for restoring passenger rail service. Oklahoma City has grown to the 22<sup>nd</sup> largest city in the nation and is one of the six cities in the nation to have grown by more than 100,000 residents in the last decade. This level of growth justifies increased transportation options. Moreover, as a state with many rural areas and regional cities, we believe having the ability to better connect urban, suburban, and rural Oklahoma is critically important. Many of these communities would benefit from the re-development of train depots and downtown areas, and the option for residents to use passenger rail to travel for business, work, pleasure, and to medical appointments.

In conclusion, the undersigned Oklahoma chambers of commerce would like to strongly underscore our commitment to working with your agency, the Oklahoma Congressional Delegation, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, and other partners to achieve the restoration of passenger rail service between the central Oklahoma region and Newton, KS. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

<b>Greater Oklahoma City Chamber</b>	<b>State Chamber of Oklahoma</b>
<b>Norman Chamber of Commerce</b>	<b>Edmond Area Chamber of Commerce</b>
<b>Ponca City Chamber of Commerce</b>	<b>Guthrie Chamber of Commerce</b>
<b>Ardmore Chamber of Commerce</b>	<b>Moore Chamber of Commerce</b>

CC: The Honorable Tim Gatz, Secretary of Transportation, State of Oklahoma  
Todd Stennis, Senior Manager of Government Relations, Amtrak