

REAP | Regional Economic Area Partnership

May 18, 2022

The Honorable Amit Bose, Administrator
c/o Peter Schwartz, Chief, Project Engineering and Transportation Planning Division
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Amtrak Heartland Flyer Extension-Corridor Identification Designation docket number
FRA -2022-0031

Dear Administrator Bose:

The Regional Economic Area Partnership (REAP) is contacting you to express our 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 and Kansas communities north to the national network via the Southwest Chief at Newton, Kansas, and points across the nation.

REAP is comprised of over 35 city and county governments in ten counties of South Central Kansas, including Butler, Cowley, Harper, Harvey, Kingman, McPherson, Pratt, Reno, Sedgwick, and Sumner, as well as multiple school districts and higher education institutions. These jurisdictions and education partners have voluntarily joined together to guide state and national actions that affect economic development in the region and to consider and adopt joint actions among member governments that enhance the regional economy.

The long-awaited, full re-connection of this corridor in America's Heartland would provide increased transportation choices and economic opportunity for rural and urban residents and businesses alike. With its long-term value of enhancing economic growth within the I-35 Corridor megaregion, and near-term benefit for improving the Amtrak National system, this Corridor Designation is the first step in this vital 400-mile re-connection.

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

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must be addressed to ensure we take advantage of the opportunity to enhance our links with this enormous and growing economic super-region.

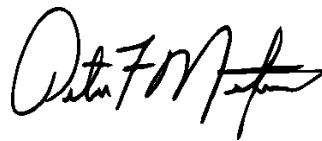
Wichita has grown to the 48th largest city in the nation and Oklahoma City has grown to the 22nd and is one of the six cities in the nation to have grown by more than 100,000 residents in the last decade. This level of growth justifies increased transportation options. Moreover, as a region with many rural areas and regional cities, we believe having the ability to better connect urban, suburban and rural Kansas and 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.

We respectfully request Designated Corridor Identification from Fort Worth, Texas to Newton, Kansas.

Respectfully,



Mayor Tom Brown
City of McPherson, Kansas
REAP Chair



Commissioner Peter F. Meitzner
Sedgwick County, Kansas
REAP Vice Chair

Cc: Governor Laura Kelly
Governor Kevin Stitt
Secretary Julie Lorenz, Kansas Department of Transportation
Secretary Tim Gatz, Oklahoma Department of Transportation
Derrick James & Todd Stennis, Amtrak