



June 13, 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:

On behalf of the City of Wichita, Kansas, I would like 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 and Kansas communities north to the national network via the Southwest Chief at Newton, Kansas, and points across the nation. **(See Figure 1)**

Wichita is one of the largest cities in the United States without Amtrak service. Currently, the Eisenhower Airport has few direct flights, however this extension of train service would grow the catchment area of our airport, thereby increasing passengers by pulling from northern Oklahoma and other parts of Kansas. This additional traffic to the Eisenhower Airport would increase local business productivity and ultimately help us bring more non-stop flights to the Wichita business community.

Wichita State University offers in-state tuition to students along the I-35 Megaregion, effectively increasing its enrollment, but that increase is hampered by lack of easy, affordable transportation options for students. Wichita is home to one of the top skilled workforces for advanced manufacturing in the country and companies across the country are looking to move here, especially from the tech industry. The Heartland Flyer Extension is vital to the continued success of these investments and plans for growth in our region.

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.

This corridor falls within the I-35 Megaregion which is centered along an 1100-mile corridor with a resident population of forty million in four states. (See Figure 2)

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.

Missouri's Department of Transportation studied their River Runner train in 2021. At two round trip trains/day, what they discovered was an almost 2:1 tax revenue generation over the operational cost of the train. Based on several studies, Kansas and Oklahoma can also expect tax revenues greater than the cost to operate the Heartland Flyer Extension. (See Figure 3)

We believe this is a historic moment, given the unprecedented funding levels included in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, to make the case for restoring passenger rail service. While Wichita has grown to the 48th largest city in the nation, 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.

Sincerely,



Dr. Brandon Whipple
Mayor, City of Wichita

Cc: Governors of KS and OK
DOT Secretary Lorenz, Kansas
DOT Executive Director Gatz, Oklahoma
Amtrak, Derrick James & Todd Stennis
500 W. Jackson Blvd
2nd Floor
Chicago, IL 60661

Northern Flyer Alliance, Inc.
876 N. Diane Dr.
Olathe, KS 66061

Figure 1:

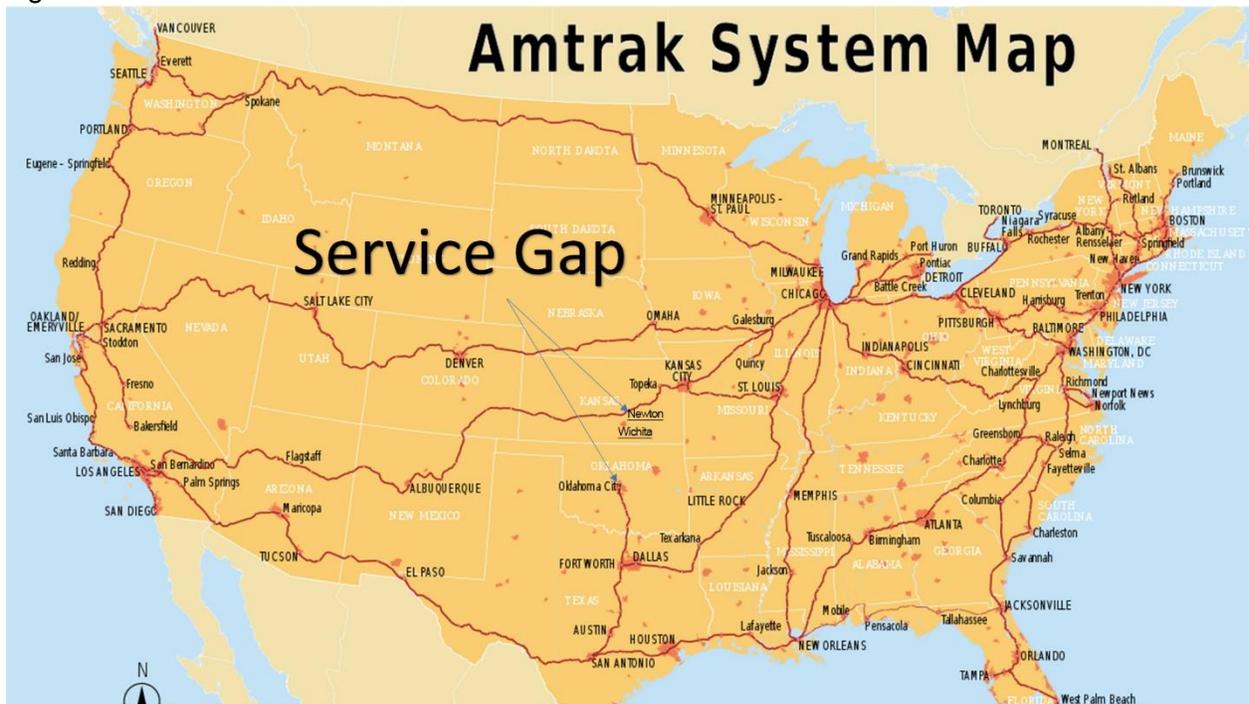


Figure 2:

I-35 Megaregion



Figure 3: MODOT Study of River Runner train, 2021:

