

News Release



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KANSAS ASKS AMTRAK TO STUDY ADDITIONAL PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE Trains between Kansas City and Oklahoma City to be considered

TOPEKA and CHICAGO – The nation’s passenger rail corporation has been asked by the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) to identify what would be needed to provide state-sponsored rail service between Kansas City, Mo., and Oklahoma City, via Newton, Kan.

The route between Kansas City and Newton is served by the Amtrak *Southwest Chief* (Trains 3 & 4), which stops in the early morning hours in Lawrence and Topeka and operates daily between Chicago and Los Angeles. The popular *Heartland Flyer* (Trains 821 & 822) operates daily between Fort Worth and Oklahoma City and is supported by the Oklahoma and Texas state transportation departments.

The study will include a connection between the *Southwest Chief* and an extended *Heartland Flyer* at Newton; a further extension of the *Heartland Flyer* to Kansas City; or another new service.

“State-supported routes are the fastest growing part of our business,” said Amtrak President and CEO Alex Kummant. “We have carried out several studies in the Midwest and elsewhere in the last few years, with Illinois doubling the size of its state rail program since 2006 and California continuing to rack-up growth that has contributed to five straight years of record Amtrak ridership.”

“Linking the *Southwest Chief* route to the *Heartland Flyer* route at Newton and Kansas City seems to be a logical connection within Amtrak’s national system and is worthy of further study and analysis,” said KDOT Secretary Deb Miller. “Before we can make any decisions about expanding passenger rail service, we need to examine a number of issues including cost, schedule, and the likelihood of travel delays due to freight traffic on the line.”

The cost of the KDOT-funded study is expected to range between \$150,000 and \$200,000. Amtrak expects to begin the study in mid to late summer and complete it by the third quarter of 2009.

The study will consider potential schedules and existing Amtrak stations, as well as railcar and locomotive availability among other start-up costs. The study will also consider the capital needs for rail improvements to accommodate passenger service and increase capacity for greater freight movement on tracks owned by BNSF Railway.

KDOT staff met with key legislators and stakeholders last week for their input on the study and will now work with Amtrak to finalize the factors to be evaluated.

KDOT has received a number of letters and petitions expressing support for the expansion. The Kansas cities that have officially expressed support for expanded passenger rail service to date include Arkansas City, Strong City, Lawrence, Winfield and Emporia. The Newton and Winfield chambers of commerce also have expressed support for the service.

A route between Oklahoma City and Newton would likely include Wichita, which has not been served by Amtrak trains since the 1979 discontinuance of the *Lone Star*. Emporia has not been served by Amtrak trains since that stop by the *Southwest Chief* was eliminated in 1997.

About Amtrak

Amtrak provides intercity passenger rail services to more than 500 destinations in 46 states on a 21,000-mile route system. For schedules, fares and information, passengers may call 800-USA-RAIL or visit Amtrak.com.

About KDOT

KDOT is responsible for more than 9,500 miles of highway in Kansas. The agency also provides support for short-line railroads, local road improvements, community airports, and public transit. KDOT is nearing the completion of a \$13.2 billion, ten-year Comprehensive Transportation Program passed by the Legislature in 1999. For more information, visit www.ksdot.org.

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