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NEWS RELEASE

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KDOT Takes First Steps Seeking Passenger Rail Funds

On July 10, 2009, the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDGT) submitted three grant pre-applications to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) seeking more than \$17 million under the High-Speed/Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) program. HSIPR was created to distribute American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds and U.S. Department of Transportation appropriations for passenger rail investments.

“No funds will be awarded from the pre-applications,” said John Maddox, KDGT Rail/Freight Manager. “They can be considered expressions of interest to apply for grants later in the year,” he added. KDGT submitted a pre-application in each of three funding categories called Tracks.

A Track 1 pre-application was submitted for a \$6.95 million project on BNSF Railway’s tracks between Barclay and Emporia to replace 19 miles of jointed rail with continuous welded rail and install heavier rail on a passing siding. The section of track serves Amtrak’s Southwest Chief, and the improvements will allow Amtrak to operate at speeds up to 79 mph on the section as opposed to the current 60 mph speed restriction. These grants are supported by ARRA funds and do not require a match, so KDGT requested 100 percent federal funding.

A Track 3 pre-application was filed by KDGT for a \$500,000 project to prepare a comprehensive Service Development Plan (SDP) for implementing state-supported Amtrak service between Kansas City and Oklahoma City. The SDP would build on the findings of the Amtrak Expansion Feasibility Study which is expected to be complete by the end of 2009. Among other topics, the SDP would include identifying capacity investments required to accommodate faster passenger trains on today’s heavily used freight only tracks. The Amtrak study was not intended to be detailed enough to serve as an SDP. An SDP will be required for

KDOT to apply for potential HSIPR grants in the future, if funding is available. KDOT offered to contribute \$250,000 to the cost of the project because these grants are not supported by ARRA funds and require at least a 50 percent match.

KDOT also filed a Track 2 pre-application for \$10 million to upgrade signal timing and grade crossings along the section of BNSF track between Newton and the Kansas/Oklahoma state line. This section carries only freight trains, which have a speed limit of 64 mph. Potential new Amtrak service between Kansas City and Oklahoma City would operate at speeds up to 79 mph so the signal timing and crossing approaches will have to be upgraded, in addition to other capacity investments to the all-freight line that would be identified in the SDP above. These grants are supported by ARRA funds and do not require a match, so KDOT requested 100 percent federal funding.

The next step is for FRA's HSIPR team to review all the pre-applications it received to verify applicant and project eligibility and selection of the appropriate Track. FRA will also provide the applicants with a general assessment of the proposed projects. Final grant applications are due August 24, 2009, for Tracks 1 and 3 and October 2, 2009, for Track 2. KDOT will work with FRA to determine the appropriate approach for developing the final grant applications. FRA anticipates announcing the final awards by the end of the year.

Copies of the completed pre-applications are available on the KDOT website at www.ksdot.org then click on Other Transport Modes – Rail and scroll to the Passenger Rail section.

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