

SAN □ Sustainability Action Network

A Kansas not-for-profit organization

P.O.Box 1064

Lawrence, KS 66044

20 June 2008

re: Purchase of BNSF Depot

Lawrence City Commission

6th & Massachusetts St.

Lawrence, KS 66044

Dear Mayor Dever & Commission:

As a regional organization promoting ecological sustainability, we urge the Commission to accept ownership transfer of the BNSF Depot so Lawrence will be positioned to accommodate the expansion of passenger rail service.

Aside from ocean transport, rail service is the most energy efficient mode, and the United States is now experiencing a resurgence of passenger rail service. The inexorable rise in gasoline prices is accelerating the shift from auto use to options such as rail, bicycle and transit for both utilitarian and recreational needs.

Amtrak serves 25million annual passengers, a number bound to increase with the Congressional approval of \$15billion to expand the network. Ridership was up 12% in May this year, a record for Amtrak's 37 year history. Though President Bush amazingly called for a 40% cut in Amtrak funding, this authorization passed both houses by a veto-proof margin.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/nation/bal-amtrak0611,0,2335081.story>

For the Amtrak system to respond to this increased ridership pressure, it will need both technological and logistical support. Local facilities that are convenient and well maintained will play a key roll in a successful expansion. So this opportunity for Lawrence to acquire the BNSF Depot comes at a very opportune time.

SAN hopes the Commission chooses to partner with the U.S. Congress, with the Amtrak Board, and with other localities to develop affordable and efficient travel options for our citizens. Whichever project goals may emerge for the Depot redevelopment – public, non-profit or mixed-use - SAN stresses that the Commission preserve as highest priority any and all options for future passenger rail service. We commend the Commission for your interest.

Sincerely,

Michael Almon

SAN Board of Directors



The Northern Flyer Alliance

Evan Stair, Oklahoma Director . 517 Claremont . Norman, OK . 73069 . 405.366.8957 . www.northflyer.org

Honorable Mayor Mike Dever
P.O. Box 708
Lawrence, KS 66044

June 18, 2008

Honorable Mayor Dever:

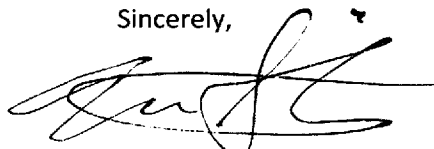
It has come to my attention that your city is considering the purchase of the Lawrence Santa Fe depot from the BNSF Railway. I would like to voice my support for this purchase as a part of our overall Amtrak expansion effort. The expanded rail route would provide Lawrence with four Amtrak stops a day, one in the direction of Albuquerque/Los Angeles, one in the direction of Wichita/Oklahoma City/Dallas/Austin, and two in the direction of Kansas City/Chicago/St. Louis.

Placing the city of Lawrence in a position of readiness for expansion will show state legislators and congresspersons that your community is serious in your support as initially voiced in your city resolution dated February 26. This is vital to the success of what we hope is a shared mission of improved regional public transportation, through the development of multi-modal transportation hubs. Our organization sees the Santa Fe depot in Lawrence as a potential multi-modal transportation hub connecting transportation services as varied as Amtrak, City Buses, Intercity Buses, and future commuter rail with the combined Lawrence and University of Kansas Community. Its location near downtown and the Lawrence Riverwalk are ideal for the development of a multi-modal hub.

Being a resident of Norman, Oklahoma, I am qualified to speak of the many advantages of city depot ownership. The city of Norman owns its former Santa Fe depot. Norman's population (approximately 100,000) is similar to that of Lawrence (95,000). Norman is close to a large metropolitan area as is Lawrence. Norman is also home to the University of Oklahoma, a Big XII member.

Lawrence does differ from Norman in one important respect. Lawrence is an early morning stop on the Long Distance Southwest Chief Amtrak route. Some 3,732 persons used the Lawrence depot in FY2007. Some 11,033 used the Norman depot during the same year. Our depot hosts a short corridor daylight train, the Heartland Flyer. With expansion, the number of passengers using the Lawrence depot could swell to over 14,000. I base this on the similarities of the communities and dissimilar existing national/regional passenger train demographics. Economic development of this area of Lawrence could be enhanced with city depot ownership and associated Amtrak expansion which must happen if we are to remain a mobile society.

Sincerely,



Evan Stair

RECEIVED

JUN 23 2008

CITY MANAGERS OFFICE
LAWRENCE, KS

The Official Newsletter of the Northern Flyer Alliance

FEDERAL MATCHING LEGISLATION PASSES

(by – Mark Corrison)

H.R. 6003: Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (80-20 Federal Match)

The long awaited House of Representatives version of SB294, bearing the same name, passed 311 to 104 June 11. This legislation contains provisions for capital projects and provides the foundation upon which Kansas and Oklahoma can develop new intercity passenger rail services. The House and Senate will work out details in conference prior to a final vote later in the year. This process takes time, but may actually work to the advantage of Oklahoma and Kansas. Time is needed to coordinate studies and legislative activities. The Alliance will follow developments closely and keep membership informed as to progress.

A separate bill, the **Passenger Rail Improvement and Reform Act of 2005**, was signed by President Bush late last year. This Act provides a 50-50 federal/state capital funding mechanism. The act is being administered by the Federal Railroad Administration. March 18, 2008 marked the first day states could submit grant applications.

Summary: The Alliance will be spending significant time and resources this summer on an informational campaign directed toward the Kansas and Oklahoma legislatures. Dissemination of legislation details will require much effort, but the news is exciting and important as we prepare to combat rapidly increasing fuel costs.

CITY RESOLUTIONS::JUNE 10TH OKC SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHT Alliance ACTIVITIES

(by – Evan Stair, PassengerRailOK.org, Executive Director)

City resolutions continue to flood into Northern Flyer Alliance offices. Resolutions are highlighted on the NorthFlyer.org website under the **Actions** link. The cities of Newton, Wichita, Topeka, Norman, Edmond, and Perry have passed resolutions since our last report. We believe support is strong due to the promise of economic development opportunities and oil price concerns. Oil will likely reach \$200 a barrel by early next year.

A joint legislative symposium was organized by NFA Legislative Director Bob Kemper. It was held June 10. KDOT/ODOT/Kansas and Oklahoma legislators and civic officials were on hand to discuss the KDOT study. Lonnie Blaydes from Trinity Railway Express was on hand to discuss ideas regarding how to develop passenger rail corridors such as the successful routes between Dallas and Fort Worth and the New Mexico Rail Runner.

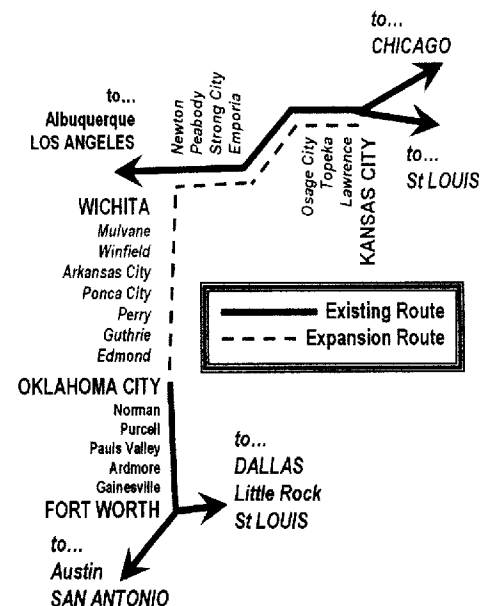
KANSAS PASSENGER RAIL STUDY (by – Evan Stair)

On February 18 The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) officially requested a feasibility study from Amtrak. Four different scenarios will be examined over the proposed 606 mile corridor:

1. **Newton – Fort Worth** (on present Heartland Flyer schedule)(no additional train sets)(3am connection with SW Chief)
2. **Kansas City – Fort Worth** (daylight)(an additional train set required)
3. **Oklahoma City – Fort Worth** (daylight)(No Change in Heartland Flyer schedule)
4. **Segmented: Wichita – Kansas City/ Wichita – Oklahoma City**(daylight)(No Change in Heartland Flyer)

NFA- AMTRAK MEETING (by – Evan Stair)

Bob Kemper and Evan Stair met with Amtrak Government affairs department staffers Ray Lang and Derrick James June 16. The meeting was intended to build comfort levels between the Alliance and Amtrak. The AECOM study process, timelines, and Amtrak Government Affairs activities were discussed. We learned that following study completion, Amtrak Government affairs will become more officially involved. It is important that the relationship



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grow as the legislative funding process will be the most difficult hurdle to overcome in the years to come. We want to ensure that the process has the best chance to work and we believe that we can be beneficial to Amtrak's government affairs staff in this way.

ALBUQUERQUE GREAT AMERICAN STATIONS

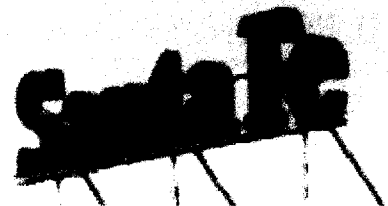
(by Carey Maynard-Moody, NFA Depots)

(editor's note:) Carey Maynard-Moody, Northern Flyer Alliance, Depots, attended Amtrak's Albuquerque Great American Stations (<http://www.greatamericanstations.org/>) workshop May 6. Maynard-Moody is also a founder of Depot Redux, the Lawrence, Kansas initiative to restore the 1950's era Santa Fe depot in town. Here is her report:

Representatives from Winslow, Kingman, Needles, Flagstaff, **AZ**; Raton, La Junta, Albuquerque, Trinidad, and Raton, **NM**; Kirkwood, **MO**; Dodge City and Hutchison, **KS** were in attendance at Amtrak's Great American Station workshop in Albuquerque. Lawrence was represented through the NFA and Depot Redux. Most participants boarded Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* at their home town depot along the route. I noted with interest how depot condition varied. It was the first rail voyage for some of the 30 participants. Private rail cars and sleeping accommodations were provided for meeting participants with an open platform observation to watch the miles click by. While covering the distance, all appreciated the beautiful western landscape. The rail-based view west of Dodge City is breathtaking, especially over Raton Pass. It stays glorious and riveting, all the way to Albuquerque.

The Great American Stations Civic Conversation Workshop topics included an ADA review, funding, and promotion. The ADA presentation included a platform specification/ regulation review. Free depot directional signage and signage standards for streets were reviewed. Depot restoration case studies (Meridian, MS and Dodge City, KS) were presented. A Seattle-based artist, J. Craig Thorp, spoke to how design and image can be used to promote depot restoration projects.

The most important part of the trip was the networking that occurred during the journey. Amtrak Government Affairs officials, including the department VP, were onboard. Remarkable "Civic Conversations" occurred between Amtrak, BNSF officials, and workshop participants both on board as well as in Albuquerque. Community leaders swapped depot defense stories. Officials recommended a shift of focus for Depot Redux from city government to economic development and developers to help with the Lawrence depot ownership transition (BNSF Railway to a restoration-friendly party.)



A BNSF Railway contractor scrapped this neon sign from the Lawrence depot several years ago.



Lawrence depot circa 1995. (Both Photos, Evan Stair)

Rail Runner - Commuter Rail in Albuquerque

I was especially thrilled locally by the Rail Runner . <http://www.nmrailrunner.com> This is the new commuter rail line that will eventually run to Santa Fe. This congestion and air mitigation project, began twenty years ago. It inspires me with its vision, wisdom and perseverance. Governor Richardson understands transportation alternatives and how they dovetail with economic development. Kansas desperately needs leaders who are passenger rail champions. I loved watching the Rail Runner pull out of the beautiful Alvarado Intermodal Transportation Station precisely at 6:30 AM every morning, heading east and west. While I thoroughly enjoyed viewing the drifting hot air balloons, the mountains and the beautiful city square from my 18th floor room window in the Hyatt, none of them inspired me like the Rail Runner. It is a dream come true.

That's why I made this rail journey. Like all of you, I want to help make a dream come true. Times have changed. There has never been a better time to *Get Back to the Future* using passenger rail. It's going to be a very long and challenging journey, requiring exceptional perseverance.