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LAWRENCE, KS

Mark Parkinson, Governor  
Deb Miller, Secretary

<http://www.ksdot.org>

August 31, 2010

Dear Passenger Rail Stakeholder,

I am writing to provide you with an update on progress that has been made on work to expand passenger rail service in Kansas. As you know, KDOT conducted public officials and public meetings at potential station stop cities during May and June. I want to thank those of you who attended those meetings and shared your thoughts about expanded passenger rail service.

Enclosed you will find a summary of what we heard from visitors at these meetings – in Lawrence, Wichita, Ark City, Newton, Emporia, Topeka and Shawnee. Comments were wide ranging but generally supported an increase of passenger rail service in Kansas.

The next stage of our work has begun with the selection of Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB), a transportation consulting firm, to develop two Service Development Plans (SDPs). These SDPs will be detailed business plans that outline the steps necessary to expand passenger rail service as well as the necessary operational details. PB will analyze two service alternatives: #1, a nighttime service from Oklahoma City to Newton and #3, a daytime stand-alone service between Kansas City and Fort Worth. We expect the completion of the SDPs by the fall of 2011.

While the development of SDPs will be an important milestone, it will not be the last step of the process. Legislative and gubernatorial action will also be needed in Kansas, Oklahoma and perhaps Texas (depending on the alternative selected) for the initiative to move forward. Once this approval is obtained, steps will be taken to complete negotiations and agreements, conduct necessary environmental reviews, perform infrastructure upgrades as well as a number of other tasks to implement the service.

Again, thank you for your interest in our work to study the possibility of expanding passenger rail service in Kansas. If you have questions or need more information, please contact John Maddox, KDOT's Freight/Rail manager at (785) 296-3228 or Tom Hein, KDOT's District 5 Public Affairs Manager at (316) 660-4990.

Sincerely,

Dennis R. Slimmer, P.E.  
Chief of Transportation Planning

Attachment

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# Summary of Passenger Rail Meetings

## Meetings held May and June 2010

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) held a series of public meetings to discuss expanding Kansas passenger rail service and to seek input on four alternatives for doing so as identified in an Amtrak passenger rail feasibility study.

Attendees at each meeting could watch an informational video on the recently completed Amtrak feasibility study and the four passenger rail alternatives under consideration, review display boards with information about the alternatives, talk with KDOT and Amtrak staff about the options and provide their opinions through a written survey. Approximately 333 people attended the meetings and 245 people returned surveys.

Meetings were held in seven communities with potential station stops during May and June, 2010. Each meeting presented four alternatives for input:

- **Alternative 1**—Newton to Fort Worth, Texas. Extends Heartland Flyer from Oklahoma City to Newton, Kansas, and provides nighttime service through Kansas. Start-up cost: \$156 million.
- **Alternative 2**—Kansas City to Fort Worth, Texas. Extends Heartland Flyer from Oklahoma City to Kansas City and provides nighttime service through Kansas. Start-up cost: \$317 million.
- **Alternative 3**—Kansas City to Fort Worth, Texas. New service between Kansas City and Ft. Worth. Stand alone daytime service. Start-up cost: \$479 million.
- **Alternative 4**—Kansas City to Oklahoma City. New service between Kansas City and Oklahoma City. Stand alone daytime service. Start-up cost: \$309 million.

### Moving Forward

While the survey did not directly ask for a vote on the alternatives, it did ask for thoughts on each of the alternatives. Not all who filled out a survey made a clear choice of preference. All of the alternatives received a level of support from some who filled out a survey, as shown in Figure 1 to the right.

Alternatives 1 and 3 were the most popular of the options presented. There were several comments that suggested combining Alternatives 1 and 3 or starting with Alternative 1 and expanding service to Alternative 3.

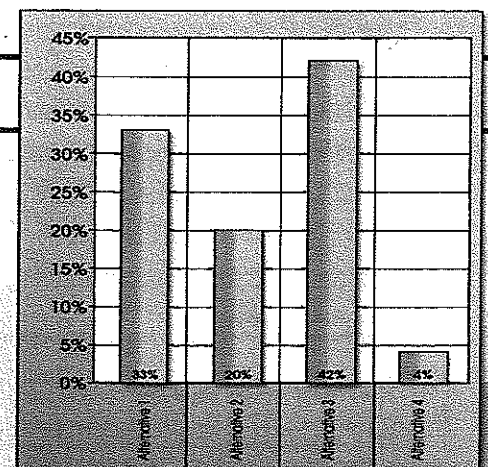


Figure 1—Summary of Support for Alternatives

## What We Have Learned

Overall, attendees at the passenger rail meetings were very supportive of expanding passenger rail service in Kansas and would like options available for those who choose to use the train. Those attending were primarily retirees with a few younger people interested in bringing back passenger rail. Many attendees were retired Amtrak, BNSF or others who have a connection to the rail industry. Representatives of various chambers of commerce or economic development agencies along proposed routes also attended.

In discussions with attendees at the meetings, opinions varied on how much should be spent to develop daytime service to Oklahoma City or Fort Worth. Some felt the number of trips and riders did not warrant spending significant amounts of taxpayer dollars, while many others felt the service was needed regardless of cost. There were many comments about issues beyond the scope of this study, including expanding east/west passenger rail service or expanding commuter service. When comparing the alternatives, most frequently the debate centered on service times—daytime or nighttime and the ability to connect to other trains. Cost and economic feasibility were a concern noted by comments in the surveys and discussion at the meetings. Some acknowledged expanded passenger rail would be an opportunity to enhance economic development in individual communities.

There was a wide range of comments about the alternatives, but the main issues of concern included:

- **Daytime service versus nighttime service.**

Comments and discussion around time of service included whether daytime service warrants the extra cost and whether it is necessary and/or beneficial to travel

through Kansas during the day and arrive in Texas at night.

- **Ability to connect to other trains and layover times.**

Connections to other passenger trains and the length of the layover affected preferences for the alternatives. Layover times that resulted from daytime or nighttime service also generated comments on the alternatives.

- **Cost and economic feasibility.**

Many commented on the cost of the alternatives, particularly Alternative 3, and whether a standalone daytime service was needed or justified based on the cost. Others commented on the expense to taxpayers and the benefit to the communities along the route.

- **Economic opportunities.**

There were a few comments regarding the potential economic opportunities provided by specific alternatives for individual communities and for the state of Kansas.

Many people indicated support for expanding passenger rail as a way to provide travel options to those who can't or choose not to drive. Several also said that passenger rail service would provide increased economic development for their local community. Another reason given for supporting expanded passenger rail service was the environmental benefits of traveling by rail as compared to other conventional modes. A few attendees, however, expressed concern about expanding passenger rail service because of the sizeable startup costs and annual operating costs that would require a state subsidy.

A more detailed look at the comments on each of the above topic areas can be found in the Appendix located at [www.ksdot.org/passrail](http://www.ksdot.org/passrail).

## Next Steps

KDOT will move forward to develop Service Development Plans (SDPs) for both Alternatives 1 and 3. The SDP is a more detailed business operations plan that will analyze and refine the revenue and cost estimates from the Amtrak Feasibility Study for both alternatives. It is anticipated that the SDPs will be completed by the fall of 2011.

It is important to note, that legislative and gubernatorial action will be needed to fund expanded passenger rail service. Depending on the alternative selected, such action could be needed in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Following this action, steps will be taken to complete negotiations and agreements with all parties, conduct necessary environmental reviews, and take steps to implement the service.