



\*meaning brought back or revisited

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**JUN 19 2008**

**CITY MANAGERS OFFICE  
LAWRENCE, KS**

June 19, 2008

Dear Mayor Dever and City Commissioners:

Depot Redux is a new organization working to insure the continued viability of the Santa Fe Depot at 413 East 7th St. We think it is important to retain the Depot as an inviting and convenient gateway to Lawrence for Amtrak passengers.

An important element contributing to the appeal of train travel is access to historically and architecturally significant depots. Our Amtrak depot has particular importance in representing the last period of depot building by U.S. passenger railroads. It is a very fine and extremely well preserved example of "modern" depot architecture of the 1950s.

Unfortunately, the depot has been neglected by its present owner, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad. Their current level of maintenance does not preserve the historic integrity of this landmark building. Listing the building on the State and National Registers of Historic Places will pave the way for funding to preserve and restore the building, and insure that work is done consistent with preservation standards. BNSF is opposed to listing the building while they retain ownership.

We have received communication from BNSF that they will consider donating the depot to the City of Lawrence. We ask that the City work with BNSF to facilitate transfer of ownership of the Depot to the City. Negotiations regarding current and future leasing arrangements with both Amtrak and BNSF should also take place.

The 2002 Conditions Report of the depot prepared for the city indicates that the building is basically sound. Therefore, repairs and renovation could take place in a phased manner. For example, the first phase could be the repair of the roof, estimated to cost about \$40,000.

Currently Depot Redux is in the process of seeking more complete restoration estimates. We hope to have more information to present when you consider the matter at the June 24 City Commission meeting.

We understand the city’s current financial constraints, but we want to caution you that BNSF managers responsible for this offer to the city are approaching retirement. When the management changes, an offer to donate the depot may not be available to the City. Therefore it is important that we act now.

By becoming the owner of the Santa Fe Depot, the 1956 building may be listed on both the State Register and the National Register of Historic Places. The State Historic Preservation Office has expressed willingness to expedite this listing process. Once listed, the structure is eligible for various historic preservation grants and other transportation grants, and a 30% tax credit on appropriate repairs and renovations. These tax credits can then be sold to brokers. Once the city assumes ownership of the BNSF depot, the project will qualify for several sources of funding similar to those used for the renovation of the Union Pacific depot in North Lawrence.

This facility, unlike the UP depot, is an active and vital part of the transportation infrastructure for Douglas County residents and visitors. This depot served nearly 4,000 Amtrak passengers last year, and ridership has greatly increased in the first half of 2008. It is expected that Amtrak’s feasibility study for an expanded *HEARTLAND FLYER* service will show promise. It is further expected that our state government will authorize its share of funding for this passenger rail expansion between Kansas City, Oklahoma City and Dallas. Your resolution No. 6758 signed Feb. 26, 2008 supported the Northern Flyer Alliance’s campaign to expand the *Heartland Flyer* through Lawrence. This resolution attests to your support for passenger rail serving Lawrence. The *Heartland Flyer* expansion, if it includes daytime trains, is projected to more than double the current level of ridership using the Lawrence depot. The depot needs to stand ready for this expansion.

Investing in train travel is also an investment in the environment. Per capita emissions of CO2 are almost 35% less in rail travel than in car travel, and 50% less than in air travel.

CARBON EMISSIONS (per passenger mile)	
Rail	.21 kg
Car	.35kg
Air	.48 kg

Emissions factors based on calculations from the World Resources Institute (WRI) and Carbonfund.org. Calculations assume single-occupant car and the added impact of high-altitude emissions for air.

The Lawrence Mayor’s Climate Protection Agreement and the Mayor’s Climate Protection Task Force suggest the City government’s support for its citizens’ access to regional transportation

systems that are part of the solution to global warming. Passenger rail, with all associated facilities and infrastructure, is just that option citizens are clamoring for.

Investment in a community's transportation infrastructure is a governmental responsibility which enhances the local and regional economy. A convenient, comfortable and safe depot that is also a beautiful, historic building boosts local tourism in the cities that have supported these projects. With Amtrak's free hop off/hop on option for passengers on the Southwest Chief, the spending of riders designating Lawrence as one of several destinations would benefit our local economy.

Depot Redux will continue to work with other civic groups and with the City of Lawrence to return the Santa Fe Depot to its former status as a first class passenger rail facility, while highlighting its architectural and historic significance. We believe that it can be a key element in increasing the appeal of rail as a travel option for the citizens of Lawrence and the surrounding communities in Douglas County.

Please direct staff to pursue ownership transfer of the BNSF depot at 413 E 7<sup>th</sup> Street to the City of Lawrence for the purpose of maintenance and restoration of the historic building. Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter of importance to the community now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Carey Maynard-Moody, Chair  
Depot Redux

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