

February 2, 2024

Honorable Mike Petersen, Chair
Senate Transportation Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 Southwest 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

SB 349 Passenger Rail Service Program (K.S.A. 75-5089, as amended)

Senator Petersen and Members of the Committee

We respectfully submit this proponent statement in support of the Kansas Passenger Rail Service Program bill (SB 349).

My wife and I have followed the bi-state effort to extend the Amtrak Heartland Flyer from Oklahoma City to Newton, Kansas. There have been countless (and this is not an exaggeration) news reports and articles about the prospect of expanding passenger rail service in the state. From all indications this project is economical and with no significant complexity as a transportation infrastructure project. However, progress on this has been frustratingly slow. In early December we saw that this project (the Heartland Flyer Extension) has been recognized by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in the first round of development grants of the FRA Corridor ID Program. The Corridor ID program is a once-in-a-generation game changer that will make possible the first major improvement in passenger rail service since Amtrak was created over 50 years ago. We do not want to see our state miss out and urge Kansas, and the Kansas Department of Transportation do their part to re-establish a connection to the national passenger rail system.

This is very important to us for a several reasons. A few years ago, we traveled by Amtrak to Montreal with a group of friends for a cruise that terminated in Boston which allowed a convenient return to Kansas City by rail. One member of our party had recently suffered a stroke and was wheelchair bound. Our trip was made easier and practical because of the special accommodations that exist aboard Amtrak trains. We would like to travel by rail in the future, and maybe next time travel to a destination opened by a continuous passenger rail corridor between Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. But that will depend on having Amtrak service connections in the state of Kansas.

We ask that the Kansas State Legislative Committee for Transportation act affirmatively on the Bill and advance it for a hearing and subsequent vote.

We hope to see SB 349 pass into law and Statute, and new Amtrak service in Kansas as a result.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ed & Janice Rawlings". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the right of the word "Respectfully,".

Ed and Janice Rawlings
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Overland Park, Kansas 66204
Kansas Senate District 7