

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
OCTOBER 29, 2012**

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CECIL O'BRATE, CONESTOGA ENERGY PARTNERS, LLC
GARDEN CITY, KANSAS**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing our joint testimony to be presented regarding passenger rail service. WindRiver Grain, LLC is a grain facility located on the mainline Burlington Northern Santa Fe in Garden City, Kansas. Our business revolves around loading and unloading 80-110 car unit trains. This is the most efficient means of transporting bulk commodities at this point. This brings global markets back to our local producers as we export wheat and milo to the Texas gulf, along with wheat into domestic and export markets on the west coast. We are a relationship-based company that takes great pride in creating long-term partnerships that adds value to all parties involved. We also service the end user in our local market by importing corn to area feed yards and to Bonanza BioEnergy, one of three ethanol production facilities operated by Conestoga Energy Partners. Conestoga is one of the leading producers and marketers of low-carbon renewable fuels in Kansas. Bonanza Energy uses the same rail line as WindRiver Grain.

We, like other businesses in Garden City and in southwest Kansas, rely heavily on this high quality rail line to be competitive in the global market. We appreciate Amtrak's Southwest Chief operating on the BNSF rail lines through our communities. Lines that carry passenger trains are required to maintain better track conditions and allow for higher travel speeds. Our concern is if passenger rail is moved from this line, track conditions could deteriorate and only be kept at the minimum required for freight cargo. This would have a negative impact on our current and future businesses in these communities which include the economic engines of production agriculture, and the beef and the ethanol industry.

We support the efforts of the Southwest Chief Rural Rail Partnership to preserve passenger rail on its current route through Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico. We think it is extremely import to the state's economy that the Southwest Chief remains on its current route through our communities. As such, it is also important that the State is supportive of this group's efforts as it works to secure federal support and funding for line maintenance and future upgrades.

Thank you for allowing our testimony.