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Testimony before the Special Committee on Transportation
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City of Dodge City, Kansas

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to offer testimony regarding passenger rail service. I am Ken Strobel, City Manager of Dodge City, Kansas. Dodge City is built at the crossroads of America's western history where millions of Texas longhorns met the railroads. Since the time Dodge City was founded in the late 1800s, it has been served by daily passenger rail service. Then, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe line sent its passenger trains through Kansas on their way east and west. Today Amtrak's Southwest Chief transports passengers from Chicago to Los Angeles and many cities in between on the tracks of Burlington Northern Santa Fe providing our community with daily service. In Kansas, the Southwest Chief serves Garden City, Dodge City, Hutchinson, Newton, Topeka and Lawrence. It also serves Kansas City, Missouri.

This spring, Amtrak and BNSF held a meeting in Garden City with representatives of the communities the Southwest Chief serves in three states -- Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico. At the meeting, Amtrak shared with us that the tracks the Southwest Chief travels are in need of infrastructure upgrades. The upgrades and ongoing maintenance needs will be expensive. Amtrak estimated that

if the Southwest Chief is to stay on its traditional route with its traditional stations, \$10 million per year for track-maintenance costs and a total of \$100 million for long-term improvements must be found. If not, the Southwest Chief route through our community may be in jeopardy. At the meeting, Amtrak asked for state and local funds to support maintenance and upgrades. Amtrak officials indicated the funds are necessary for upgrades and on going maintenance to ensure passenger safety.

We recognize that cities and states' have many demands on their budgets and limited financial resources. The request from Amtrak for state and local funds is daunting. So, we must explore other options. This is what we are proactively doing. Dodge City along with Garden City, Hutchinson and Newton have joined together with cities in Colorado and New Mexico and formed the Southwest Chief Rural Rail Partnership to work together to preserve the Southwest Chief. The purpose of this partnership is to bring the matter to the attention of federal officials in Washington D.C. and Amtrak. We are working through the Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico congressional delegations to help explore possible federal funding options and to receive specific information from Amtrak. We are not seeking additional federal appropriations for Amtrak. We are working in cooperation with our federal delegations to identify and prioritize the most critical repairs and upgrades. In simple terms, we must determine what repairs and upgrades are needed, where the repairs and upgrades are required and what the estimated costs are. Once the repairs and costs are identified, we will work with the federal congressional

delegation to identify and secure federal support and funding, which could include existing appropriations to Amtrak and various federal grants that may be available.

We do need the continued support of the Kansas Department of Transportation, which has been very helpful thus far. It is, ultimately, with all of us working together that we will successfully solve this problem and passenger rail service will continue across Kansas as it has for more than a century.