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Camp Wood YMCA Mission: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

April 3, 2008

Ron Kaufman
Bureau Chief, Public Involvement
Kansas Department of Transportation
700 SW Harrison
Topeka, KS 66603

Dear Mr. Kaufman,

It is my understanding that a study is to be done on possible passenger rail service to locations across Kansas. I am also told that Strong City / Chase County, Kansas is not yet on the list of stops. This raises some questions and suggested considerations. I would like to be an advocate for the consideration for a stop by this passenger train in Strong City at the local depot that is still standing.

My name is Ken Wold and I act as the CEO for Camp Wood YMCA located two miles south of Elmdale and seven miles west of Strong City. One of the first stories I ever heard concerning Camp Wood YMCA is of the railroad trip kids made to come to camp. The train, in the old days, came to Elmdale, KS and dropped off campers each week where kids were picked up by wagons and pick-ups and taken to camp. It would be wonderful if that could be brought back only this time they would be picked up in Strong City by bus and taken to camp and back to the depot at the end of the camp week.

Camp Wood YMCA serves 4,000 people each year. Our summer camp will see 1,900 campers this summer. In 2008 we saw a 46% growth in the number of campers that were served. We will see 200 campers per week and of this 200 it would be a conservative guess that 20 campers would arrive by train. We receive phone calls from new parents of campers asking for transportation for their children. It would be our intention to place the information in our brochures and have them sign up ahead of time for pick-up and drop-off. Information about camp with this information would go out to 120,000 school children each spring.

Camp Wood YMCA also provides opportunities for families, school groups, individuals, and corporate groups to use camp. If rail service was provided, it would be my guess that a good many of these visitors could arrive by rail, whether they be day trips from Wichita or overnight trips from other locations. It just makes sense. Camp Wood YMCA could serve as another destination for visitors to the Flinthills.



Summer Residence Camp - Conference Center - Outdoor Education



Other considerations would be the whole package Chase County has to offer. This may include:

- A stay at the Grand Central Hotel with a meal at a AAA - Four Diamond establishment.
- Friday night at the Emma Chase Café with live local music.
- A trip to the **Tall Grass Prairie National Preserve** – The only National Park in Kansas.
- A trip to Matfield Green to see Pioneer Bluffs highlighting life in Chase County.
- A trip to the Flinthills to experience the “Symphony in the Flinthills”.
- A weekend during the first weekend in June for the Strong City Rodeo.
- A stay at one of the wonderful bed and breakfasts in the area.
- Experiencing the River Suite, A Dam Concert (Classical music on a Classically Restored Bridge) on a warm summer’s evening.
- Experiencing ranch life on one of the agri-tourist adventures.
- A visit to the Chase County Historic Courthouse. The oldest operating courthouse west of the Mississippi.
- The Annual Prairie Fire Festival in April
- The lighting of the Court House during “A Country Christmas”.
- A hunting experience with a local guide service.

And, I am sure there are more.

What about people traveling from here to other places for day trips or overnight? While I worked in Reno, NV, our YMCA sent children on a summer camp experience that included a train trip to Truckee, CA and back. The campers loved the experience. One of our most popular trip camps here in Kansas has been a train trip to St. Louis or Chicago and back. How exciting would it be to start in Strong City and return to Strong City. I am not saying we would fill the train. I am saying that we, with all the attractions and the possible traffic out of this location, could enhance the profitability.

All of this could benefit from rail service. All of the attractions could promote the possibilities. Speaking for Camp Wood YMCA, we would definitely do all that is possible to promote riding the rails.

If you have questions or would like to visit about our participation, please call 620-273-8641. I would be happy to visit with you. Thank you for your time and consideration. Chase County is the hottest place going in Kansas.

Sincerely yours,



Ken Wold
Executive Director