



The Northern Flyer Alliance

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July 1st, 2008

The Honorable Brad Henry, Governor
212 Oklahoma Capitol
2300 North Lincoln Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Dear Governor Henry:

We the below signed Mayors of Ardmore, Pauls Valley, Purcell, Norman, Oklahoma City, Edmond, Guthrie, Perry and Ponca City, would like to discuss with you a matter of urgent importance. Today our citizens face the rapid approach of five-dollar a gallon gasoline. The airline industry is cutting services and raising fares in order to address \$140.00 per barrel oil. The decline in intercity bus transportation coupled with the high cost of personal automobile travel is resulting in the increasing isolation of small town Oklahoma.

At your earliest convenience we would like to meet with you, Transportation Secretary Phil Tomlinson, and ODOT staff to discuss a strategy addressing a partial solution to our worsening transportation crisis. The crisis, related to crude oil pricing and resulting market volatility, threatens the mobility of our citizens. A decrease in cost effective transportation will negatively impact our communities making economic development and recovery difficult.

Oklahoma has crossed a major threshold. No longer is there any argument about whether Oklahomans and the American people want optional transportation. We can confirm to you that market demand already exists in our communities that would make the *Heartland Flyer* expansion north into Kansas, and on to Kansas City highly beneficial. We can confirm to you that the expansion of the *Heartland Flyer* will bring economic benefit to state communities. We can confirm to you that the expansion of the *Heartland Flyer* will increase the quality of life for hundreds of thousands of Oklahomans.

On February 11, 2008 the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) issued a formal request to Amtrak to study expanded passenger rail operations on the 606 mile Kansas City to Fort Worth corridor. This rail corridor presently hosts Amtrak's 206 mile passenger rail segment operating between Oklahoma City and Fort Worth. The study is estimated to cost \$150,000 to \$175,000. It will be complete late in 2008, or early 2009. Unfortunately, the time delay in going

through the legislative process anticipated for the 2011 sessions in Kansas and Oklahoma will place unnecessary and increasing burdens on the citizens of our states.

On October 30, 2007 the US Senate passed S. 294, The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act, by a vote of 70-22. Oil at that time was just \$92 a barrel. On June 11, 2008, Oklahoma's delegation to the US House of Representatives unanimously passed the House version of The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act, HR6003. The final House vote was 311 - 104. This Act will provide a federal match of up to 80 percent for passenger rail capital improvements. Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas should act soon to reap benefit from this landmark legislation while Senate and House versions are combined in conference committee.

Based upon current Oklahoma and Texas contractual payments to Amtrak, some \$4.3 million combined, Oklahoma and Texas pay Amtrak a \$21,000/mile annual fee for passenger rail operations. Applying this figure to the Kansas City - Fort Worth corridor, the total cost would be in the range of \$13 million annually, split between Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. ODOT estimated in 2001, through a Carter Burgess engineering study that track upgrades for this corridor would be in the range of \$5 million with \$2.9 million required in Oklahoma and \$2.1 million in Kansas. Estimates also show that an additional train set, required for expanded operations, would cost Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas a combined \$8 million. In other words, with the federal match, the combined capital startup infrastructure cost would be \$2.6 million. Oklahoma's share would likely be around \$1.17 million.

With increasing support from Congress for expanded passenger rail service, now is the time for completion of the *Heartland Flyer* route. With your voice and with the power of your office we request your support and advocacy in order to expedite planning and funding by the inclusion of a provisional line item in your 2009 budget.

Sincerely,



Mayor Homer Nicholson, Ponca City



Mayor Chuck Hall, Perry



Mayor Chuck Burtcher, Guthrie

Dan O'Neil

Mayor Dan O' Neil, Edmond

Mick Cornett

Mayor Mick Cornett, Oklahoma City

Cindy Rosenthal

Mayor Cindy Rosenthal, Norman

Betty Gerhard

Mayor Betty Gerhard, Purcell

Tim Gamble

Mayor Tim Gamble, Pauls Valley

Sheryl Ellis

Mayor Sheryl Ellis, Ardmore