

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of this committee for allowing me this opportunity to answer questions about intercity passenger rail planning.

This initiative began with an inquiry to Amtrak in 2007 about a feasibility study of passenger rail service on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe corridor between Kansas City and Fort Worth through the Kansas and Oklahoma State capitols.

Amtrak delivered the study to KDOT and the legislature on the same morning that enabling legislation in Senate Bill 409 was passed by the Kansas House and Senate in March 2010.

KDOT also completed a State Rail Plan in 2010 and contracted for a formal Service Development Plan required by the Federal Railroad Administration. The SDP was completed and delivered at the end of October 2011. Two weeks ago this committee had its first opportunity to hear the findings.

The three planning studies completed over the last 5 years provide the information needed to move passenger rail planning forward with carefully planned steps of action and sequence.

Expansion of passenger rail service in Kansas is of great interest to the Federal Railroad Administration, Amtrak, and also the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad. It reconnects a missing link in the passenger rail system on existing rail running through the most populous regions in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas.

KDOT's request for commitment and funding follows the rules found in several transportation grant programs. The request comes at a critical moment because just last week the USDOT announced guidelines for federal funding available under the 2012 TIGER grant program. This round of grants, referred to as TIGER IV includes \$100 million for passenger rail programs.

This grant opportunity cannot to be missed. If it is, a year of development will be forfeited before any next step can be considered. The application process is administered under Grants.gov; it opens for pre-application on Monday, February 13th, with a one-week pre-application window that closes on February 20th. Final applications are required by March 19th.

Selection criteria for TIGER IV awards "values" to specific virtues of a project.

This corridor possesses several of these virtues, including 1) a convenient opportunity to reconnect and improve rail service across a region; 2) an expectation that ridership will be very high, and generate greater ridership in adjacent areas; 3) and generally improve transportation in Kansas-Oklahoma and Kansas. TIGER IV also gives favorable consideration to group-of-states initiatives, and shovel ready projects, especially where passenger rail service is present. We learned over the weekend that the BNSF railroad is preparing TIGER IV grant applications for improvements on this corridor, precisely because this is an important corridor.

The next service development step includes environmental impact assessment, which is mandatory and integrated with “preliminary engineering.” It is mainly a planning step, and the FRA advises that planning alone will not score high enough to receive TIGER IV funding.

The FRA advises that environmental assessment and preliminary engineering, if integrated with **construction**, will meet requirements for TIGER IV funding application.

BNSF is actively installing rail traffic management system called PTC which means Positive Train Control. PTC is costly, but necessary. It is a valuable system for rail safety, and is being implemented nationwide over the next few years.

PTC projects and rail crossing improvement are applicable to the passenger rail expansion, and it is like killing three birds with one stone in that a group state and BNSF effort combines the 1) environmental impact assessment requirement, 2) with preliminary construction, and 3) reduces the overall project costs and development time for the states seeking the DOT transportation grants.

The original cost of service development identified in the Service Development Plan was calculated almost two years ago. It is a static estimate predicated on the as-is-status of the corridor with no improvement or development. Current projects on the corridor in Texas and Oklahoma and improvements made over two years, and future improvements alter and reduce total funding required for the Heartland Flyer corridor. The total funding estimate includes a 30% allowance for cost overruns. It is smart to include contingent allowances, however the current BNSF

construction projects reduce the cost estimates shown on pages 94-99 of the SDP also reduce the contingent costs calculated in the totals.

BNSF plans to seek TIGER IV funding for their current shovel ready construction projects. A federal match will significantly extend BNSF construction. If KDOT ODOT and BNSF partner on a TIGER IV grant, the odds improve because it is a group-of-states application that includes passenger rail development.

There is 100 million dollars in TIGER IV available this year and the window of opportunity is about 1 month. Passenger rail development can literally ride along on this effort with the following commitment of funding for:

- a group state application for a TIGER IV grant of at least \$10 million, with a federal match of 50% or higher. (KDOT has recent experience with taking the lead in securing matching funding for the Service Development Plan.)

- construction projects and integrated NEPA study associated with passenger rail development on the corridor,

There is also a fair possibility that that NEPA study on this corridor may qualify for what is called a “categorical exclusion” because of the existing rail system that currently has passenger train operations over 400 miles of the 600 mile corridor. A categorical exclusion could drastically reduce the \$54 million dollar estimate for NEPA and Preliminary Engineering soft costs identified for Kansas City–Fort Worth Daytime service.

There was not enough time during the last committee meeting to discuss the third operational scenario included in the SDP. This option combines the simple expansion of the Heartland Flyer schedule in a night time service with daytime service between KC and Fort Worth. The capital costs of combined service although higher, are not significantly higher than daytime service alone. The construction work done on the corridor prepares the route for passenger rail service regardless of whether it is daytime only, or, combined night time and daytime service. What is significantly greater is the ridership, estimated at 368,000 riders as compared to 257,000 riders for daytime service only, or 112,000 for nighttime service.

A number of questions were raised during committee meetings two weeks ago. The questions and answers are included on the handout. And I will be pleased to answer any other questions that are asked today.

Thank you,

Mark Corrison