Thank you, Senator Dietrich. First, for your leadership in making sure the Kansas Rail Caucus continues it’s tradition of educating legislators and the public not only about the Heartland Flyer Extension, but also about the benefits of passenger rail and why Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas need this connection. And Secondly, for this opportunity to speak today. The Northern Flyer Alliance is honored to sponsor the annual Passenger Rail Caucus luncheon meetings.

As outlined during the Senate Ways & Means Committee meeting on SB 86 earlier this month, the success of Missouri’s state-supported rail service with its tax revenue generation of $12M greater than the cost to operate their train, Missouri has provided Kansas and Oklahoma with a great model to follow. Our greatest hope is that both Kansas and Missouri will be successful in their passenger rail extensions, as the economic benefits will extend to both states. Our fellowship with the Missouri Rail Passenger Association has provided among other advantages, important educational tools such as their recent Economic Impact Study that we share with Kansas Legislators.

We also want to take this moment to highlight the Alliance of communities—who they are, how many there are, and the broad range of entities beyond city councils that are involved. (A Handout with this list is available). This Alliance spans 3 states and collectively has been committed to this project for 19 years with ongoing appeals directed to departments of transportation, governors, legislators, Amtrak and the FRA. With so many new legislators this year, and many unaware of this effort, we are taking this public moment to share.

This long-standing commitment from these communities needs to be recognized by the State of Kansas. It serves as the strongest counterargument to claims that this project lacks public support, just as the Missouri Economic Impact Study serves as the strongest counterargument that trains don’t pay for themselves.

And finally, we want to emphatically make the case that KDOT needs more than the Passenger Rail Program Act of 2010. KDOT needs SB 86. If nothing more were needed, why are we barely further along than we were in 2011 when KDOT completed the first Service Development Plan? Many federal grant opportunities have been missed since then. The best example being January 2019. At that time, there were enough federal grants available to have paid for this project by almost 100% according to Amtrak’s presentation to that year’s Senate Ways & Means Committee.

Ultimately, this is why we are here today. This is another opportunity for KDOT, legislators, and Amtrak to hear this message together in a public setting. We must ensure that the voices of these communities are acknowledged, that they believe in the economic transformational nature of this connection, and that their readiness to commit resources speaks loudly about their belief in the success of this rail connection.

Thank you. Rail Caucus 2025