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GOVERNOR LAURA KELLY

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**For Immediate Release:**

December 8, 2023

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## **Governor Kelly Announces Heartland Flyer Passenger Rail Expansion Moves Forward in Kansas**

**TOPEKA** – Governor Laura Kelly today announced the proposed extension of the Heartland Flyer passenger rail corridor is among the projects selected by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for inclusion in the Corridor Identification and Development (ID) Program. The Corridor ID Program will provide funding for the development of a Service Development Plan (SDP), which is expected to be completed in spring 2024. In this first cycle of Corridor ID Program awards, \$500,000 will go to the development of the Heartland Flyer Corridor SDP.

The proposed Corridor would connect Amtrak's existing Heartland Flyer intercity passenger rail service between Fort Worth and Oklahoma City, extending north to Wichita and then Newton. The proposed Corridor would include new station stops in the Oklahoma

cities of Edmond, Perry, and Ponca City, as well as Kansas stops in Arkansas City, Wichita, and Newton.

“The extension of the Heartland Flyer Passenger Rail would further connect Kansans to Oklahoma City and North Central Texas, unlocking business, educational, and cultural opportunities to Kansans and enabling our neighbors to the south to add to the Kansas economy,” **Governor Laura Kelly said.** “One of Kansas’ greatest assets is that we are in the center of the country, which is why my administration has supported rail projects like this to build on that strength.”

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) submitted the Corridor ID Program proposal in partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation and the Texas Department of Transportation.

KDOT has already completed a scope, schedule, cost estimate, and other preliminary staging needed for the Heartland Flyer expansion. This advance work, combined with ongoing support of state and local governments, significantly strengthened the three-state application, and has advanced the Heartland Flyer extension into the FRA funding pipeline.

“The FRA’s acceptance of the Heartland Flyer Extension into the Corridor ID Program benefitted from collaboration among KDOT, ODOT and TxDOT in preparing a strong, needs-based application,” **said Kansas Secretary of Transportation Calvin Reed.** “In south central Kansas and across the state, the call to renew this passenger rail route has been strong, unified, and clear. The result is another step forward in bring this vital passenger rail line back into service.”

This Heartland Flyer Corridor was discontinued in 1979. The proposed extension would re-connect Oklahoma and Kansas communities north to the national Amtrak network via the Southwest Chief, allowing residents and travelers to access tremendous mobility available through the major east-west route. The extension is expected to positively impact ridership throughout the Midwest and beyond by connecting six of the 50 most populated cities in the U.S.

The Corridor ID Program was created as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and will guide the development of new and enhanced intercity passenger rail services to help bolster economic growth throughout the country.

“I have been working with local, state, and federal leaders for several years to connect Kansas to the Heartland Flyer by rail,” **said Kansas Senator Jerry Moran.** “Connecting communities across these three states will support new economic opportunities for businesses and provide a new means of travel along this busy route. I am pleased to see the

first step in this corridor progress and look forward to seeing the project benefit Kansas and the region and look forward to continued dialogue with local stakeholders.”

“Getting the Federal Rail Administration’s blessing to move forward with our service plan for passenger rail from Newton to Oklahoma City and beyond is promising,” **Kansas State Senator Carolyn McGinn, Kansas Senate District 31, said.** “This will open a new mode of travel that will help everyone from college students to seniors and expand our I-35 economic corridor.”

“What a great day for Kansas,” **said Sedgwick County Commissioner Pete Meitzner.** “This extension is a long-awaited economic development and transportation objective to re-connect numerous Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas communities to the national network via the Southwest Chief at Newton, and points across the nation.”

Nationwide, this inaugural round of selections aims to upgrade 15 existing rail routes, add or extend service on 47 new routes, and advance seven new high-speed rail projects, creating a pipeline of intercity passenger rail projects ready for implementation and future investment.

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