

*Carey Maynard-Moody, chair  
Depot Redux  
1645 Barker Avenue  
Lawrence, KS 66044-3717*

March 10, 2009

Deborah Miller, Secretary  
Kansas Department of Transportation  
Dwight D. Eisenhower State Office Building  
700 S.W. Harrison Street  
Topeka, KS 66603-3754

re: application for TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT funds  
For the SANTA FE DEPOT located in Lawrence, KS

Dear Secretary Miller,

We are pleased to include this letter of support for the applicant project, the Santa Fe depot in Lawrence, KS.

My organization, Depot Redux, has been working closely with the City to procure the best outcome for this worthy, historic, and active transportation facility. Funding support for this project is required to meet that end.

My letter provides you with a brief history of the depot, its former, current, and projected use as an active transportation facility in our community and the State of Kansas.

## INTRODUCTION

The Santa Fe depot, located at 413 E 7<sup>th</sup> Street in Lawrence, KS, is a revered neighborhood landmark in historic East Lawrence. This building is an example of the standard depot architectural design that the Santa Fe Railway developed for its replacement depots in the 1950s (See Figure 1). Built in 1955 in the Midwestern Modern Style, this active passenger and freight railway depot replaced a two story brick structure constructed in 1883 (See Figure 2). The earlier building was damaged by two major floods.



Figure 1: Lawrence, Kansas Santa Fe Depot and Station Facilities 2008



Figure 2: 1883 Lawrence, Kansas Santa Fe Depot and Station Facilities

## LOCATION AND USAGE

Located in the urban core of the city of Lawrence, Kansas, the depot's surrounding neighborhood, East Lawrence, has mixed uses. These include housing, commercial life, industrial centers, schools, churches, parks, and playgrounds. East Lawrence possesses more 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century houses than any other neighborhood in the city.

The depot, located four blocks east of Massachusetts Street in Historic Downtown Lawrence, is presently used as an Amtrak station and a local BNSF Railway office. Amtrak's long distance train, the *Southwest Chief*, operating between Chicago and Los Angeles, makes daily early morning arrivals at the depot. The eastbound train arrives at 5:49am and the westbound at 12:32am. This Santa Fe Railway passenger route was originally established in 1926, transferred to Amtrak in 1971, maintaining the Lawrence stop for over eighty years.

During Amtrak's 2008 fiscal year (FY) 2008<sup>1</sup>, over 4,000 Amtrak passengers used the Lawrence depot and station facilities. Passengers board this train in Lawrence to launch their vacations. Other passengers use the *Southwest Chief* as a means of commuting for work related activities as well as staying connected with families and friends. Students from both Haskell Indian Nations University and the University of Kansas rely on this train for transportation between home and school.

## VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Since the volunteer group Depot Redux became involved early last year, services at the depot have improved greatly. Passengers once again feel welcome, comfortable and secure while they wait for trains in the depot. Depot Redux, with funding from Amtrak, now provides depot caretaker services. The caretakers open and close the facility for each arriving train. They remain on the premises during open hours to answer questions and assist passengers with boarding and alighting from the train. The group is working closely with the City of Lawrence to address depot ownership, and promote the depot's preservation and restoration.

<http://www.depotredux.blogspot.com>

## ADDITIONAL TRAIN SERVICE STUDY

An additional daylight train stop is being considered for this depot in Lawrence. In December 2009, Amtrak is expected to complete a \$200,000 study, as requested by the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT). The study examines expanding Amtrak's short distance *Heartland Flyer* train to Kansas City. Currently this route operates between Fort Worth, TX and Oklahoma City, OK. Lawrence's Santa Fe depot is being considered for a stop on the expanded route. The study results are projected to favor expansion of the route and to favor modest funding by the states of Kansas, Oklahoma,

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Amtrak Kansas State Fact Sheet FY2008

and Texas to make the expansion possible. Oklahoma's and Texas' combined contribution for FY2008 to operate the *Heartland Flyer* was \$4 million.<sup>2</sup>

### **A PEER ANALYSIS: NORMAN, OKLAHOMA**

Norman, situated just 20 miles south of Oklahoma City, is home to 102,827 residents and the University of Oklahoma. A peer city to Lawrence, both in population and demographics, Norman served 13,414 Amtrak passengers on the Short Distance daylight *Heartland Flyer* route during FY2008<sup>3</sup>.

The proposed *Heartland Flyer* (Amtrak train) expansion would significantly increase the Lawrence Amtrak's depot usage.

### **DEPOT CONDITION**

While in sound structural condition, the Lawrence depot has deteriorated from neglect. Restoration of this facility will halt further deterioration caused by deferred maintenance by the current owner, BNSF Railway. Restoration funding will also provide for ADA compliance. The City of Lawrence and BNSF Railway are currently negotiating for ownership transference to the City, as has occurred in other KS municipalities such as Strong City. Once the City takes ownership it can apply to place the depot on the National Registry of Historic Places.

### **CONCLUSION**

This active facility functions as a vital transportation link for the City. Additionally, its historical and cultural significance render it an economic development and enhancement tool for the East Lawrence neighborhood, the City of Lawrence, the NE KS region, and the entire State of Kansas. The depot must be ready for proposed regional and commuter passenger rail expansion that is occurring nationally.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this worthy Kansas transportation project.

Respectfully submitted,

Carey Maynard-Moody, chair

Other References: International Architectural Style

<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~twp/architecture/international/>

Public Law 110-432

[http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110\\_cong\\_public\\_laws&docid=f:publ432.pdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ432.pdf)

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Amtrak - Oklahoma Contract

<sup>3</sup> Source: Amtrak Oklahoma State Fact Sheet FY2009