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THIS WEEK ON THE FLYER CORRIDOR

HSIPR IMPROVES TULSA ROUTE POSSIBILITIES



Overlay showing HSIPR-Existing-Amtrak-Route Map shows that HSIPR routes are not fully contiguous with Amtrak's route structure.

Tulsa's passenger rail aspirations improved dramatically following the introduction of the *Federal Railroad Administration's* (FRA) *High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail* (HSIPR) program. HSIPR represents a historical federal passenger rail capital investment program, similar to that which built the US interstate highway system in the 1950's and 1960's. Prior to HSIPR, the possibility of passenger rail returning to Tulsa was unlikely due to infrastructure condition and fiscal challenges. ODOT, a \$1.5 billion state agency, cannot afford such a project without federal assistance.

HSIPR as introduced through the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (ARRA) has brought Tulsa passenger rail service closer to reality. This multi-year capital/study investment program is designed to expand and improve national passenger rail routes between 100 and 600 miles in length. The Tulsa route is 116 miles. Some national routes will eventually reach speeds over 125 MPH. HSIPR *Round I* funding included \$8 billion dollars. *Round II* will reach \$2.3 billion. *Round II* applications are due August 6. Awards will be made September 30.

Two possible options exist to connect Tulsa with the *Kansas City – Fort Worth* corridor at Oklahoma City; 1) an existing route and 2) a brand new 125MPH railroad that would parallel the *Turner Turnpike*. For the existing route, rail infrastructure between Oklahoma City and Sapulpa is state owned. Remaining infrastructure into downtown Tulsa is owned by the BNSF Railway. The Oklahoma Department of Transportation ODOT; however, prefers to build a new, passenger-only, high-speed route between Oklahoma City and Tulsa along the turnpike. ODOT views existing route curves as an impediment to higher speeds.

ODOT applied for \$2 billion last year between Tulsa, Oklahoma City and Fort Worth. ODOT's grant application was denied in January, due to a lack of multi-state collaboration and likely project size. ODOT intends to apply as a *group-of-states* with Texas for a longer route study between San Antonio and Tulsa this summer. Only study grants will be requested. Such joint efforts and studies improve the probability the FRA will approve future grant requests.

KANSAS INITIATIVE LACKS NEPA STUDY

Requirements to qualify for HSIPR program funding are lengthy. These include a route *Service Development Plan* (SDP), a current *state rail plan*, and a *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) study. We learned that the *Kansas Department of Transportation* (KDOT) has not begun a NEPA study. KDOT anticipates a NEPA categorical exclusion as new right of way will not be required for the route under study. There is a danger associated with this assumption. If KDOT does not receive an exclusion, a significant delay would occur due to the rejection of an expected 2012 HSIPR application. This could further delay or even jeopardize federal funding for the *Kansas City – Wichita – Oklahoma City* Corridor. Whether the HSIPR program continues depends upon political will. While Congress and the Obama Administration are highly supportive of HSIPR, politics and election results could cause HSIPR funding to become insignificant.

PASSENGER RAIL OKLAHOMA RESTART

Passenger Rail Oklahoma started the *North Flyer* effort in 2001. This led to the formation of the Kansas based, Northern Flyer Alliance in 2006. The organization restarted July 14th in Edmond, OK. This organization will again focus upon Oklahoma specific passenger rail initiatives.



LOGO: The logo represents the vision for passenger rail in the Oklahoma – Kansas region. Red lines represent possible future expansions. The "tracks" represent existing Amtrak routes. NorthFlyer.org will remain a focal point for Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas activities.

Please Join Our Effort. It's easy; e-mail your name, address, e-mail address to...

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