



Aug 1, 2010

THIS WEEK ON THE FLYER CORRIDOR

T-TOWN TRAINS: ODOT-TxDOT TO TRY AGAIN

On Saturday May 1, 1971 Amtrak began national operations, leaving Tulsa behind. The *Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe* (Santa Fe) joined Amtrak along with all but a handful of U.S. railroads. The *Tulsa – Kansas City Tulsan* train had survived only due to *Interstate Commerce Commission* (ICC) discontinuance denials. Amtrak did not include the route in its original design. The Santa Fe seemed to say, “*problem solved.*” The Santa Fe’s *Tulsan* made its last run on April 30, 1971.

The last *Oklahoma City (OKC) – Tulsa, Frisco* passenger train, had been discontinued several years earlier. The *Texas Chief* later *Lone Star* Amtrak train, operating between *Chicago – Kansas City – Wichita – OKC – Ft Worth – Houston* met its end in October 1979.

Oklahoma purchased the *Sapulpa – OKC* “Tulsa route” BNSF Railway segment in the mid-1990’s with an eye to possible passenger operations. Sapulpa, 15 miles from downtown, is now a Tulsa bedroom community. The BNSF Railway’s Cherokee yard, between Sapulpa and Tulsa, serves as a busy rail junction with routes radiating to *Los Angeles, Dallas, Kansas City, St. Louis*, and an *OKC – Lawton* shortline. Curves dominate nearly all the way on the OKC and St. Louis routes.

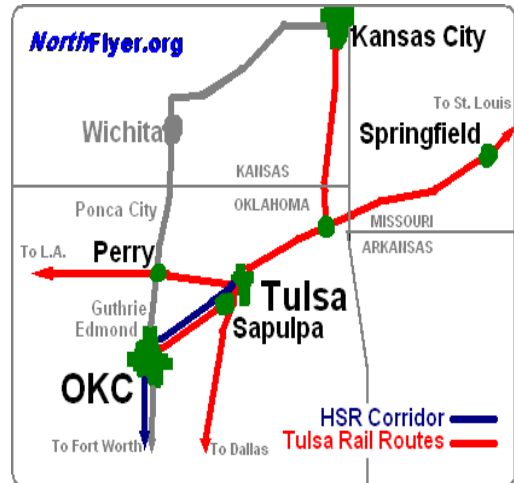
Following the *OKC – Fort Worth Heartland Flyer* reintroduction in 1999, Oklahoma applied for and received USDOT South Central High Speed Rail (HSR) corridor designation. The federal HSR program; however was an unfunded mandate. In 2009 that changed. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) created a funding stream through the *High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail* (HSIPR) program.



Beryl Ford Collection/rotary Club of Tulsa, Tulsa City-County Library and Tulsa Historical Society

In 2009, The *Oklahoma Department of Transportation* (ODOT) decided that the existing *OKC – Tulsa* alignment had too many curves for practical HSR operations. ODOT estimates showed a \$110 million cost to straighten the railroad for 79m.p.h. operations. ODOT revised its plan, applying for \$2 billion in federal funding between *Tulsa – OKC – Texas Line* through the \$8 billion HSIPR program. \$1.8 billion was to be spent building a new 150m.p.h. railroad along the Turner Turnpike. The train would have operated between the city centers within an hour. The application was denied.

On August 6, ODOT and TxDOT will combine as a group-of-states to request study funding through the FY-2010 HSIPR program. The *Tulsa – OKC – San Antonio* HSR corridor is to be the subject of the study. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) makes HSIPR program grant decisions. The FRA gives priority to *group-of-state* requests. ODOT’s portion of the request is expected to be \$3 million for an environmental study, \$500,000 for State Rail Plan development. Preliminary ODOT designs show a 125m.p.h. to 150m.p.h. railroad that would carry 1,400 people daily in less than an hour between Tulsa and OKC. Awards will be announced on September 30th.



ODOT and TxDOT are expected to apply as a group-of-states on August 6 for HSIPR funding to study the 800 mile Tulsa - OKC - San Antonio HSR Corridor. Oklahoma’s share would be \$3.5 million.

OKLAHOMA PASSENGER RAIL INTERM STUDY

Plans are in the works for an early Fall interim study at the Oklahoma state capitol. This is the first step to educate Oklahoma legislators with regard to recent passenger rail developments on a federal and regional basis. The interim study will provide information to be used to develop legislation over the next two years. This legislation will advance the effort to bring more passenger rail to the region, specifically over the *Kansas City – Wichita – OKC – Ft Worth* and *Tulsa – OKC* corridors.



Please Join Our Effort. E-mail your name, address, e-mail address to...

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