



Oct 14, 2011

THIS WEEK ON THE FLYER CORRIDOR

HEARTLAND FLYER CARRIES 84,039 PASSENGERS FOR FY-2011. Amtrak *Heartland Flyer* ridership increased by 2.8 percent this year (up from 81,749 last year). This reflects a less-than-national average increase. However, this figure still represents the best year in the 12 year history of the train.

Ridership would have been higher had Amtrak equipped the *Heartland Flyer* for summer loads. Three coaches constitute the regular consist for the train. Sometimes five are needed during the busy summer months. Better lounge space would attract more passengers. Demand for café coach service exceeds the ability of Amtrak staff to serve all passengers in a timely manner. Nationally, Amtrak ridership increased over 5 percent. Amtrak's press release: <http://www.tinyurl.com/4x8cpjj>

KDOT TOK-CORRIDOR SDP DUE LATE THIS MONTH. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) administered [High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail \(HSIPR\) Program](#) includes three requirements to qualify for federal capital matching funding. These include an FRA approved State Rail Plan (SRP), a Service Development Plan (SDP), and National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) clearances.

If this sounds like a broken record you are not hearing things. Studies are being completed at a snails pace. The [Kansas Department of Transportation](#) (KDOT) expects *Parsons-Brinckerhoff* SDP release by the end of this month. This leaves only corridor/project NEPA studies and the [Oklahoma SRP](#) to complete before a full *Texas-Oklahoma-Kansas (TOK-Corridor)* HSIPR application can be submitted.

Kansas Secretary of Transportation Deb Miller stated that Kansas does not have funding to proceed following SDP completion. Miller also stated that TIGER III funding is not available for corridor level NEPA studies. KDOT should seek other federal funding for the corridor level NEPA, or better, request a NEPA categorical exclusion from the FRA. Many other federal funding grants are available for planning. HSIPR has historically provided such funding for rail corridor planning. If you would like to challenge KDOT's position please write to your Kansas Representative or Kansas Senator. All you need is your zip code to find who represents you in the Kansas legislature. A tool is provided at <http://www.PassengerRailKS.org> so that you can locate applicable legislative mailing addresses.

SOUTHWEST CHIEF RIDERSHIP UP 3.7 PERCENT. *Southwest Chief* ridership increased 3.7 percent to 354,912 passengers for FY-2011. As reported in September's [This Week on the Corridor](#), the train may be rerouted at some uncertain date. The hope is that Amtrak management sees value in continued operation over Raton Pass. Less likely, but possible, is a service suspension a-la the *Sunset Limited* east of New Orleans (see [SUNSET LIMITED UP 8.8 PERCENT](#) below). Amtrak claimed in 2009 that non-Amtrak (federal) funding is required to restore the train east of New Orleans.

TEXAS EAGLE RIDERSHIP UP 4.3 PERCENT. Good news continues for the *Heartland Flyer's* Texas connection. Ridership increased from from 287,164 to 299,508 for FY-2011. The *Texas Eagle* operates between *Chicago – St. Louis – Little Rock – Fort Worth – Austin – San Antonio*. *Heartland Flyer* passengers can connect with the *Texas Eagle* at 1:25 PM southbound and 1:58 PM northbound.

SUNSET LIMITED UP 8.8 PERCENT. Amtrak's stepchild long distance train, the *Sunset Limited* carried 99,714 passengers this past year, up 8,030 passengers from last. The train remains just tri-weekly. The service suspension remains in effect between New Orleans and Orlando due to the 2005 Hurricane Katrina. The *Sunset Limited* currently operates between *Los Angeles – Tucson – El Paso – San Antonio – Houston – New Orleans*. What is Amtrak



The *Sunset Limited* has not operated between New Orleans and Orlando since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Why is it still in the Amtrak timetable?

trying to prove by keeping the discontinued stops in its timetable? Freight operations restarted just months following the hurricane. Amtrak applies a double standard to the route when it states that ADA requirements and station facilities must be rebuilt. Many Amtrak stops across the nation are unstaffed and do not meet the requirements in [Amtrak's Gulf Coast study](#).