



MIDLAND RAILWAY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
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The Honorable TerriLois Gregory
Representative, 10th District
State Capitol
Topeka, KS 66612

February 29, 2012

Re: HB 2689 Concerning Sale of Alcoholic Beverages on Railroad Cars

Dear Representative Gregory:

Please let me begin by introducing myself. I am the President of the Midland Railway, headquartered in Baldwin City, Kansas. I have served in that capacity since 1996 and as a volunteer since 1990. Midland began operations in 1987 resurrecting a railroad line that had been abandoned by the Santa Fe Railway. Midland is an all-volunteer, not-for-profit historical demonstration railroad. It has no paid employees. Its mission statement states that it “restores railroad artifacts, equipment and facilities and operates them as a demonstration historic railroad to educate the public about the role railroading played and continues to play, in the commercial, social and commercial life of the Heartland”.

The year 2012 will be Midland’s twenty-fifth year of operations. In recent years approximately 18-20,000 people per year have come to Douglas and Franklin Counties to ride Midland Railway trains. Its volunteers operate and maintain ten miles of track along with the associated locomotives, cars and machinery that are required. It is most grateful for various Federal/ Kansas grants to repair and improve facilities over the years but is striving to further improve its service offerings to the public and, of course, increase the revenues needed to sustain its operations.

I am writing to testify in support of the above-referenced Bill 2689 because its enactment will facilitate Midland Railway’s reintroducing a high quality full-service dinner train reminiscent of dining cars operated by the best railroads in the mid twentieth century. The revenues from this service will help to support Midland’s mission as a historical demonstration railroad. It will also bring many new visitors to Douglas and Franklin Counties that will patronize local facilities for dining, lodging and the like.

House Federal & State Affairs

Date: 3-05-12

Attachment # 12

In the 1990's Midland operated the "Prairie Pioneer Dinner Train" for several years. The train was successful but Midland did not own the rail cars and the owners moved them elsewhere after a few years. We still receive frequent inquiries about the dinner train. We now have an opportunity to bring dinner train service back to the Midland. The prospective operators have conducted a dinner train service very successfully since 1988 at another city in the Midwest. Most new restaurant ventures would have failed in far less than the intervening years but this train has flourished. We believe that addition of a dinner train will make a major contribution to the long term viability of the Midland Railway and bring an additional 10,000 or more visitors annually to Douglas and Franklin Counties. It will also create new employment opportunities. It's really a natural, Midland has operated its railroad for twenty five years and the dinner train has operated for twenty three years.

However, we do need assistance from the Kansas Legislature to bring this opportunity to fruition. Current Kansas Law limits the sale of alcoholic beverages on moving vehicles, including railroad trains to 3.2% beer. Many customers of upper end restaurants, such as a high-end dinner train, prefer wine or other beverages and sales of such beverages represent a significant portion of restaurant sales. Without the option for such sales, the opportunity to bring the dinner train to Douglas and Franklin Counties is questionable.

Since most upper end restaurants in Kansas now offer full-service beverages and the bill would comply with "local option" limitations, we believe that the legislation would be very much in the interest of the areas you represent.

This is to express as strongly as possible, Midland Railway's support for the pending legislation that you are sponsoring.

Yours very truly,

Michael K. Fox
President