



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2013
DAVID CRASE, MAYOR
CITY OF GARDEN CITY, KANSAS

CITY COMMISSION

DAVID D. CRASE,
Mayor

ROY CESSNA

MELVIN DALE

DAN FANKHAUSER

CHRIS LAW

MATTHEW C. ALLEN
City Manager

MELINDA A. HITZ, CPA
Finance Director

RANDALL D. GRISELL
City Counselor

Mister Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing my testimony to be presented regarding passenger rail service. I am David Crase, Mayor of Garden City, Kansas.

Passenger rail provides a transportation link to residents of southwest Kansas that is of growing importance and will likely become critical as rising energy prices curtail the attractiveness of driving and flying. Amtrak's Southwest Chief currently serves Kansas on its route between Chicago and Los Angeles on the host railroad line of Burlington Northern Santa Fe. Both eastbound and westbound trains stop at Garden City daily and served more than 49,000 Kansas passengers in 2012, including 7,887 Garden City passengers. These numbers continue to grow as Amtrak ridership increases. In 2012, all 15 of Amtrak's long-distance routes, including the Southwest Chief, experienced an increase in passengers resulting in their best combined ridership numbers in nearly two decades.

Passenger rail is a vital means of transportation for many in our community, from college students traveling between home and school to families who want a safe, affordable way to travel, to the elderly who can no longer drive. It is also an important transportation option for those from the business community who wish to remain productive during travel time. During the summer, the Southwest Chief is used by thousands of Boy Scouts nationwide who travel to and from Philmont Scout Ranch via the Raton Amtrak Station.

However, as you are aware, deteriorating track conditions are threatening this route. Citing maintenance costs and budget priorities, Amtrak is contemplating abandoning passenger service through western Kansas, eastern Colorado and northern New Mexico. Amtrak is asking for state and local funds to support maintenance and upgrades. The funds are needed for upgrades to ensure passenger safety.

The City of Garden City is part of a coalition—the Southwest Chief Rural Rail Partnership—comprised of Kansas cities working together to preserve the Southwest

CITY ADMINISTRATIVE
CENTER
301 N. 8TH
P.O. BOX 998
GARDEN CITY, KS
67846-0998
620.276.1160
FAX 620.276.1169
www.garden-city.org



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Chief through Kansas. Those cities include Newton, Hutchinson, Dodge City and Garden City. For over a century, passenger railroad service has transported the citizens of Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico to locations around the country. Our communities are working together through the Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico congressional delegations to explore solutions at the federal level. We will need the State's support to keep passenger rail accessible to the western part of Kansas. As these communities work to identify and secure federal support and funding we will need the State to be fully engaged and supportive.

In addition to providing travel options for the residents of our community, the Southwest Chief brings passengers from across the nation to Garden City. If the Southwest Chief is rerouted, we will lose a vital access point into our community. In addition, the economic impact of Amtrak ceasing operations along this section of the Southwest Chief would be substantial, including the loss of jobs.

We continue our outreach to the Kansas Congressional delegation to explore solutions to this issue, and the Partnership will continue working with them, BNSF, Amtrak and Colorado and New Mexico to solve this problem. With everyone working together we'll get the job done.