

BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

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APR 4 2007
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STB Ex Parte No. 671

RAIL CAPACITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS

KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

WRITTEN COMMENTS

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Date: April 3, 2007

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Comes now the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) on behalf of the State of Kansas before the Surface Transportation Board (Board) and files its written comments to this docket.

Consideration of rail capacity is a very important policy decision concerning transportation infrastructure, but not the only issue at hand. The following Comments were presented to the FRA concerning highway/railroad congestion problems.

"Comments by the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) on Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Docket No. FRA 2005-23774, Notice No. 1, RIN 2130-AB74: "Implementation of Program for Capital Grants for Rail Line Relocation and Improvement Projects."

The Kansas Department of Transportation has reviewed the subject NPRM and has comments on the importance and applicability of this program to rail and highway traffic safety in Kansas.

The following quotes from the supplementary information, "Background Section I" of the NPRM, truly address the highway and rail related traffic congestion and safety issues we are currently seeing in Kansas:

"This growth [of rail traffic] is being accommodated on a system that shrunk in response to condition noted above. The smaller physical plant is handling greater and greater freight volumes."

"This more intense use of rail infrastructure is especially challenging in communities that developed adjacent to or around rail lines, most built over a century ago on alignments appropriate to the times."

This new Title 49, Section 20154 funding could be used to address several situations in Kansas where the construction of new rail lines could enhance highway/railroad safety and alleviate traffic congestion and delays. To explain how this program could benefit Kansas, I will explain two recently encountered highway congestion and traffic delay situations that have been brought to the attention of the agency.

The first location is Caldwell, Kansas, a community with a population of 1,215, served by US-81 and Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP). The US-81/UP crossing is in the middle of the UP passing track. Use of this passing track is key to UP's rail operations, with the result being the crossing is blocked for extended lengths of time. Emergency services encounter lengthy delays as there are no valid alternate routes available. While this problem results in congestion on a federal highway, the best answer to the problem is the reconstruction of the passing track so that the federal highway is not within the passing track. The typical answer to this type of problem would be a grade separation at a cost in the range of \$5 to \$10 million. Extending the passing track outside of the crossing would be in the range of \$1 to \$2 million.

The second location is Coffeyville, Kansas, with a population of 10,357, served by US-169, US-166, UP and South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad (SK&O) railroad companies. The SK&O railroad system is made up of parts of three previous Class I railroads. SK&O now provides service to industries and commerce in Coffeyville and all of southeast Kansas. Coffeyville is the one location where they interconnect with UP.

The SK&O rail network was not designed to efficiently accommodate the rail traffic movements required. The US-169/SK&O at-grade crossing has approximately 60 train movements across it daily and it is not uncommon for traffic on the US-169 to see lengthy delays. Estimates for a grade separation at this crossing are in the range of \$10 to \$15 million. Rail system construction is currently being investigated within a much smaller budget.

These two communities are just an example of some in Kansas that would benefit from funds from the Capital Grants for Rail Line Relocation and Improvements Program. KDOT is very hopeful that Congress will appropriate funding for this program as authorized by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users. There is a great need for federal financial assistance for local rail line relocation and improvement projects in Kansas and elsewhere in the nation."

As indicated above it is KDOT's position that to develop and continue a sound rail transportation system with effective competition, attention must be given to rail/highway grade crossing issues and conflicts. Much congestion of both rail and truck transportation is the result of infrastructure bottlenecks. KDOT requests the Surface Transportation Board consider resolutions of rail/highway grade crossing bottlenecks as part of Requirements.

KDOT as representatives of the people of the State of Kansas requests the Board accept these written comments in this docket.

Respectfully submitted



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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

COPIES OF THE KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S WRITTEN COMMENTS HAS BEEN SERVED THIS 3rdrd DAY OF APRIL, 2007 BY FIRST CLASS MAIL, POSTAGE PREPAID TO THE FOLLOWING:

Surface Transportation Board
ATTN: STB Ex Parte No. 671
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