



December 6, 2021

The Honorable Michael L. Parson
Governor of Missouri
Missouri State Capitol
P.O. Box 720
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Dear Governor Parson:

On behalf of the Missouri business community along the *Missouri River Runner* line, please accept this request for \$2.5 million in funding to be allocated from Missouri's available American Rescue Plan funds, to retain full passenger train service along the St. Louis to Kansas City corridor. If funding is not provided, the full service will end after the last day of this month (December 31, 2021).

Since 1979 the State of Missouri has contracted with National Passenger Railroad (Amtrak) for provision of intercity passenger rail service along the St. Louis to Kansas City line. Intermediate stops for the *Missouri River Runner* have been Kirkwood, Washington, Hermann, Jefferson City, Sedalia, Warrensburg, Lee's Summit, and Independence. This service provides an option for connecting rural communities and smaller cities to major economic centers and promotes commerce and economic development, particularly in the areas surrounding stations, and gives rise to significant benefits in Missouri through travel/transportation and tourism/visitor spending.

During the 2021 Missouri legislative session, \$10.8 million was appropriated to pay Amtrak for the service. This amount was insufficient to cover the difference between fares paid by travelers and the cost of the train service, the arrearage for past years' contracts, and funds owed to Illinois for locomotive usage. The economic benefits for the State investment are far more than the appropriation.

Key findings from the pre-Covid *Missouri River Runner* Economic Impact study include:

- More than \$22 million in annual tax revenue is generated.
- \$208 million in annual economic activity is generated.
- 1,250 jobs and \$65 million in annual labor income provided.
- More than 172,555 passengers, with an average fare of \$32.47 per passenger.
- Riders spend an estimated \$21.8 million on hotels and \$25.3 million on meals and tourist attractions each year.
- Vendor and employment spending are greater than \$35 million annually.
- Eighty-two percent of Missourians live within 60 miles of a passenger station.

The State's current appropriation to Amtrak for train services is insufficient for all daily trains after December 31, 2021. At that time, not only will the second Missouri River Runner line cease operating, but Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) will be unable to fulfill the contract with Amtrak. As the State Legislature included in its appropriations language a prohibition against going into arrears on the contract, MoDOT has instructed Amtrak to cease operation of two of the four daily trains. The morning westbound trip from St. Louis, and afternoon eastbound trip from Kansas City will cease to operate.

The communities, travelers, colleges, businesses, Katy Trail users, and tourist attractions along the route rely on the flexible daily train departures to conveniently bring customers, students, tourists, and others to our communities. A reduction to once daily service in each direction will end the train service's ability to draw those seeking dependable outbound or returning departures. Ridership declines will result in further erosion of the route's financial performance.

While ridership has rebounded from the pandemic trough, passenger travel is still not at levels before the public health crisis began. Lower ridership has produced insufficient revenue to meet contract targets. Amtrak has taken steps to reduce operating costs, including targeted temporary service reductions, employee furloughs and pay reductions. However, the U.S. Congress provided relief funds to Amtrak and states like Missouri to resume full train service to assist with bringing the economy back. That financial assistance is still needed, if *Missouri River Runner* trains are to retain their transportation value with both daily round trips and allow communities to promote their activities, and bring ridership back to full levels.

Members of the communities, MoDOT, and Amtrak meet regularly to plan and execute strategies to maximize the value of passenger service to our local economies. Communities along the route testify to the number of visitors reaching their tourist attractions, students going to school, and residents and businesspeople traveling in Missouri, safely and economically on the train. Some of those testimonials are attached to this letter.

As our economy continues to transition out of the pandemic, as Americans make decisions about the best place for their businesses and families, and as the population demographics change, the future is bright for communities that provide transportation options. Please help us continue to move forward by maintaining full service on the Amtrak *Missouri River Runner* route with an allocation of unspent ARPA funds.

Page 3

The Honorable Michael L. Parson

December 6, 2021

Sincerely,

Daniel P. Mehan, President/CEO, Missouri Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Gary Watts, President, Hermann Area Chamber of Commerce

Tom Lesnak, President, Independence Chamber of Commerce

Gary Plummer, President & CEO, Jefferson City Area Chamber of Commerce

Joe Reardon, President & CEO, Greater Kansas City Area Chamber of Commerce

Peg Weathers, President & CEO, Kirkwood – Des Peres Area Chamber of Commerce

Matt Baird, Executive Director, Lee's Summit Chamber of Commerce

Tracy Henke, Chief Policy Officer, Greater St. Louis, Inc., and President, ChamberSTL

Debra Andresen, Executive Director, Sedalia Chamber of Commerce

Suzanne Taylor, Executive Director, Warrensburg Chamber of Commerce

Jennifer Giesike, President, Washington Area Chamber of Commerce

Cc: Patrick K. McKenna, Director, Missouri Department of Transportation

Attachments: Supporter List

Community Testimonials

2008 – 2023 Missouri River Runner Investments

Missouri River Runner
ARPA Funding Request
Supporters

Hermann (HEM)

Sen.Dave Schatz	District 26	
Sen.Mike Bernskoetter	District 6	
Rep. Aaron Griesheimer	District 61	
Bruce Cox	Mayor	City of Hermann
Gary Watts	President	Hermann Area Chamber of Commerce
Mary Kunstmann	Chair	Hermann Tourism Commission
Larry Miskel	Presiding Commissioner	Gasconade County
Bart Toedtman	Chairperson	Hermann Reg. Economic Development Corp.
Bonnie Prigge	Executive Director	Meramec Regional Planning Commission
Tammy Bruckerhoff	Director	City of Hermann Tourism & Economic Development

Independence (IDP)

Tom Lesnak	President	Independence Chamber of Commerce
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Jefferson City (JEF)

Rep. Dave Griffith	District 60	
Gary Plummer	President & CEO	Jefferson City Area Chamber of Commerce
Diane Gillespie	Executive Director	Jefferson City Convention and Visitors Bureau

Kansas City (KCY)

Joe Reardon	President/CEO	Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce
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Kirkwood (KWD)

Sen. Andrew Koenig	District 15	
Sen. Doug Beck	District 1	
Rep. Dean Plocher	District 89	
Rep Barbara Phifer	District 90	
Tim Griffin	Mayor	City of Kirkwood
Maggie Duwe	Councilmember	City of Kirkwood
Liz Gibbons	Councilmember	City of Kirkwood
Bob Sears	Councilmember	City of Kirkwood
Wallace Ward	Councilmember	City of Kirkwood
Mark Zimmer	Councilmember	City of Kirkwood
Peg Weathers	President/CEO	Kirkwood-Des Peres Area Chamber Commerce
Donna Poe	Executive Director	Downtown Kirkwood

Lee's Summit (LEE)

Donnie Rodgers, Jr.	Executive Director	Downtown Lee's Summit Main Street, Inc.
Matt Baird	President	Lee's Summit Chamber of Commerce

St. Louis (STL)

Tracy Henke	Chief Policy Officer President	Greater St. Louis, Inc., and ChamberSTL
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Sedalia (SED)

David Dick	Presiding Commissioner	Pettis County
Jim Marcum	Western Commissioner	Pettis County
Israel Baeza	Eastern Commissioner	Pettis County
John Kehde	Mayor	City of Sedalia
Debra Andresen	Executive Director	Sedalia Area Chamber of Commerce
Carolyn Crooker	Executive Director	Sedalia Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Warrensburg (WAR)

Sen. Denny Hoskins	District 21	
Rep. Dan Houx	District 54	
Rep. Kurtis Gregory	District 51	
Scott Holmberg	Mayor	City of Warrensburg
Suzanne Taylor	Executive Director	Warrensburg Chamber of Commerce
Bill Bernier	President	Depot Renovation
Tom Koenigsfeld	President of the Board	Warrensburg Convention & Visitors Bureau
Jill Purvis	Executive Director	Warrensburg Main Street

Washington (WAH)

Rep. Jeff Porter	District 42	
Tim Brinker	Presiding Commissioner	Franklin County
Sandy Lucy	Mayor	City of Washington
Jennifer Giesike	President	Washington Area Chamber of Commerce
Sal Maniaci	Economic Development Director	City of Washington
Tyler King	Executive Director	Downtown Washington, Inc.
Craig Mueller	Council Member	Washington Transportation Council
Chad Eggen	Executive Director	Boonslick Regional Planning Commission

Missouri River Runner
ARPA Funding Request
Business Community Testimonials

“Two each way, Amtrak passenger service is a vital service to the Warrensburg community for several reasons. It benefits our residents for commuter transportation, students at the University of Central Missouri who travel to and from home on weekends, and our military members stationed at Whiteman Air Force Base who get to explore Missouri as well as receive out-of-town family members.”

-Suzanne Taylor, IOM, Executive Director, Warrensburg Chamber of Commerce

"Hungry travelers are delighted to find my cozy bakery-café, Great Harvest, just across from the platform. Anticipating a long journey, departing passengers order breakfast or lunch to go as an alternative to the dining car. Our bakery provides a friendly safe place to wait for the train, notably during the COVID-19 shutdown of the station in between trains."

-Paul Barkofske, owner of Great Harvest, Kirkwood, MO

“Cornucopia is located right across from the Amtrak Station. We regularly get visitors to the store either waiting to catch a train, just getting off a train, or those waiting to pick someone up. Amtrak is popular with Senior citizens and students. A great asset to our Community. Ridership will rise with the growth of the Tourist Areas it visits.”

-Walter Smith, owner, Cornucopia, Kirkwood, MO

“Amtrak is important to every business in every community. It is very beneficial as it promotes sidewalk shopping activities for small business owners who appreciate sidewalk shoppers. Highways and byways are also important, but nothing happens unless visitors stop, get out of their cars, trucks, boats, or planes. Amtrak visitors are capable of walking the many shops and venues because they are captured shoppers and spend their dollars!!”

-Mike Sloan, Hermann Wurst Haus, Hermann, MO

“Opening during COVID-19 could have been much more difficult without the built-in publicity the Amtrak lines provide. Lamy's in Sedalia has become a hotspot for Amtrak riders day and night. Passengers eagerly await their trip to Hermann with mimosas and brunch and weary travelers join us for relaxing evenings in a refreshing atmosphere. We are excited to watch the further development of Sedalia as a tourist destination especially via the Amtrak.”

-G. Reid Swearingen, Chief Marketing Ofcr., Elliot Management Services, Sedalia, MO

Missouri River Runner
ARPA Funding Request
Public and Private Investments Timeline
2008 - 2023

The State of Missouri, Union Pacific Railroad and Amtrak have made critical investments in railroad infrastructure to improve the quality of service through improved schedule reliability, fuel efficiency and passenger safety and comfort.

2008 New railroad passing siding at California allowing passenger trains to pass slower freight trains. \$8 million paid for with Federal and State funds.

2008 St. Louis opens new \$31.8 million Gateway Station serving local transit, intercity bus companies and Amtrak. Fourteen passenger trains daily make this the busiest in Missouri.

2011 Sedalia welcomes Amtrak passengers back to the restored 1886 depot. The \$2 million project was financed with a combination of USDOT, CDBG and local funds. The Missouri State Fair and Katy Trail are major traffic generators for Amtrak trains.

2013 Union Pacific opens new Osage River bridge near Osage City, removing single track bottleneck along route and improving train schedules. \$28 million project paid for with Federal, State and Union Pacific funds.

2014 Hermann opens new transportation center and museum, replacing small wooden shelter, in place since start of regular Amtrak service in 1991.

2017 Thirty-three new US-built Charger locomotives deployed. \$218 million order paid for by Federal government. These 4,400 hp locomotives have rapid acceleration, lower fuel consumption, lower emissions (meet EPA's highest standard, Tier 4) than the older locomotives they replaced.

2022 New passenger boarding platform to open at Warrensburg, paid for by Amtrak with Federal grants.

2022 New rail passenger cars, also built by Siemens in California, will replace 30-year-old railcars. Coaches have wheelchair lifts, larger windows, more bike racks, and safety features.

2023 Construction of two new passenger boarding platforms, enhanced pedestrian crossing warning devices and visual and audible passenger announcement system at Kirkwood, now in design. Construction estimated at \$5-\$7 million.