

Item 8 From: Regional Transportation Council
Thursday, July 10, 2025
North Central Texas Council of Governments

Heartland Flyer Funding for One Year

☒ Action ☐ Possible Action ☐ Information Minutes: 5

Presenter: Michael Morris, NCTCOG

Item Summary: Staff is requesting \$3.5 million in Regional Toll Revenue funds to secure the continued service of the Heartland Flyer for one year. Staff will seek reimbursement from the State of Texas and initiate a ridership campaign reducing the need for a subsidy. This service is critical for the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup 2026.

Background: The 89th Texas Legislature elected not to support Texas Department of Transportation's request for funds to match Oklahoma's funds for Heartland Flyer service. There are 80,000 trips per year using this inter-city rail system. This item is an emergency funding commitment to extend service long enough to develop a second-year funding program in order to get back to the 90th Legislative session. If service is terminated, the federal government will seek reimbursement of funds expended in the corridor. Electronic Item 8 contains correspondence requesting our assistance.

Performance Measure(s) Addressed: Administrative, Transit



June 20, 2025

Michael Morris
North Central Texas Council of Governments
Centerpoint II
616 Six Flags Drive
Arlington, TX 76011

Dear Michael,

For more than 25 years, the *Heartland Flyer* has been key to our regional success as a global destination and has been central to our tourism industry, business community, and thriving economy. With service that supports the state and region's economic growth and connectivity, sustaining the *Heartland Flyer* is crucial to ensuring continued momentum and mobility in Texas.

Overall, the *Heartland Flyer* generates \$5.3 million in direct economic benefits and an estimated \$23.7 million in economic activity. Serving over 80,000 customers in FY24 and reaching \$2.2 million in ticket revenue overall, the *Heartland Flyer* alleviates congestion on one of Texas' busiest highways and supports workforce mobility and job access – key pillars of Texas' \$97.5 billion travel industry.

In Fort Worth alone, the \$3.5 billion tourism economy benefits significantly from continued rail service. Amtrak is also investing over \$63 million in ADA station improvements at 16 stations in Texas, further bolstering the state's passenger rail network. With the Dallas-Fort Worth region set to host more 2026 World Cup matches than any other U.S. city next year, it will also be vital to support increased regional mobility.

Operated in partnership with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT), the *Heartland Flyer* now faces imminent service suspension no later than Oct. 1 unless Texas secures its share of funding.

From reviewing claw back provisions at the federal level to looking for additional funding levers that may be pulled, it is essential that we find a solution to alleviate the funding shortage. We look forward to working together to keep the *Heartland Flyer* on track.

Sincerely,

Mayor Mattie Parker
Fort Worth

Mayor Tommy Moore
Gainesville

Judge Andy Eads
Denton County