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News Release

Convention & Visitors Bureau to host welcome event for Amtrak

Cookies, water to be served; picnic planned afterward at Wilson Park rotunda

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (June 8, 2017) — The Arkansas City Convention and Visitors Bureau will be host to a special reception event on Friday morning to welcome a special Amtrak train to Arkansas City.

Amtrak will operate the invitation-only one-way inspection train on the BNSF Railway from Oklahoma City to Kansas City as part of an initiative to evaluate the potential for restoring passenger rail service.

The purpose of the trip is to see the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway and explore the opportunity to extend Amtrak's Heartland Flyer passenger rail service north to Newton, where it can connect with the existing Amtrak Southwest Chief route linking Newton to Kansas City, Missouri.

Invited guests accompanying Amtrak and BNSF officials on the train will be from state transportation departments in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas, along with local leaders interested in restoring Amtrak service on the route, including Ark City Mayor Duane Oestmann and City Manager Nick Hernandez.

"As a retired railroader, I am excited about the opportunity to potentially bring back passenger rail service to Arkansas City and the surrounding area," Oestmann said.

"The economic benefit of bringing more visitors through town, not to mention the travel convenience for local citizens — especially Oklahoma Sooners fans who could travel to Oklahoma City and back on the train — would be well worth the expenditure needed to bring the rail line up to passenger standards."

The train will operate on the schedule shown below. Each of the stops between Guthrie, Oklahoma, and Wichita will take place at the former Santa Fe stations in each of those respective cities.

In Arkansas City, the BNSF depot is located at 520 E. Fifth Ave., east of the Arkansas City Fire-EMS Department and north of Two Rivers Co-op. The train is expected to arrive between 10:15 and 10:45.

"We encourage as many Arkansas City residents as possible to come to the depot and welcome this special Amtrak train to town," said City Manager Nick Hernandez.

For immediate release

more

“Let’s show Amtrak that Arkansas City is excited about this opportunity with our welcoming ways!”

Residents who wish to come to the depot area to welcome the train are asked to congregate in the grassy area west of the depot building, across the street from the Arkansas City Fire-EMS Department.

The Convention and Visitors Bureau will provide cookies and water at a tent there for residents who attend the reception. Hernandez and Oestmann hope to disembark the train and visit with attendees.

Both Hernandez and Oestmann plan to ride with the train from Oklahoma City to Kansas City.

Parking for this special reception event is available in the western half of the parking lot in front of the depot. Overflow parking is available to the north on East Central Avenue, to the south on East Fifth Avenue and to the west on South D Street.

After the train departs Ark City, the Friends of Wilson Park urge everyone in attendance to gather at the Wilson Park rotunda for a potluck picnic lunch. Food will not be provided, so please pack a lunch.

For more information about the train visit, call Marc Magliari with Amtrak at (312) 554-5390, or email him at GovernmentAffairsCHI@Amtrak.com or MediaRelationsChicago@Amtrak.com.

June 9 Amtrak inspection train schedule

This inspection train will operate as an extra service on the route and schedules are approximate after departing the Paul Adams Memorial Platform at the Oklahoma City Amtrak Station at 7:45 a.m. Friday.

Brief stops will be made at current or former Amtrak stations in the following communities. All times listed below are estimated departure times, unless otherwise noted:

- 7:45 a.m. — Oklahoma City Santa Fe Station (downtown)
- 8:30 a.m. — Guthrie, Oklahoma
- 9:15 a.m. — Perry, Oklahoma
- 10 a.m. — Ponca City, Oklahoma
- **10:45 a.m. — Arkansas City**
- 11:55 a.m. — arrive at Wichita Union Station
- 12:05 p.m. — depart Wichita Union Station
- 1 p.m. — Newton
- 3:45 p.m. — Topeka
- 5:30 p.m. (projected arrival time) — Kansas City Union Station

News media are invited to ride the train from Oklahoma City to Guthrie or from Wichita to Newton on a space-available basis. They must arrange for their own return travel.

Call Magliari at (312) 554-5390 prior to 6 p.m. Thursday to make arrangements, or email him at GovernmentAffairsCHI@Amtrak.com or MediaRelationsChicago@Amtrak.com.

Local history of passenger rail travel

Wichita last had scheduled passenger train service in 1979, when the Amtrak Lone Star route between Chicago and Houston was discontinued.

Communities from Fort Worth, Texas, to Oklahoma City have been served since 1999 by the Amtrak Heartland Flyer, which is sponsored by the Oklahoma and Texas departments of transportation.

The Heartland Flyer makes connections to the Amtrak Texas Eagle and Sunset Limited trains in Fort Worth and San Antonio, respectively.

Extending the Flyer to Newton is an ongoing topic among Amtrak, BNSF, and local, state and federal officials. An extension would enable train-to-train connections in Newton with the Amtrak Southwest Chief between Chicago and Los Angeles, through Kansas City and Albuquerque.

In 2016, Amtrak began a Thruway Bus Connection between Newton and Oklahoma City, via Wichita.

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