

Chapter 7 – Inter-City Passenger Surface Transportation

Bus

Inter-City Passenger Bus

The OTO region is currently served by one inter-city bus company, Greyhound Lines, Inc., which serves over 2,300 destinations in North America. There are 31 Greyhound locations in Missouri, including Springfield, Kansas City, and St. Louis. Branson is also served by Greyhound. Many calls are received through the OTO Rideshare telephone number requesting transit between Springfield and Branson, or Kansas City and Branson. Greyhound is one of the few affordable services for such transportation. As Branson is about 50 miles from the north edge of Springfield, taxi or other private services can be expensive. One difficulty, however, is connecting to Greyhound from the airport. Greyhound connects many smaller towns in southwest Missouri, but City Utilities transit no longer directly serves the Springfield-Branson Airport. Private ground transportation services, such as taxicabs, are available. The Greyhound bus station in Springfield is on the northeast corner of Springfield, whereas the airport is on the very northwest. Greyhound's service to St. Louis and Kansas City provides a connection to Amtrak service.

Strategy to Implement Plan Goals

- *Pursue options to connect fixed-route transit service to the Springfield-Branson National Airport, providing a better connection to inter-city bus service such as Greyhound.*
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Charter Service

The Springfield area also has a number of charter bus companies and companies offering bus tours to popular tourist area in the region. Local school districts will also utilize charter bus service to provide transportation for out-of-town school trips, including sporting events.

Train

Springfield does not have passenger train service. Current discussions regarding national transportation infrastructure have focused on high-speed passenger rail. Numerous proposals exist, but most focus on improving existing passenger rail service. Proposals for future corridors

show new rail lines extending from Kansas City, through Wichita and on to Tulsa. Springfield is shown to provide connecting bus service to these high speed passenger corridors.

In 2007, due to congestion along the corridor between St. Louis and Kansas City, Missouri Department of Transportation officials requested that Amtrak study the possibility of service between St. Louis and Springfield. The mainline between St. Louis and Springfield is predominantly single-track, travels through rural countryside with varying terrain and nearly half the trackage is on curves. As of 2007, BNSF Railway Company operated 12 freight trains per day on this track. About 90 miles of track remains jointed, whereas most is welded. Due to funding constraints, it could be several years before it has all been replaced with welded track. Much of the maximum authorized speed along this track is 40 to 45 miles per hour. Though passenger trains can travel at higher speeds, their train speed is limited to the track speed imposed upon the line by the Federal Railroad Administration. Track improvements and a MoDOT evaluation of the adequacy of signaling requirements for at-grade crossings would be necessary.

Should the route between St. Louis and Springfield be funded, the following station stops have been recommended –

- St. Louis
- Kirkwood
- Sullivan
- Rolla
- Lebanon
- Springfield
- (Branson) - possible connection by shuttle

Stations and shelters do not currently exist at these locations along the route and funding sources for those facilities, as well as passenger platforms, would have to be identified. Once in Springfield, this BNSF line intersects the heavily traveled Thayer Sub (Memphis-Springfield route), a primary coal route from the Powder River Basin to the southeast. It has been recommended that a Springfield station be located east of downtown to avoid conflicts with this rail traffic.

Figure 48 - National High Speed Rail Plan

Source: US Department of Transportation



A trip to St. Louis from Springfield by automobile takes about 3 hours. The same trip by Greyhound bus takes about 4 hours. Direct flights between the two cities are no longer offered. It is estimated that given the current track conditions and the stops along the way, a passenger train trip between St. Louis and Springfield would take nearly 6 hours.

The study recognizes that the connection between St. Louis and Springfield has strategic merit and could potentially carry 34,000 passengers per year, but service is not feasible given today's current track conditions and population densities. Significant capital would need to be invested along the corridor and for each station.

The Missouri Department of Transportation has not precluded the possibility of passenger rail service to and from Springfield. The Missouri State Rail Plan will study both freight and passenger rail in the state. OTO will participate in this planning process.

Interest in passenger rail also exists locally. The draft Springfield Strategic Plan recommends conducting a study to determine the feasibility of passenger rail service between Springfield, St. Louis, and Kansas City. The Plan recommends looking for corridors beyond existing freight track, with one option being the medians along Interstate I-44 and Highway 13.

Strategy to Implement Plan Goals

- ***OTO should stay involved with discussions that would bring passenger rail to Springfield.***
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The most prevalent concern regarding passenger rail, high speed or otherwise, is funding for operations. Federal grants can contribute significantly to capital costs for passenger rail, but operations must be paid for by each state. In Missouri, funding for Amtrak operations comes from general revenue and must be approved annually by the General Assembly. This creates an unstable funding situation.

Strategy to Implement Plan Goals

- ***The Missouri General Assembly is encouraged to find a stable funding source for passenger rail in Missouri.***
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