

Pioneer Passenger Rail Service Testimony
Spring Bartlett
2/7/24

This testimony is in regard to HB 4109-4 SECTION 5. (1) The Department of Transportation shall pursue cooperative efforts with the State of Idaho to obtain assistance from the Federal Railroad Administration to restore service on the Amtrak Pioneer Line.

When the train ran from Baker City to Portland in the 80's my family took it to spend Thanksgiving with my sister-in-law and her family who lived in Vancouver, Washington. One year the Columbia Gorge was treacherous with ice and freezing rain. We would not have been able to go but for the train. I had two young daughters at the time and they had an adventure they remember to this day.

If the service were reinstated I would go to Portland for cultural experiences. Now, I find it too stressful to drive. The I-85 freeway is closed more often due to ever increasing hazardous driving conditions from a changing climate.

It would be great to hop on a train to Boise to get to medical services. Medical specialist options in Baker City are decreasing, as I age and have greater medical needs. I am also less inclined to drive in heavy traffic with compromised eyesight.

If the rail service went to Salt Lake City I would be able to visit my daughter and her family more often. I don't fly much because of the heavy carbon footprint, as well as the inconvenience of a three hour drive to the Boise Airport.

I believe that the reinstatement of passenger rail service to underserved rural communities is an idea whose time has come, and have been actively advocating for the reinstatement of the Pioneer Line since 2019. There are others in my small remote community of an aging demographic with similar needs and desires. A petition in support of reinstating the Pioneer was circulated Halfway in 2020 and gathered 322 signatures. The Halfway city council passed a resolution in support at that time. The petition we did last month, January of 2024 had 148 signatures including 25 businesses. One in Baker City included Halfway's signatures and had over 1,000 signatures from Baker County. Increased economic opportunities would be a great benefit were the train to stop in Baker City as it once did.

I dream of a day when my grandchildren have the option to come visit their Nana by train. Thank-you for considering my testimony.

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