


Dec 8, 2025 - News

Texas-Oklahoma train route could be key in World Cup travel



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The World Cup could increase Amtrak ridership in 2026. Photo: Brandon Bell/Getty Images

Thousands of visitors from across the country and world will converge on Dallas-Fort Worth for the [2026 FIFA Men's World Cup](#).

- Many might arrive by train.

Why it matters: The future of one of the train routes — the Heartland Flyer, which operates daily between [Fort Worth](#) and Oklahoma City — is at risk.

- The line will continue through next summer, but its funding beyond that is uncertain.

Catch up quick: The 206-mile route has been jointly funded by the Texas and Oklahoma departments of transportation since 2006.

- Texas' portion, about \$7 million requested by TxDOT, was not included in the state's biennial budget this year. The state Legislature doesn't meet again until 2027.
- The Regional Transportation Council, which is part of the North Central Texas Council of Governments, [spent \\$3.5 million](#) to keep the Heartland Flyer running

transportation plans for the World Cup.

- The council of governments is spending millions to upgrade metro trains and other transportation services to prepare for the influx of visitors.
- As many as 100,000 people are expected to visit Arlington on each of the nine match days next summer.

The big picture: About [1.2 million international visitors](#) are expected to visit the U.S. cities hosting World Cup matches.

- FIFA [estimates](#) foreign travelers will stay in the country about 12 days, likely moving between cities.

Between the lines: Many international visitors are coming from countries with better rail transportation systems than in the U.S., council of governments transportation director Michael Morris tells Axios.

- They "may not be likely rental car buyers and maybe will take advantage of our light rail system and our regional rail system," Morris said.

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By the numbers: Even without an international event, ridership on the Heartland Flyer exceeds 80,000 a year.

- Ridership has been increasing since 2020 and is higher than pre-pandemic ridership of nearly 69,000 in the 2019 fiscal year.

- It takes about four hours with stops, including in Gainesville and Norman, Oklahoma, where OU is located.

What they're saying: The trip might take slightly longer than the drive, but it's better than fighting traffic on Interstate 35, Amtrak spokesperson Marc Magliari tells Axios.

- "Windshield time is wasted time. You can't nap. You can't work. You can't read," he said.



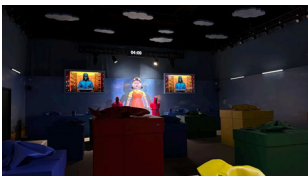
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