

**Amtrak Cascades Preliminary Service Development Plan**  
Public Review Draft Alternatives Development and Recommendations Report

***Appendix B***  
*Preliminary Purpose and Need Engagement  
Summary*

# 1 Overview

2 The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is developing  
3 a preliminary Service Development Plan (SDP) for Amtrak Cascades in the  
4 segment of the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor (PNWRC)<sup>1</sup> between  
5 Vancouver, British Columbia and Portland, Oregon. This work will be used to  
6 guide improvements to the PNWRC with a focus on increasing intercity  
7 passenger rail service to accommodate growing travel demand in the  
8 corridor through the next 20 years. Strategies to reduce travel times, improve  
9 safety, enhance passenger amenities, and achieve greater schedule  
10 reliability of Amtrak Cascades will be considered.

11 The SDP is critical to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) project  
12 development process. It is an iterative process that includes service  
13 planning, preliminary engineering, environmental analysis, and alternatives  
14 analysis. Each iteration provides more specific information as the project  
15 moves toward the implementation phase of final design and construction.  
16 The SDP process starts early in project development, with the intent of  
17 completing basic project development work prior to starting project-level  
18 analysis that meets National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.  
19 The goal of this early work is to identify and resolve issues prior to starting  
20 NEPA. The SDP will later be updated with information generated during  
21 NEPA analysis, and then refined further as service planning and preliminary  
22 engineering continue after the NEPA decision.

23 To guide the SDP work, WSDOT prepared a Preliminary Purpose and  
24 Need statement that describes why service improvements are being  
25 considered and the issues they are intended to address. The Preliminary  
26 Purpose and Need statement is the primary focus of public engagement  
27 during this phase of the planning effort.

28 WSDOT gathered input on the Preliminary Purpose and Need during a 45-day comment period from January  
29 10 to February 24, 2023.

## 30 Targeted audiences

31 To ensure that future investments benefit the most people, WSDOT sought public input on the draft Preliminary  
32 Purpose and Need Statement from a wide range of perspectives in the corridor.

- 33 • Government agencies
- 34 • Municipal planning organizations (MPOs) and regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs)
- 35 • Local jurisdictions
- 36 • Transit agencies
- 37 • Regulatory agencies
- 38 • Other government entities



A map of Amtrak Cascades route and station areas.

<sup>1</sup> On October 20, 1992, FRA designated this passenger rail corridor as one of five original corridors called for in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991. The FRA classifies the PNWRC as a Regional Express Corridor, providing service between mid-sized and large cities at 90-125 mph.

## Amtrak Cascades Preliminary Service Development Plan

### Public Review Draft Alternatives Development and Recommendations Report

- 1 • Native American tribes
- 2 • Non-governmental organizations
- 3     ○ Rail/ transportation organizations
- 4     ○ Equity and environmental justice organizations
- 5     ○ Economic development organizations
- 6 • Individuals
- 7     ○ WSDOT public email list subscribers and social media followers
- 8     ○ Non-English speakers, including, but not limited to the following languages:
- 9         ▪ Spanish
- 10        ▪ Vietnamese
- 11        ▪ Chinese
- 12     ○ Low-income (annual household income below \$50,000)

## Engagement methods

14 An important part of understanding what travelers need from Amtrak Cascades is knowing what factors drive  
15 their decisions about whether to take the train for their trip. The recent pandemic prompted wide-ranging  
16 changes to travel behavior, but not all these changes are expected to persist in the long-term. Achieving insight  
17 into the current decision-making considerations people apply to their travel choices was a key goal of the  
18 engagement process for the Preliminary Purpose and Need.

19 WSDOT approached this process with the goal of getting feedback that represents a broad range of  
20 perspectives from as many people as possible, particularly from groups of people who are typically under-  
21 represented in public outreach responses.

22 The engagement tools and methods used by the project team are described below.

### Website and comment form

24 The project website provided information about the Preliminary SDP and linked to a comment form. The  
25 primary information was posted on the website in English, Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Somali, Spanish, Russian  
26 and Vietnamese.

27 The digital comment form asked respondents for input on the evolution of their travel habits through the  
28 pandemic, their experience with Amtrak Cascades and what would persuade them to take the train more  
29 frequently, and their priorities for the Preliminary Purpose and Need. The comment form was available in  
30 English, Chinese, Spanish and Vietnamese, which are the leading languages spoken by those in the  
31 Washington state Amtrak Cascades service corridor.

### Notifications

33 **Emails** with background information and announcement of the public comment period were distributed in  
34 January 2023 to:

- 35 • Municipal planning organizations (MPOs) and regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs),  
36 local jurisdictions, and transit agencies
- 37 • Regulatory agencies
- 38 • Other government entities
- 39 • Non-governmental organizations (rail/ transportation, equity and environmental justice, economic  
40 development organizations, etc.)
- 41 • 21,411 subscribers to WSDOT public email lists on topics related to Amtrak Cascades

- 150 non-English language media outlets in western Washington

**Social media announcements** were posted on WSDOT and Amtrak Cascades Facebook, Twitter and TikTok accounts. Social media posts were also used to remind followers to submit input via the comment form before the close of the comment period.

**A letter and email** were sent to all Washington and Oregon tribes along the corridor requesting feedback.

## ***Amplification strategies***

The following amplification strategies were performed virtually in accordance with COVID restrictions.

**A text message campaign** targeted in-language and low-income populations. The project team sent English, Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese texts to share the corresponding comment form link with 10,000 mobile phone contacts throughout the comment period. Click rates on the comment form link were generally higher than the industry average for ads in Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The contact breakdown included:

- 1,000 Chinese-speakers (3.6% click rate)
- 1,200 Vietnamese-speakers (3.7% click rate)
- 2,000 Spanish-speakers (1.8% click rate)
- 5,800 English-speaking individuals with annual income below \$50,000 (2.3% click rate)

**A video tailored to elicit comment form responses** was promoted via a social mirroring digital outreach campaign that included a customized video to reach adults 18 and older within 10 miles of Amtrak Cascades stations. People are more likely to click on a video than on a display ad so the project team created a video as a specific digital carrot to carry the message. Viewers were asked to provide input, with the potential to win two tickets on Amtrak Cascades and concert tickets to Ed Sheeran following completion of the comment form. The video was digitally mirrored through Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok posts, which resulted in more than one million impressions and generated nearly 4,000 clicks on the comment form link during the campaign. The click-through rate for this campaign (0.52%) was almost eight times the national average. The goal of the video was to:

- Invite the public to fill out the comment form
- Introduce the opportunity to win prize incentives
- Explain that WSDOT is hosting this comment period to ensure Amtrak Cascades funding benefits the most people

**Facebook posts were translated into Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese** and publications and organizations that serve these in-language populations were tagged to further target limited-English-speaking audiences—resulting in more than 2,000 views and almost 200 clicks.

**Webinars** were held for three key audiences during the comment period:

- Technical audiences, including MPOs and RTPOs, state and local government representatives, local transit agencies, regulatory agencies, and other government entities (hosted on January 26 from 2 – 3:30 PM) – 41 participants.
- Rail-advocacy organizations (hosted on February 1 from 1 – 2 PM) – 26 participants.
- Public audiences, including non-governmental organizations and station area community members (hosted on February 7 from 5:30 – 6:30 PM) – 70 participants.

**Earned media coverage** from [The Urbanist](#), [Local Today News](#), and social media shares from the Washington Democrats Environment and Climate Caucus and the [Burlington Chamber of Commerce](#).

# What we heard

## Summary

The primary feedback WSDOT received is that people see the need for more passenger train service. The current schedule sometimes makes it inconvenient to use Amtrak Cascades and more frequent service would encourage people to use the service. People also want the trains to operate reliably. Travel time is also important to people. Another commonly mentioned need was for better connections to and from stations. Many people feel they need a car at their destination. Better local travel options could make the train a more viable alternative to driving.

## Comment form feedback

Throughout the comment period, the project team collected a total of 4,717 comment forms. Some totals may not sum to 4,717 as some people did not respond to every question in the comment form. Insights below also include comments received by email and letter.

## Demographics of participants

The 14-question comment form included four optional questions at the end that invited participants to share some demographic details to give the project team insight into who the amplification strategy reached. Approximately 4,000 of the total number of comment form respondents chose to answer the demographic questions, providing important and statistically significant regressions on the core ten questions on the comment form. An overview of how respondents identified can be found below.

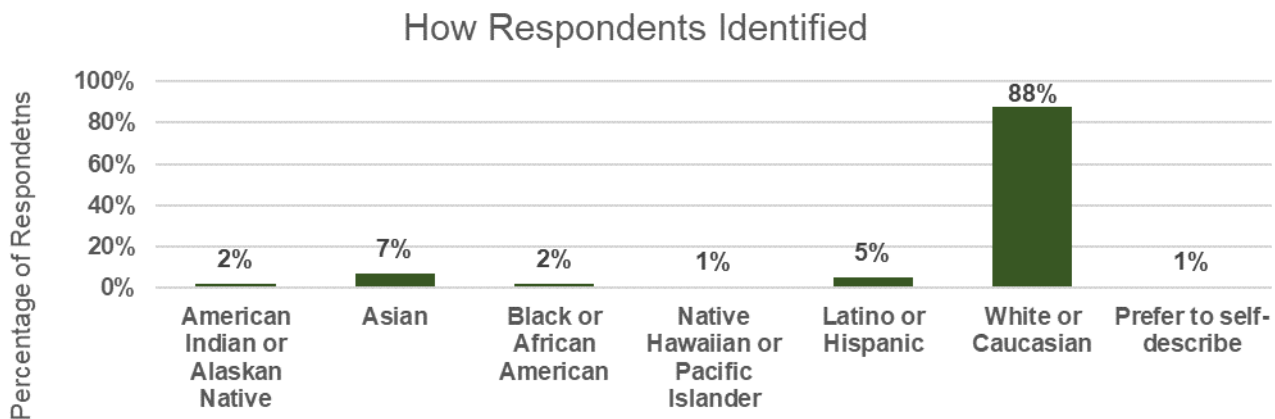
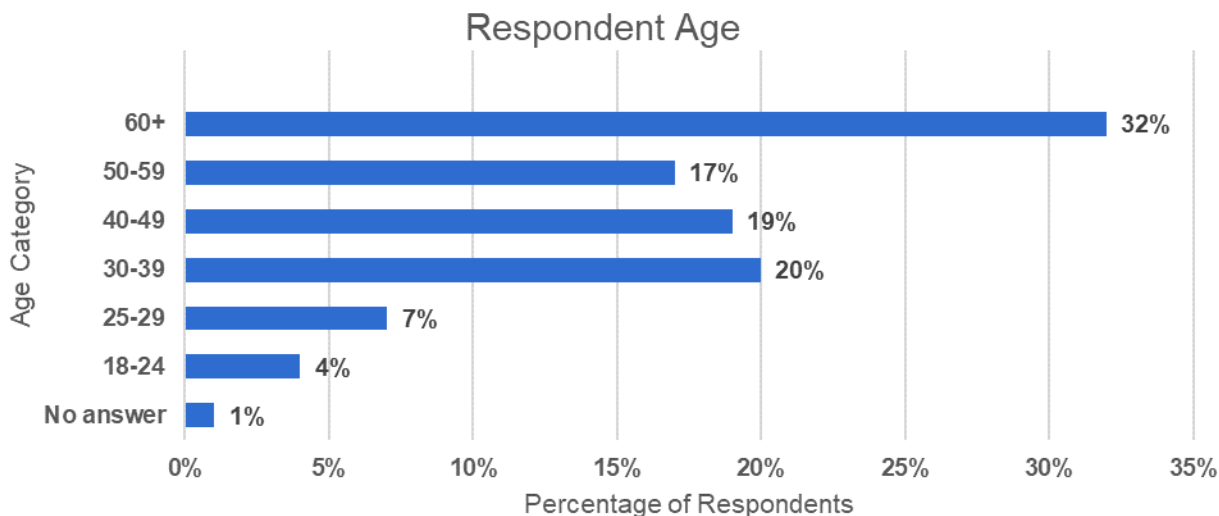


Figure 1

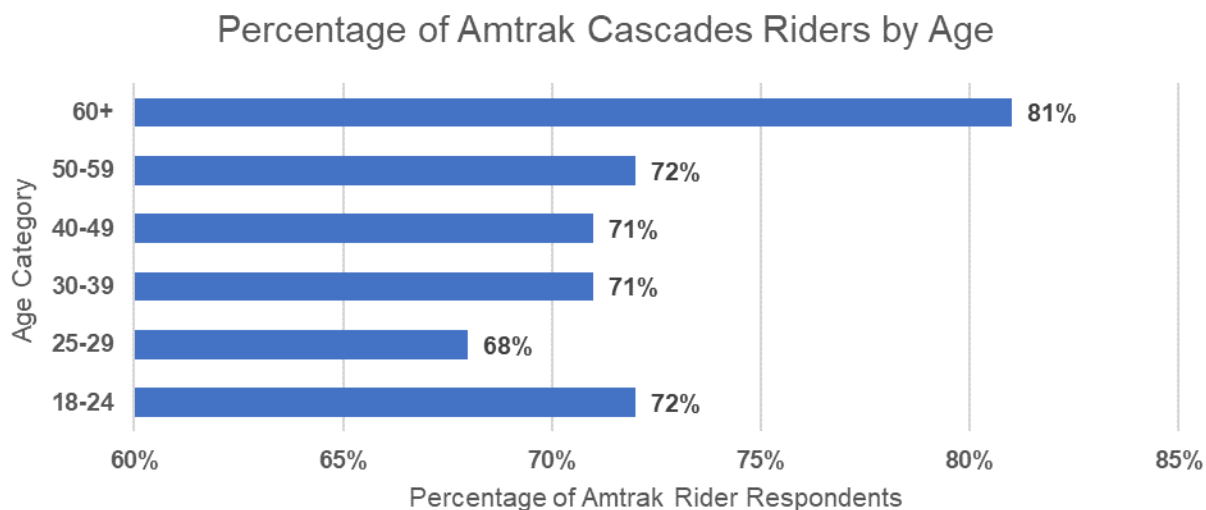
Most commenters identified as White or Caucasian (88%), with 7% identifying as Asian, 5% as Latino or Hispanic, 2% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 2% as Black (Figure 1). A small number of people (60) preferred to self-describe, 61 people refused to answer this question, and 331 people skipped it. The above totals do not sum to 100% because respondents could select more than one option if they identified as multi-racial. There were no significant differences in answers from respondents based solely on racial identity.

Most participants chose to complete the comment form in English, but in-language responses included eighteen in Spanish, six in Vietnamese, and one in Chinese.



1  
2 *Figure 2*

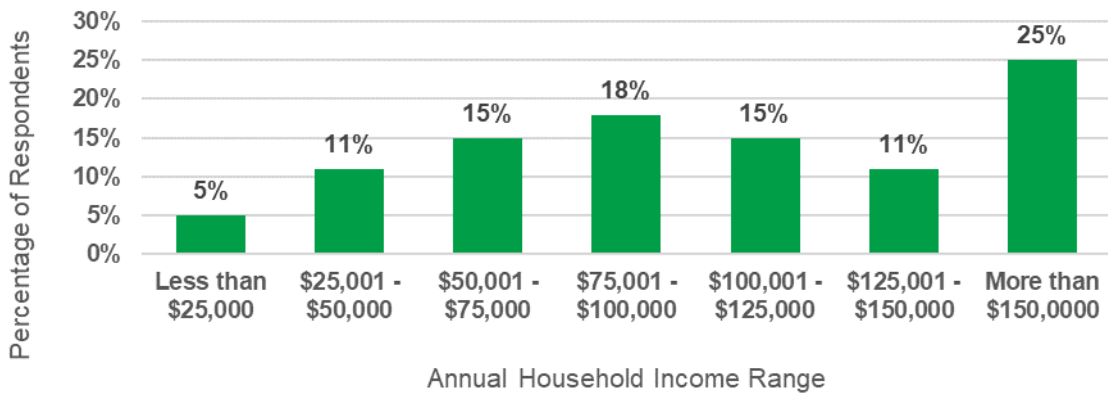
3 Most respondents (32%) were aged 60 or older (*Figure 2*). This age demographic represents a significant  
4 portion of current Amtrak Cascades ridership. WSDOT understands that younger demographics are less likely  
5 to own cars and could be a large portion of future ridership. 7% of respondents were aged 25-29 and 4% were  
6 between 18 and 24 years old.



7  
8 *Figure 3*

9 Of those who shared their demographic details, 74% reported that they had ridden an Amtrak Cascades train  
10 at least once. The largest rider age demographic is people 60 or older with 81% of people in that age bracket  
11 reporting riding the train before (*Figure 3*). Respondents aged 25-29 had the lowest percentage (68%) of  
12 people reporting they had ridden Amtrak Cascades before, while the other age demographics had a similar  
13 percentage of Amtrak Cascades riders.

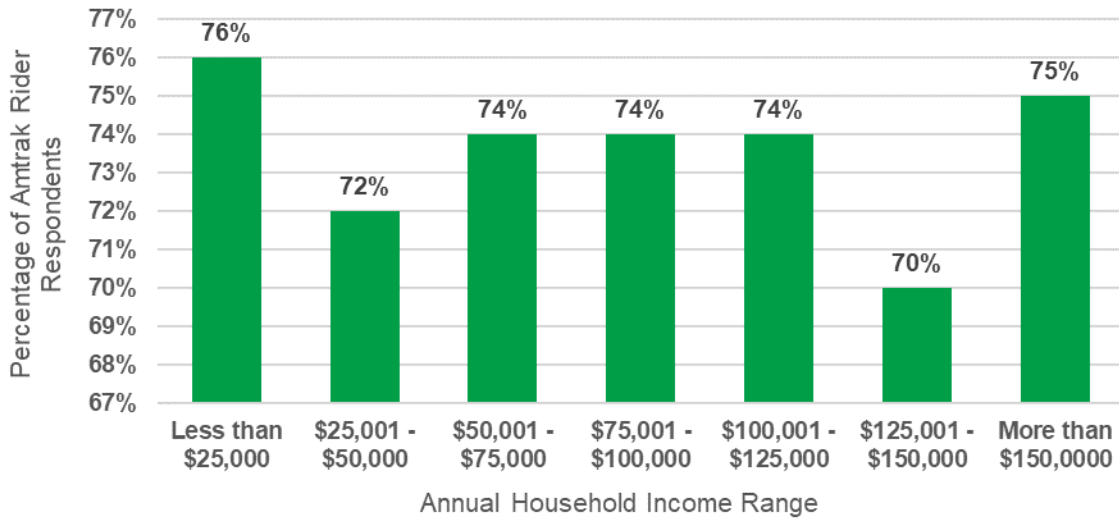
### Respondent Annual Income



1  
2 *Figure 4*

3 Many participants were higher income earners with a quarter (25%) of people reporting annual household  
 4 incomes higher than \$150,000 (*Figure 4*). A combined 16% of respondents (661 people) reported earning less  
 5 than \$50,000 per year

### Percentage of Amtrak Cascades Riders by Income



6  
7 *Figure 5*

8 There is not a clear trend of Amtrak Cascades ridership based on respondent income (*Figure 5*). Individuals  
 9 with annual household incomes between \$25,001 and \$50,000 and between \$125,001 and \$150,000 had  
 10 lower numbers of respondents who had ridden an Amtrak Cascades train before (72% and 70%, respectively).  
 11 People in other income brackets reported riding Amtrak Cascades before with similar frequency.

12 Respondents were also asked to share their zip codes (*Figure 6*). Most participants (64%) live in a zip code  
 13 more than 5 miles away from existing stations. 14% of respondents live close to Seattle’s King Street Station,  
 14 while nearly equal percentages of respondents live close to a station North of Seattle and South of Seattle (8%  
 15 and 7%, respectively).

Existing Amtrak Cascades station	Percentage of respondents within 5-miles of station
Vancouver, British Columbia	5%
Washington stations North of Seattle (Bellingham, Mt. Vernon, Stanwood, Everett, and Edmonds)	8%
Seattle (King Street Station)	14%
Washington stations South of Seattle (Tukwila, Tacoma, Olympia/ Lacey, Centralia, Kelso/Longview, and Vancouver, WA)	7%
Portland, Oregon	3%
More than 5 miles away from existing stations	64%

Figure 6

### Evolution of travel pre-pandemic vs. the past year

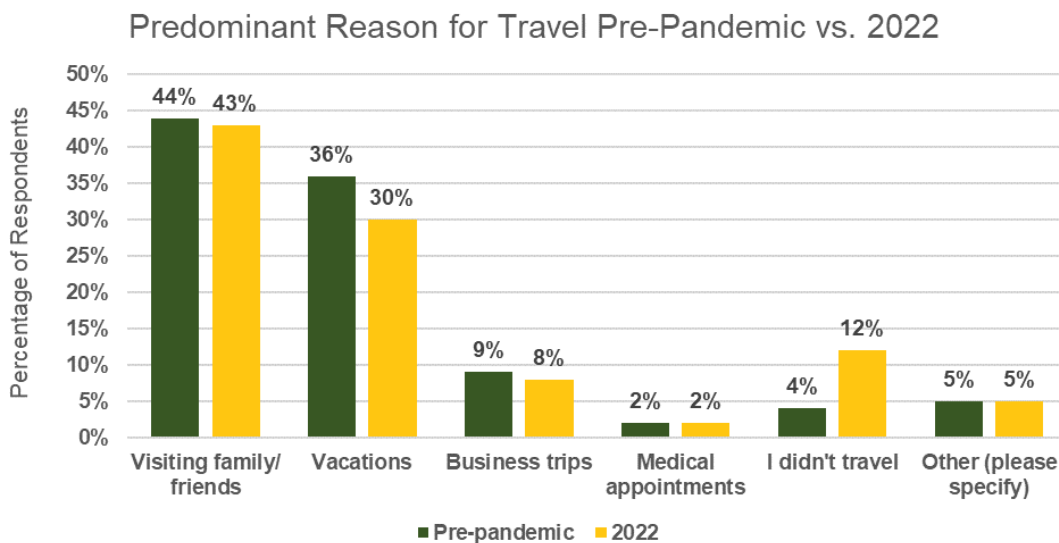


Figure 7

The primary reasons identified by respondents for traveling 75 miles or longer in the I-5 corridor in Washington were visiting family/ friends and vacations for both pre-pandemic travel and travel in the last year (Figure 7). The percentage of respondents who reported visiting family/ friends was almost the same pre-pandemic as it was in 2022— 44% and 43%, respectively. The percentage of participants who selected traveling for vacations declined by 6% from pre-pandemic levels. Similarly, the percentage of respondents who communicated they did not travel increased by 8% from pre-pandemic travel patterns to the past year, likely due to travel frequency slowly rebounding as people feel safer.

The percentage of business travelers in the I-5 corridor between Vancouver, B.C., and Portland, OR remained almost unchanged from reported pre-pandemic to 2022 levels – 9% before COVID compared to 8% in the last year. This suggests business has returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Commenters who reported another reason for travel beyond the pre-populated options in the comment form cited traveling for special events (e.g., concerts and sporting events), cultural resources (like museums), recreation, shopping (particularly cross-border shopping trips), and simple enjoyment of train travel.

Travel reasons and trends for respondents who had ridden Amtrak Cascades before were consistent with the overall trends represented in the above figure.



## Most frequent mode of travel in the I-5 corridor

Mode of Travel between Vancouver, B.C. and Portland, OR

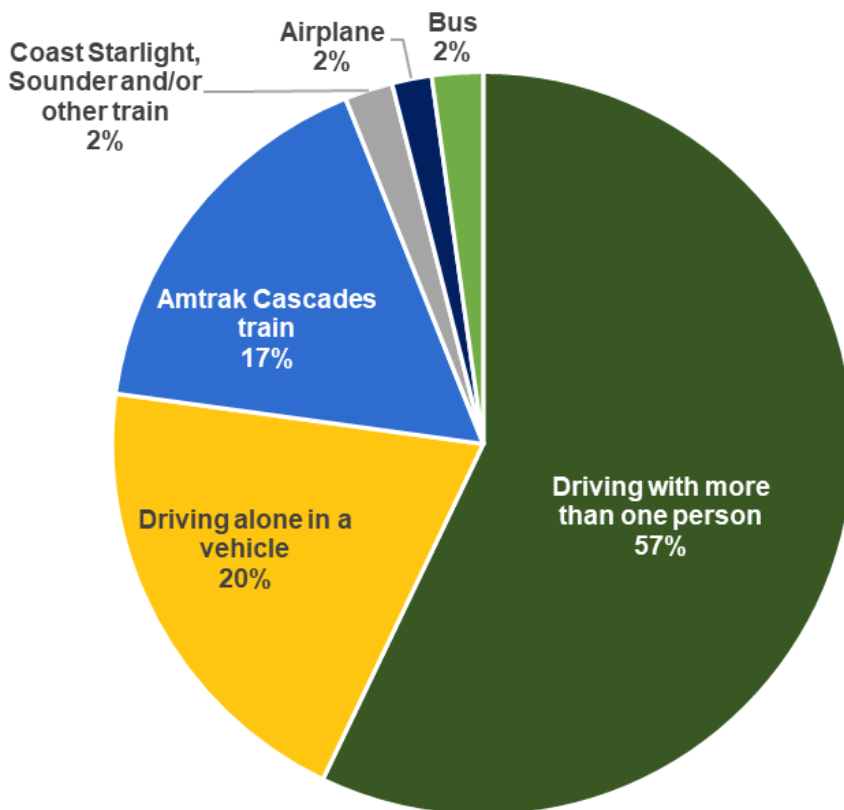
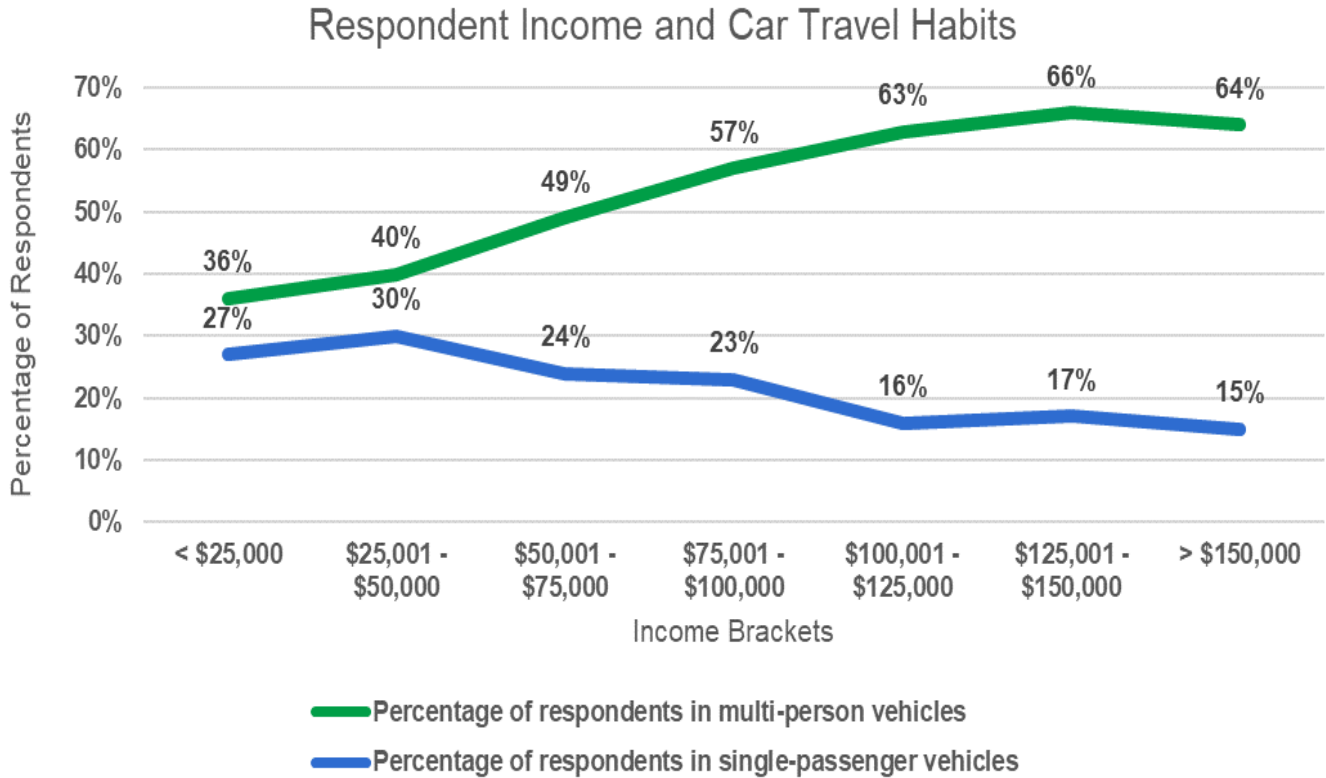


Figure 8

Commenters were most often regular travelers along the Interstate-5 corridor in Washington. Almost a third (31%) used this corridor at least monthly. Another 43% of respondents reported traveling at least once every couple of months. 74% of respondents had also ridden an Amtrak Cascades train before.

The comment form prompted respondents to share which mode of travel they take most frequently when traveling more than 75 miles along the I-5 corridor between Vancouver, B.C., and Portland, OR (Figure 8). More than half of respondents (57%) reported that driving with more than one person was their most used travel option. Of those 57% of respondents, 73% of them (898 people) had reportedly never ridden an Amtrak Cascades train before.

Further, more than 80% of commenters who live within five miles of Washington stations both north and south of King Street Station—Edmonds to Bellingham in the north and Tukwila to Vancouver, WA in the south—reported driving (either with another person or by themselves) compared to 64% of respondents who live within five miles of the King Street Station in Seattle.



1  
2 *Figure 9*

3 The percentage of people who reported driving with more than one person increased as household income  
 4 increased (*Figure 9*). Conversely, respondents with lower reported annual incomes were more likely to drive  
 5 alone than those with higher annual incomes. There is not a clear reason for this trend, but one explanation  
 6 could be that several commenters shared Amtrak Cascades was a cost-effective option if they were traveling  
 7 alone, but when traveling with two or more people in a vehicle the cost was cheaper than multiple Amtrak  
 8 Cascades tickets.

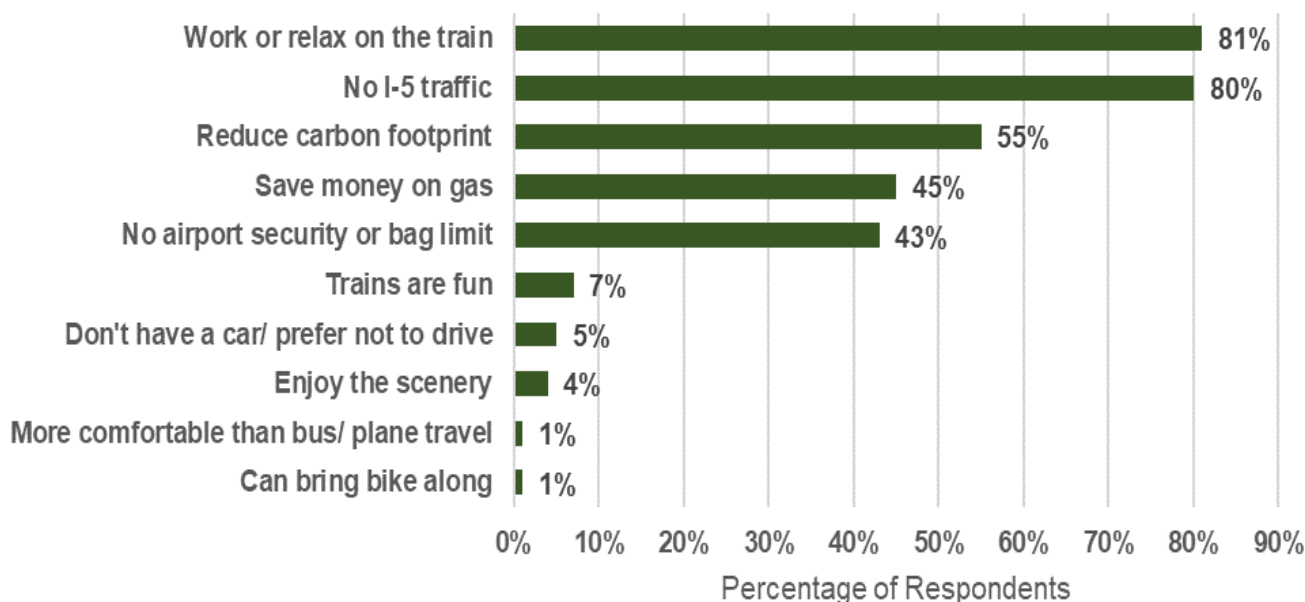
9 When prompted to share what would help them take Amtrak Cascades more often, 13% of participants (377  
 10 people) mentioned affordability as a barrier and expressed a desire for cheaper ticket options. More than a  
 11 third of these respondents (138 people) earned less than \$75,000 per year.

12 Respondents reported taking an Amtrak Cascades train and driving alone in a vehicle with similar frequency  
 13 (17% and 20%, respectively). Of those 17% who reported taking Amtrak Cascades trains, 64% were people  
 14 who also recorded that they take Amtrak Cascades trains monthly or more, indicating that regular riders  
 15 already see the value of Amtrak Cascades service.

16 People reported taking an airplane, bus, or other heavy rail train with similar frequency – 2% of respondents  
 17 selected these three options, respectively.

1 **Reported benefits of traveling on Amtrak Cascades**

Reported Benefits of Amtrak Cascades Travel



2  
3 *Figure 10*

4 Comment form respondents were asked to select all pre-  
5 populated benefits they experience by riding Amtrak Cascades or  
6 add others that better illustrated their experience (*Figure 10*). The  
7 top two perceived benefits by a significant margin were tradeoffs  
8 specific to taking the train versus driving: the ability to work or  
9 relax on the train (81% of commenters) and not being delayed in  
10 heavy I-5 traffic (80% of respondents).

**Comment Form Response**  
*"We recently downsized to a single vehicle. Visiting family by myself by car would prevent my spouse from having mobility while at home. Amtrak Cascades + Sounder means about 30 min in the car from SW Portland suburbs to NW Seattle suburbs."*

11  
**Comment Form Response**  
*"I'm blind and driving isn't an option for me. Mass transit is my lifeline."*

11 Respondents also saw value in the ability to reduce their carbon footprint with 55% of commenters selecting this option. Younger respondents were more likely to select this option than older commenters—an average of 68% of respondents aged 18-29 chose this option compared to an average of only 50% of people aged 50 and older.

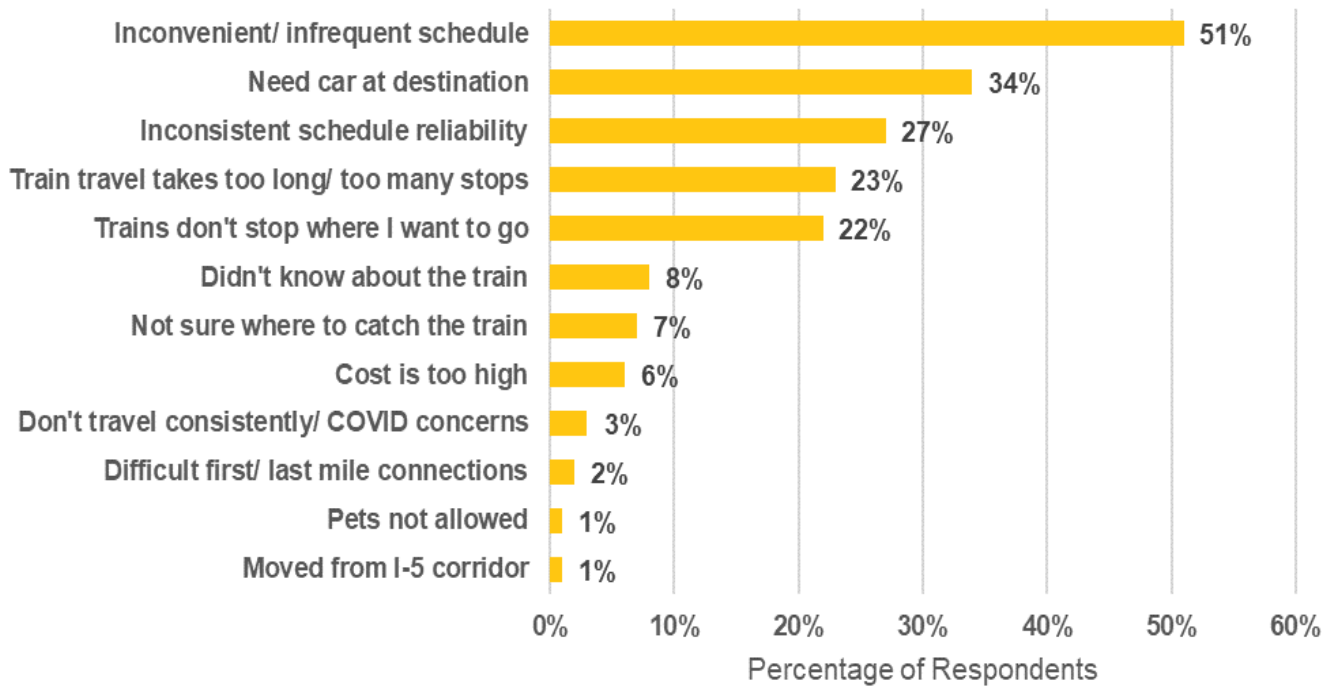
16 Saving money on gas and not experiencing air travel restrictions were selected with similar frequency, 45%  
17 and 43%, respectively. The importance of saving gas money decreased as participant age increased. Younger  
18 demographics (age brackets 18-24 and 25-29) were more likely to emphasize saving money on gas (69% and  
19 61%) compared to an average of 43% of commenters in older age categories. Further, 10% of respondents  
20 aged 18-24 reported not having a car or preferring not to drive,  
21 which is 3-6% higher than other, older age groups.

22 Participants who wrote in other observed benefits included the fact  
23 that trains are fun (7%), not needing access to a car (5%),  
24 enjoyment of the scenery (4%), more comfort than a bus or plane  
25 (1%), and the ability to bring a bike along (1%).

**Comment Form Response**  
*The views!!! The unique experience of traveling on a train is unparalleled and having the opportunity to share it with my family is a fantastic memory-making experience.*

1 **Reported difficulties with Amtrak Cascades train travel**

Reported Difficulties of Amtrak Cascades Travel



2  
3 *Figure 11*

4  
5 Participants were asked to select all pre-populated difficulties they perceived about traveling on Amtrak  
6 Cascades or add others that resonated with them (*Figure 11*). The most-selected reason respondents reported  
7 (51%) was that Amtrak Cascades trains do not run when they need to travel and that the schedule is  
8 inconvenient, or train arrival is too infrequent for them. More commenters (69%) who lived within five miles of  
9 Washington stations north of Seattle (Edmonds, Everett, Stanwood, Mt. Vernon, and Bellingham) reported  
10 difficulty with the infrequent and/or inconsistent Amtrak Cascades schedules, compared to 53% of respondents  
11 who lived within five miles of Washington stations south of Seattle and 60% of participants who live within five  
12 miles of King Street Station. Additionally, higher income earners (those who earn \$100,000 or more per year)  
13 were more likely to cite inconvenient or infrequent schedule as the reason they don't take Amtrak Cascades  
14 more frequently (an average of 56% of higher-income earners vs. an average of 44% of those who earn less  
15 than \$100,000 per year). Respondents who live in station areas north of Seattle were also more likely to select  
16 inconvenient and infrequent schedules as the reason they don't take Amtrak Cascades trains more often—  
17 69% compared to 60% for Seattle, 53% for south of Seattle, 44% for Portland, and 44% for Vancouver, B.C.  
18 respondents.

19 One-third of commenters also indicated that needing their car at their destination was a barrier that prevented  
20 them from riding Amtrak Cascades. More respondents (38%) who lived within five miles of Washington stations  
21 south of Seattle (Tukwila, Tacoma, Olympia/ Lacey, Centralia, Kelso/ Longview, and Vancouver, WA) selected  
22 this reason than people who lived within five miles of Washington stations north of Seattle (25%) and those  
23 who live within five miles of King Street Station (27%). Respondents suggested that increased non-car options  
24 for first- and last-mile connections in more rural station area communities might decrease this barrier for  
25 travelers.

## Urban vs. Rural Station Area Community Experience

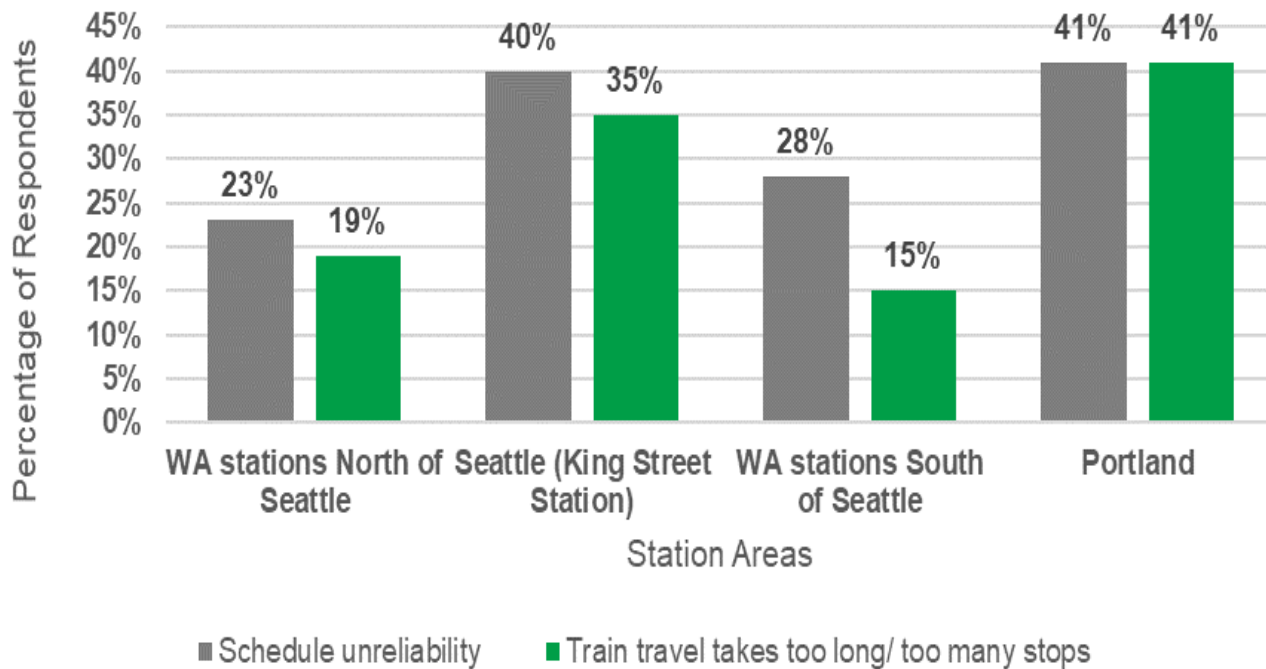


Figure 11

Reported difficulties with unreliable train schedules, length of travel time and number of stops, and lack of stops at desired destinations were all selected with similar frequency—27%, 23% and 22% of participants, respectively (Figure 11). Reliability concerns were most frequently selected by people who live within five miles of major station area cities—40% of Seattle and 41% of Portland respondents indicated this issue compared with 23% and 28% of people who live within five miles of Washington stations north and south of Seattle, correspondingly (Figure 12). This trend was also consistent with respondents who cited length of time/ number of stops as a difficulty with Amtrak Cascades—both Seattle and Portland station area participants were more likely (an average response rate of 38%) than those in more rural Washington station areas (an average response rate of 17%) to select this option.

A total of 310 respondents (8%) indicated that they did not know about Amtrak Cascades service (Figure 11). Respondents who reported earning less than \$50,000 per year were more likely than individuals in other income brackets to report they didn't know about the train (an average of 11.5% vs. an average of 7.8% for higher income earners). Additionally, participants who identified as Latino/Hispanic were more likely than other people to cite not knowing about Amtrak Cascades as a reason for not taking the train. Respondents who live in station areas north of Seattle were also more likely to report not knowing about the train.

Another 6% of participants reported that Amtrak Cascades tickets are too expensive (Figure 11). Those with household annual incomes below \$50,000 were almost twice as likely to identify cost as a barrier than higher income earners.

The most frequently cited other difficulties participants entered were related to their pets being above the weight limit (1%), moving outside of Amtrak Cascades' service corridor (1%), the condition/ comfort of trains and station facilities (<1%), and experienced confusion with the Amtrak Cascades website (<1%).

## Future improvements that could increase ridership

Almost 3,000 respondents provided detailed comments about other travel needs and priorities that should be included in the analysis of future improvements and would cause them to take Amtrak Cascades more often. Five primary categories emerged from these comments:

- Scheduling/ reliability
- Speed of train travel
- Convenience
- Accommodations
- Other improvements

Additional details about input for each of these categories can be found below. Please note that the following charts may not sum to 100% because comments could include feedback in multiple categories.

### Scheduling / reliability

Approximately 1,700 responses mentioned scheduling and reliability improvements (Figure 13). 35% of responses expressed interest in making Amtrak Cascades viable for commuters, adding more trains for increased frequency and more daily trips. Respondents shared that current train schedules do not have enough options to allow commuters to make it to their destination and back home in the same day, which causes them to choose driving or short plane travel instead.

#### Comment Form Response

*“Is there any way to simplify and streamline the service such that we run more trains continuously throughout the corridor end-to-end? I'd take it so much more if I knew there was more frequent and continuous service rather than stopping in the middle of my trip and waiting for a connecting train/bus.”*

Another 24% of responses included requests for expanded service and additional stations. The most frequent request was to extend Amtrak Cascades' western Washington service area to eastern and central Washington cities. Many respondents acknowledged that it may not be possible to do this by rail and were open to connections from other transit modes to Yakima Valley, Tri-Cities, Spokane, and Pullman.

### Scheduling and Reliability Priorities

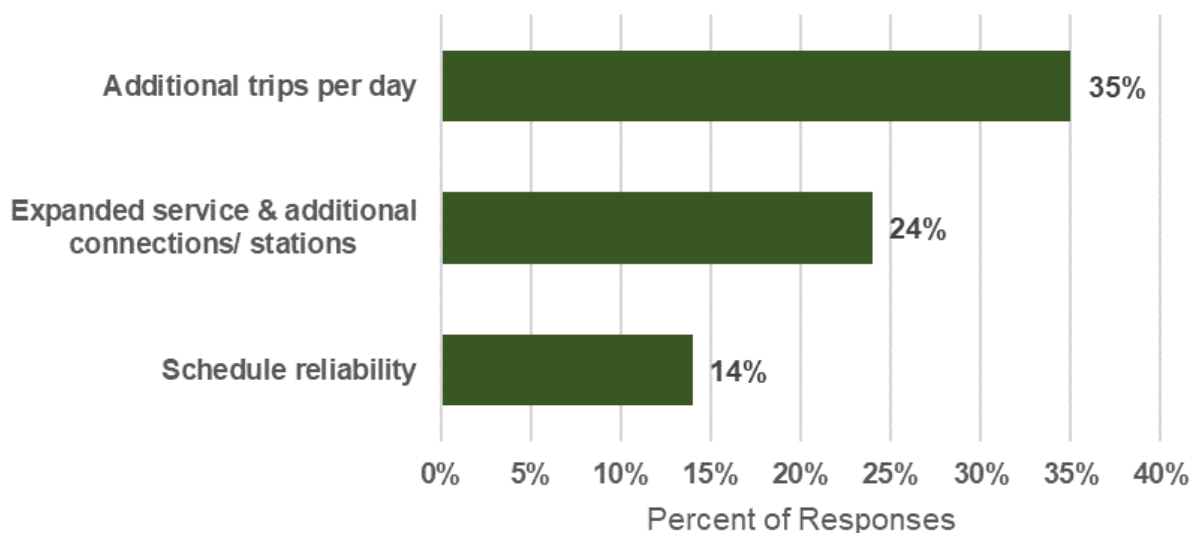


Figure 12

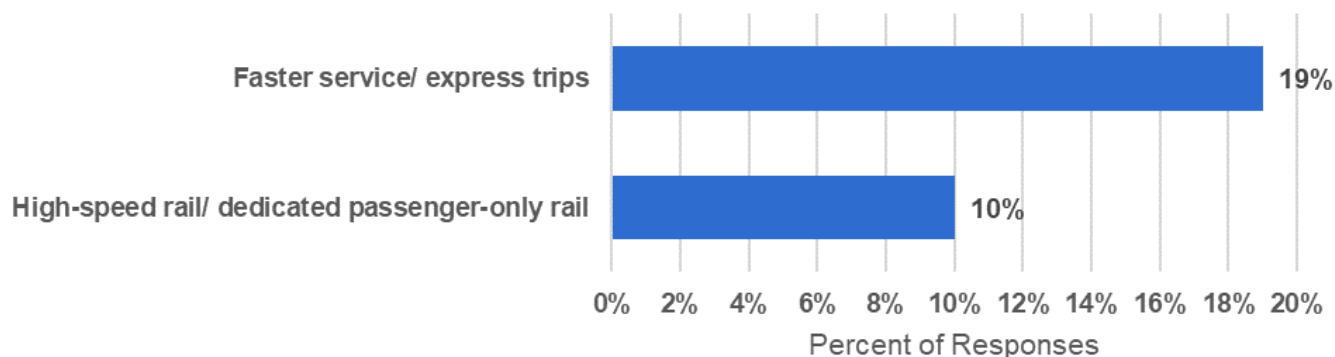
1 Some 14% of comments reiterated a need for  
 2 improved on-time arrivals and departures. Negative  
 3 experiences with delays dissuade repeat ridership  
 4 from those who have ridden Amtrak Cascades  
 5 before. Similarly, reports of schedule uncertainty  
 6 deter new riders from trying the service.

**Comment Form Response**

*“The one time I took Amtrak from Portland to Seattle it was hours late. While waiting for the train in Portland I asked about the delay and was told it is always late.”*

7 **Speed of train travel**

Speed Priorities



8  
 9 *Figure 13*

10 Close to 770 comments included priorities related to speed of Amtrak Cascades train travel (*Figure 14*). 19% of  
 11 responses were interested in express trip options, the most requested routes were connections to and from  
 12 major cities—Vancouver, B.C., Seattle, and Portland, Oregon.

**Comment Form Response**

*“...having to share track with freight rail where it can be delayed significantly makes taking a trip by train much less appealing since you don't know for sure when you're going to arrive compared to other forms of travel. It's also generally slower than just driving, even in ideal conditions, which also makes it much less appealing.”*

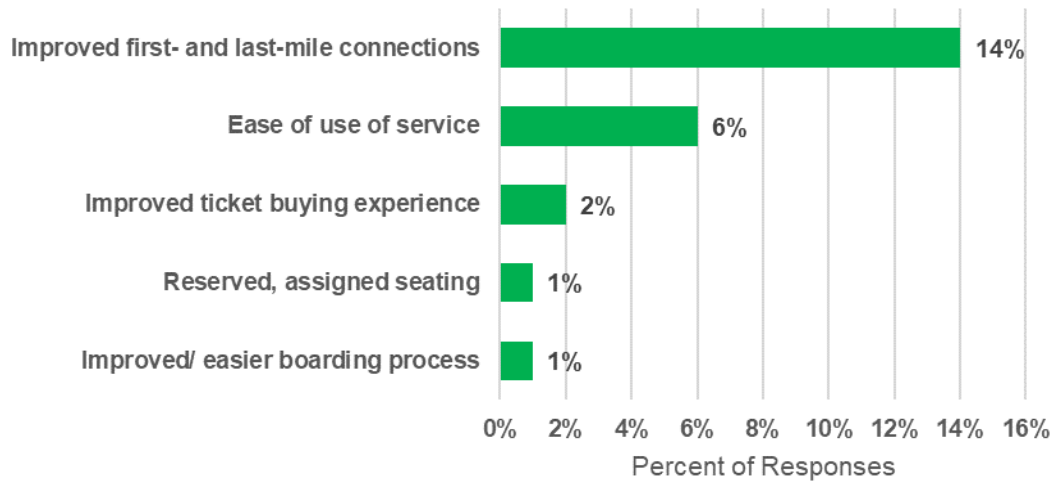
**Comment Form Response**

*“Speed and frequency are the most important, which includes reliability. I live in Seattle, my family lives in Portland and my wife and I like to eat and ski and visit Vancouver. For fun visit weekend trips, we'd prefer to just train down and relax (and take our dog who is 50lbs) and enjoy the downtown area. As is, the trains are OK on travel time but often delayed making them worse on average. If we can get them to a 2.5-hour trip I'd never drive without reason (like camping or driving to a remote destination) to Portland again.”*

14 Another 10% of responses included requests to prioritize development of dedicated passenger-only, high-  
 15 speed rail. These respondents expressed experiences with delays due to freight train operations with whom  
 16 Amtrak Cascades shares tracks and believed a dedicated passenger rail line could increase scheduling  
 17 capacity and reduce delays

# 1 Convenience

## Convenience Priorities



2  
3 Figure 14

### Comment Form Response

*“The current boarding system at King Street and Portland Union Station (lining up and rushing to get seats onboard), is stressful, airport-esque, confusing, and overall unpleasant. I feel required to arrive at the station 1+ hour before departure to secure a spot in the front of the line to ensure seats together and/or a window seat, which eliminates some of the appeal of rail travel over flying.”*

### Comment Form Response

*“I’d like to see more focus on intermodal connections, including both transit and car share/rental -- need options to get around once arriving at the station, particularly outside the big cities.”*

4 More than 600 responses detailed requests for increased convenience on Amtrak Cascades (Figure 15). The  
5 most frequently mentioned topic in this category (14% of responses) was a desire for better options for  
6 traveling to and from stations. Suggestions included better integration with local transit systems, more long-  
7 term parking options, and partnering with rental car agencies at stations.

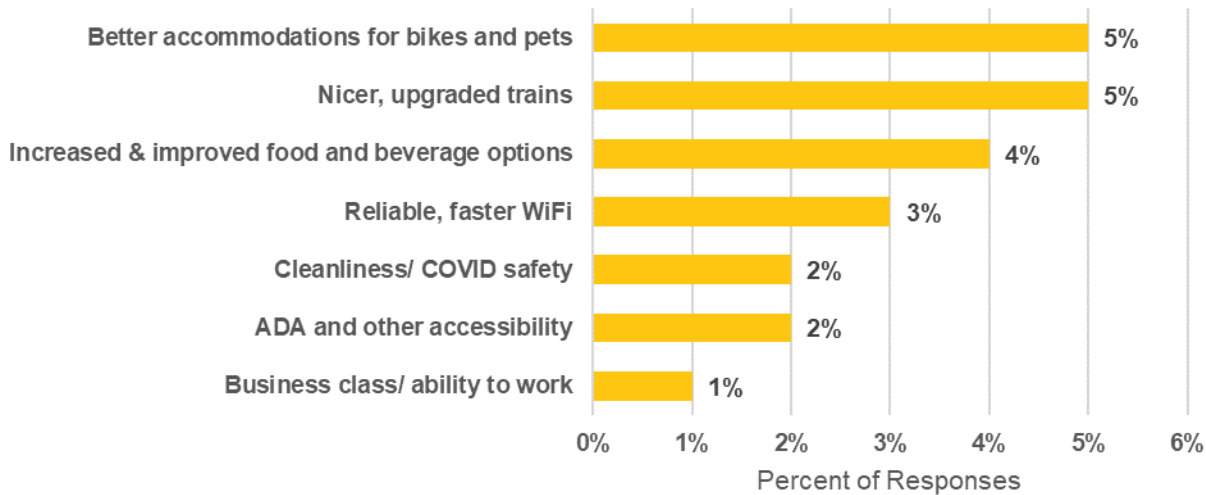
8 Another 6% of comments were related to ease of navigating the Amtrak Cascades system. Some people  
9 raised confusion with navigating some Amtrak Cascades stations, connecting between Amtrak Cascades and  
10 local transit systems, and frustration with the boarding process.

11 A smaller portion of comments were interested in an improved ticket purchasing experience (2%), both in the  
12 app and online, reserved and assigned seating (1%), and an easier boarding process (1%).



# 1 Accommodations

## Accommodations Priorities



2  
3 Figure 15

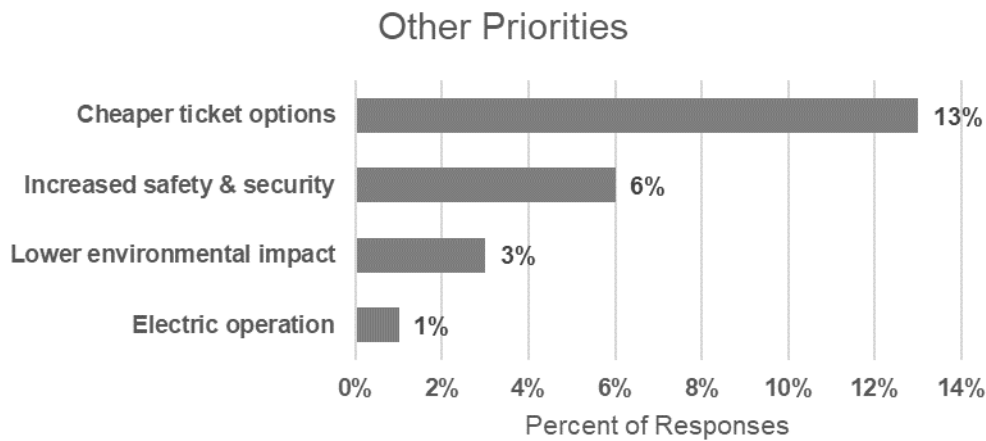
4 A smaller portion of comments (19% overall) were related to improvements to accommodations on Amtrak  
5 Cascades trains (Figure 16). Commenters were interested in more space and improved boarding experience  
6 for bikes as well as more flexibility to bring larger pets onboard (5%). Some were interested in nicer, upgraded  
7 trains (5%) and better on-board food and beverage options (4%), while others highlighted train cleanliness  
8 (2%) and ADA accessibility and accessibility overall (2%). Commenters with physical mobility challenges  
9 cited difficulties in navigating stations and trains with  
10 walkers and wheelchairs. Responses also included  
11 details about overall accessibility to and from the  
12 Amtrak Cascades system from their local transit  
13 networks.  
14

**Comment Form Response**  
“Wheelchair accessible luxury options. I travel with my sister and wheelchair accessibility in the train is very, very limited. She cannot get to the dining car and the wheelchair accessible seating cars are uncomfortable.”

15 About 30 total comments mentioned a desire for a  
16 business class option and features that would make it  
17 easier for them to work onboard, such as cars  
18 dedicated to video/ phone calls and more table space  
19 to spread out. Commenters emphasized a need for  
20 better Wi-Fi connectivity (3%).  
21

**Comment Form Response**  
“...it would be nice if the train had more than 6 bike hooks available so that cyclists would not have to box up their bikes to take them on a train.”

## 1 Other improvements



2  
3 Figure 16

4 The remaining priorities did not fit into the other above categories  
5 (Figure 17). Of these, 377 responses detailed a desire for less  
6 expensive ticket options. This was correlated with income level—  
7 of those who answered this question and completed the  
8 demographic questionnaire, most respondents made less than  
9 \$70,000 per year.

10 Some 6% of comments also included a desire for increased  
11 safety and security both on trains and at stations. Several  
12 commenters suggested having a larger security guard presence  
13 on trains and at stations.

14 Finally, about 130 comments prioritized decreasing Amtrak  
15 Cascades' impact on the natural environment. Of these comments  
16 related to the natural environment, a desire for all-electric train  
17 operation was the most frequently mentioned priority (1%). The  
18 Tulalip Tribe submitted a letter emphasizing the importance of  
19 protecting waterways, including stream crossings, wetlands,  
20 shorelines, and other critical areas to ensure health of salmon and  
21 shellfish. The Environmental Protection Agency also noted a  
22 priority to ensure Amtrak Cascades service is resilient to climate  
23 change, especially sea level rise.

### Comment Form Response

*"I would take Amtrak Cascades more if it was competitive with car pricing. When going by myself the train is more affordable and a better experience, however, if I'm traveling with my partner and my child it becomes more expensive than driving."*

### Comment Form Response

*"As we're facing a climate crisis it's critically important that upgrades to the train system are prioritized and happen as soon as possible so that intercity train travel can become a realistic everyday option for me and other residents of Washington state."*

## Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement priorities

Finally, respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance of eight priority roles for the next 20 years of Amtrak Cascades service. Participants rated the following themes on a Likert scale of one to five, with one being not at all important and five indicating high importance.

Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement Priorities

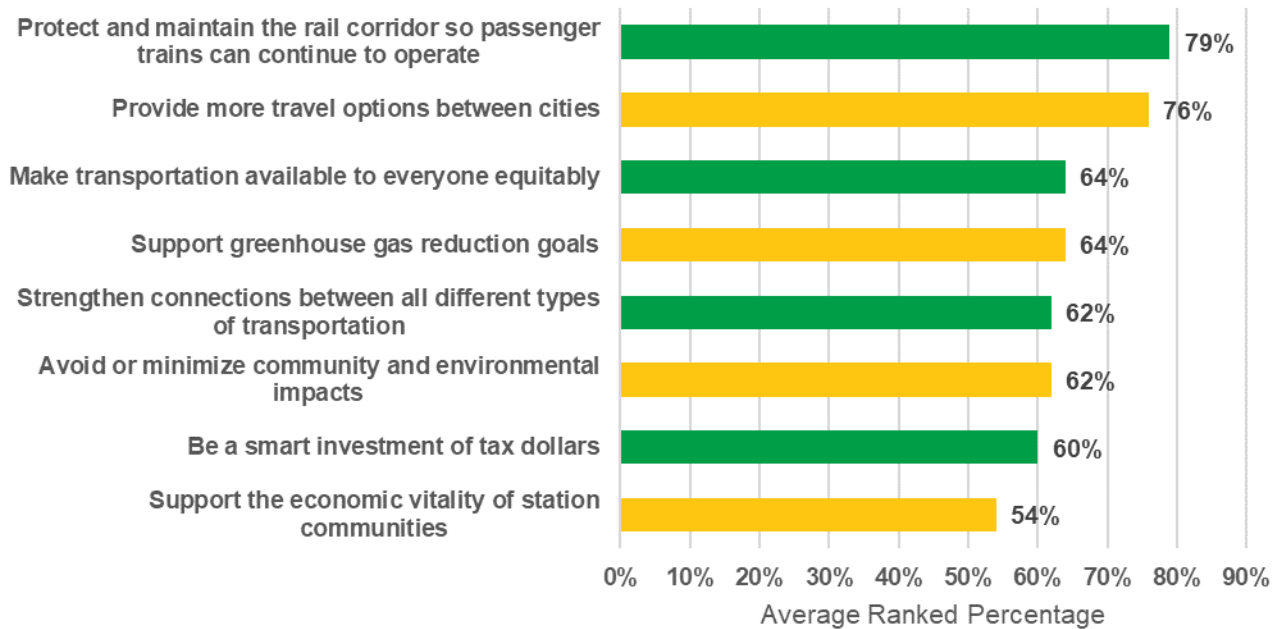


Figure 17

For ease in reporting, results for these categories have been ranked by weighted average (Figure 18). The Amtrak Cascades roles that resonated most for respondents is protecting and maintaining the rail corridor to ensure passenger trains can operate (79%) and providing more travel options between cities (76%).

The next five priorities scored within four percentage points and had virtually equal importance to commenters:

- Make transportation available to everyone equitably.
- Support greenhouse gas reduction goals.
- Strengthen connections between different types of transportation.
- Avoid or minimize community and environmental impacts.
- Be a smart investment of tax dollars.

The priority with the least reported importance was supporting the economic vitality of station communities.

# 1 Webinar feedback

## 2 *Key takeaways from the technical webinar*

3 The technical webinar audience included 41 participants from municipal planning organizations and regional  
4 transportation planning organizations, state and local government representatives, local transit agencies,  
5 regulatory agencies, and other government entities. Important themes from this discussion include:

- 6 • Suggestions to include reliability, safety, and customer service as needs in the Service Development  
7 Plan.
- 8 • A desire for WSDOT to not let freight displace passenger travel in balancing growing travel demand  
9 with increased rail usage for freight.
- 10 • A focus on station area communities, recognizing that train service can enhance affordable housing  
11 and economic development with transit-oriented development and better multimodal connectivity with  
12 non-motorized forms of transit.
- 13 • A suggestion to evaluate service needs based on trips made by different types of travelers, such as  
14 commuters vs. vacation travelers vs. senior riders.

## 15 *Key takeaways from the rail advocacy groups briefing*

16 This briefing was attended by 26 members of several rail and other advocacy groups: All Aboard Washington,  
17 Solutionary Rail and Climate Rail, Transport Action Canada, and Washington Physicians for Social  
18 Responsibility. Key themes from this conversation are highlighted below.

- 19 • An urgency around climate change and need to act now to achieve emission reduction goals and  
20 greenhouse gas pollution.
- 21 • A desire to link freight and passenger rail improvements to the Service Development Plan.
- 22 • Encouragement to explore other route options beyond the current Amtrak Cascades corridor.
- 23 • Suggestions for improved convenience and connectivity by adding a shuttle bus between the Tukwila  
24 station and SeaTac Airport and adding customs stop and station in Blaine, Washington.

## 25 *Key takeaways from the public webinar*

26 The public webinar was open to all community members and non-governmental organizations. Key elements  
27 of the discussion with 70 participants are emphasized below.

- 28 • Feedback to focus on connectivity and access for more rural stations that do not have adequate transit  
29 options. Priorities for this group included working with local transit providers and promoting bikes,  
30 scooters, and e-bikes on trains.
- 31 • Agreement that Amtrak Cascades has a role in addressing the climate crisis. Several suggestions  
32 included marketing the environmental benefits of trains and promoting increased train ridership.
- 33 • An emphasis on addressing unreliability and poor on-time performance because these things dissuade  
34 potential riders from using Amtrak Cascades more often.
- 35 • A desire for faster and more frequent service.
- 36 • Feedback about Vancouver, B.C. service and how to better connect with local transit and better serve  
37 the large area.

# 1 How feedback is being incorporated into the project

2 Nearly all the feedback WSDOT received was consistent with the needs identified in the draft Preliminary  
3 Purpose and Need statement. The comments about more frequent service, better schedule reliability, and  
4 shorter travel times illustrate changes to Amtrak Cascades that could address the need for improving the ability  
5 of the service to address growing travel demand and congestion in the corridor. Adjustments were made to the  
6 content of the document to incorporate recommendations from community engagement activities.

7 In addition to using the feedback to revise the Preliminary Purpose and Need, WSDOT also used it to inform  
8 development of Initial Service Options. Specifically, public feedback about frequency and travel times was  
9 considered.