Cascades High-Speed Rail Program

Washington State Department of Transportation

Amtrak CASCADES®

Overview

WSDOT is investing nearly $800 million in federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to deliver incremental and critical rail infrastructure improvements for emerging high-speed rail service, expand travel choices, and foster economic growth in Washington state.

Program Goal

Expand and improve Amtrak Cascades passenger service to provide a fast and reliable travel option between Eugene, Oregon, and Vancouver, British Columbia.

Passenger Rail in Washington and Oregon

Washington and Oregon work together to operate the intercity passenger rail service between two states and a Canadian province. Key areas of work include fleet management, service operations and revenue management. The Amtrak Cascades corridor includes:

- Top speeds of 79 mph
- Shared track with freight trains
- 300-mile-long corridor in Washington; 467 miles total from Eugene, Oregon to Vancouver, British Columbia

Program Objectives

- Grow Amtrak Cascades passenger service and ridership
- Make service more reliable by reducing rail congestion on the main line
- Develop the passenger rail corridor for future growth

Program Outcomes in Washington

10 minute travel time reduction between Seattle and Portland

2 additional daily round trips between Seattle and Portland, for six total

88 percent on-time performance

20 federally funded projects

Types of improvements include:

- New bypass and siding tracks to ease congestion
- Multiple upgrades to existing track
- Upgrades to advanced warning signal systems and safety-related projects
- Station upgrades and expansions
- Eight new locomotives

Program update - September 2015

- Nine projects underway in 2015, 10 completed and the last one begins construction in early 2016.
- All will be completed by 2017

Washington and Oregon sponsor Amtrak Cascades intercity passenger rail service, which takes passengers between Vancouver, British Columbia and Eugene, Oregon.

Current daily round trip service includes

- Four Amtrak Cascades daily round trips between Portland and Seattle
- Two daily round trips between Eugene and Portland
- Two daily round trips between Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia

Strong ridership growth

During the past 10 years, Washington-supported Amtrak Cascades ridership has grown 67 percent.

- **Ridership:**
  - 2014: 781,000
- **Revenue:**
  - 2014: $23.6 million

Reducing Congestion and Improving Reliability

The same way highways get clogged when there are too many cars, rail lines also get congested with too many trains. Sharing tracks means the faster passenger trains sometimes are delayed behind slow-moving freight trains.

Several of the Amtrak Cascades High-Speed Rail projects reduce congestion and improve on-time performance, including:

- Installing new rail yard bypass and new lead tracks in Vancouver
- Adding siding tracks to Kalama and Longview ports
- New train bridge in Kelso
- Rerouting trains into Tacoma to bypasses congested main line and single track tunnels
- Building new Amtrak station at Tacoma's Freighthouse Square
- Improving facility and multimodal options at new Tukwila station
- Reducing landslide delays between Seattle and Everett
- Adding tracks at Blaine customs facility

Completed Projects

Ten of WSDOT's 20 federally funded high-speed rail projects were complete as of September 2015. Examples of the work include seismic retrofit and lobby restoration at Seattle's King Street Station, new tracks at various bottleneck sites and a rail trench along the Columbia River at the Port of Vancouver.

More project details: http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Rail/Projects.htm.

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