Lastly, the plan identified several policy improvement strategies that include working with regional organizations to develop an economic development strategy, and to prioritize and preserve adjacent lands through comprehensive planning and sale of non-essential property. WSDOT will determine criteria for private acquisition of the system consistent with public interest, and update rail benefit methodology to get an accurate understanding the public benefits of the system. To monitor performance of the system, WSDOT will develop and report on performance measures (Safe Operations, Efficient Operations, and Pursue Economic Development). To address the funding gap, WSDOT will pursue alternate funding opportunities.

The economic vitality of Washington State requires a robust rail system capable of providing its agricultural economies with competitive access to North American and overseas markets. Addressing the infrastructure, operational, and policy issues will ensure the PCC rail system remains a valuable asset for the Washington State economy.

The PCC rail system benefits Washington State in many ways. Because it reduces demand for trucking, it reduces roadway congestion, reduces roadway and bridge maintenance and construction costs, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, reduces shipping costs for its users, and improves roadway safety. Moreover, the PCC rail system currently has capacity to handle additional diversion of freight from roadways in Washington State.

WSDOT is responsible for managing the overall multimodal transportation systems in Washington State. The PCC rail system helps WSDOT reach its goals of modal integration and environmental stewardship by providing an important alternate mode for freight transportation. For the system to be competitive, strategic investments are needed, along with operational changes, and policy improvements.

The plan has identified $58 million of capital project needs. Funding will be necessary to implement strategies to maintain and improve infrastructure on the PCC rail system. Operational and policy strategies can be achieved within the timeframe for this plan. Coordination with all PCC rail system partners is critical to the ongoing success of the system. WSDOT and the PCC Rail Authority will work with all PCC partners and stakeholders to advance the strategies identified in this plan.

The PCC Strategic Plan can be viewed at http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/freight/pcc.

CONTACTS

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WSDOT

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WSDOT

PALOUSE RIVER AND COULEE CITY RAIL SYSTEM

2015 TO 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Palouse River and Coulee City rail system is the longest short line freight rail system in Washington State, at 297 miles in length. The PCC rail system consists of three branches: the CW branch, the P&L branch, and the PV Hooper branch. The system spans the five Eastern Washington counties of Grant, Lincoln, Spokane, Adams and Whitman. The state completed the purchase of the PCC in 2007 for $15.5 million and currently owns the three branch lines.

The system is owned by Washington State, managed by WSDOT, and operated by private industry. The PCC rail system connects Eastern Washington to the larger freight transportation system and to global gateways enabling access to international markets, an economic benefit for our state. A single freight train can replace several hundred trucks, benefitting Washington State by reduced wear and tear on local roadways and highways, improved transportation safety, and reduced air pollution.

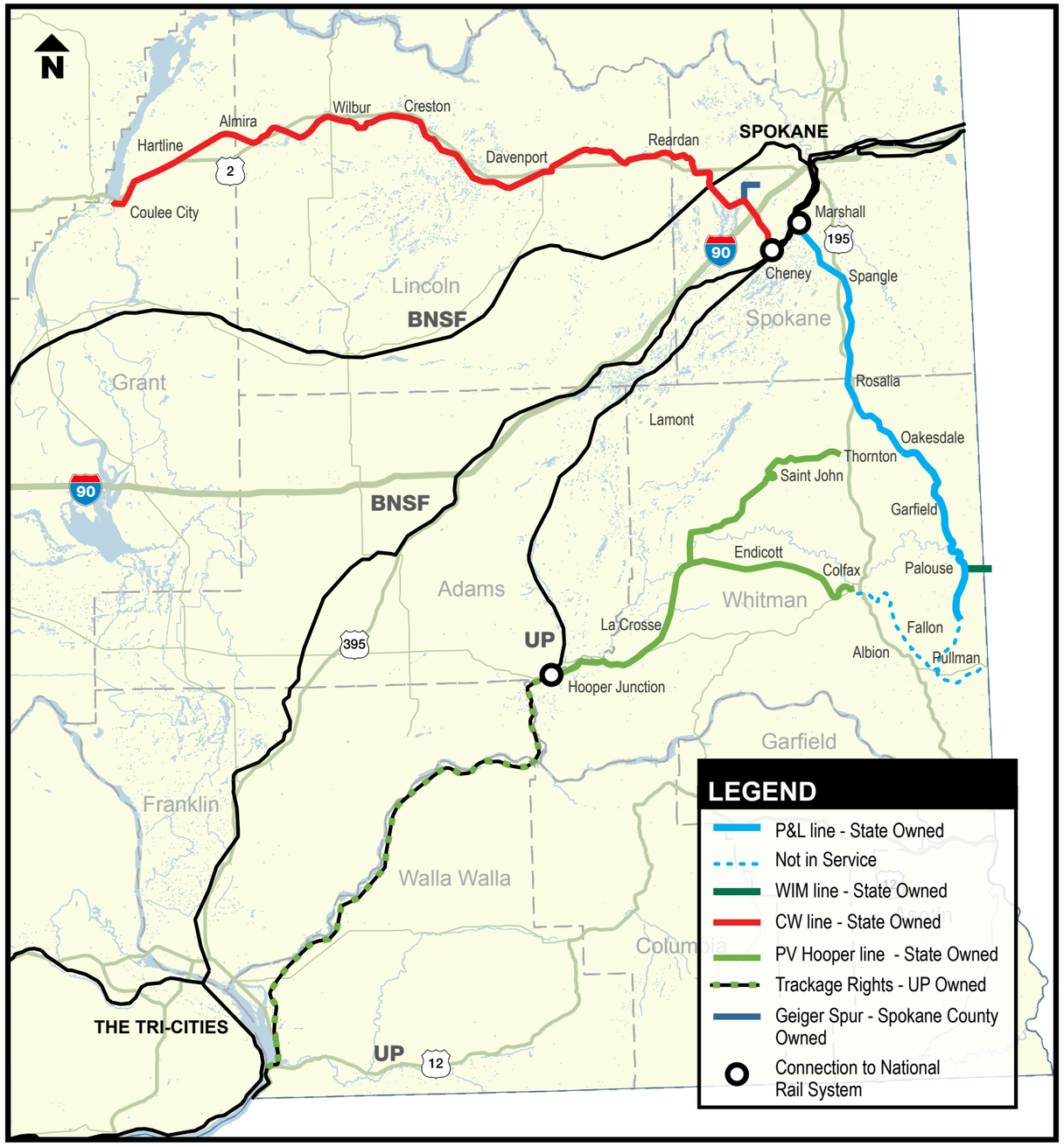
The purpose of this plan is to outline the vision and goals for the PCC rail system and to communicate what policies and projects are needed to achieve the goals. The plan is focused around three key system goals: safe operations, efficient operations, and economic development.

WSDOT and the PCC Rail Authority have worked in partnership to develop this plan. Workshops were held with representatives from rail operating companies, local governments, economic development authorities, major railroads, and shippers. These conversations helped to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the system. Strategies, summarized below, are categorized within Infrastructure, Operational, and Policy groups.

This plan has identified and prioritized $58 million in infrastructure projects:

1. Advance priority projects to increase the capability of handling 286,000-pound rail cars;
2. Rehabilitate track located in moderate and sharp curves in order to allow for increased speeds;
3. Identify and replace defective rail through integrity testing.

THE PCC RAIL SYSTEM



SYSTEM CAPITAL NEEDS

286k lb. Capacity Projects	Description		Cost
CW Cheney to Geiger	Replace rail and rehabilitate track		$7,337,000
P&L Marshall to McCoy	Replace 11 bridges and repair 4 bridges		$5,988,000
Total	Total Cost		$13,325,000
Track Rehabilitation in Curves	**Total Track Miles Rehabilitated**	**Rail Miles Replaced (incl. in total miles)**	**Cost**
CW	16.1	16.1	$15,920,000
P&L/WIM	20.2	5.2	$9,020,000
Hooper	9.3	6.7	$7,260,000
PV	10.8	6.6	$7,520,000
Total	56.4	34.6	$39,720,000
Replace Defective Rail			**Cost**
System wide Allowance	Estimated initial defective rail replacement		$5,000,000*
TOTAL (in 2015 Dollars)	Total Capital Project Need		$58,045,000

**Actual amount to be determined based on implementation of an advanced rail inspection program. The plan recommends that $5 million in funding be in place to purchase new and/or repurposed rail before beginning the integrity inspection program. This will ensure that adequate materials are available within the short time period (30 to 90 days) that the FRA allows the operator to complete remedial action for defects identified through the inspection process.*

To support the PCC capital program, the plan recommends that WSDOT add advanced techniques to our existing rail inspection programs to pinpoint deficiencies that are not detected through visual inspection alone. The department along with rail operators of the PCC will inspect load ratings for the bridges by 2017. The plan recommends programs to address maintenance and preservation, tie replacement, and grade crossing rehabilitation. It recommends that rail materials be repurposed, when possible, from other sources to replace substandard rail. The plan recommends that PCC shippers partner with the rail operators to bridge the funding gap that exists in maintenance and preservation.

This plan has also identified several operational strategies to enhance efficiencies. WSDOT will work with partners to improve terms to future operating leases, encourage operators to pursue minimum railcar orders, ensure access to major railroads and river terminals, and strategically consider rail service needs on all segments of the system. The plan recommends that WSDOT establish private crossing agreements, establish industrial track agreements, and evaluate the state Grain Train Program.