

Questions & Answers

The Point Defiance Bypass project is a capital rail project proposing to reroute passenger trains from the BNSF Railway main line that runs near Point Defiance and along southern Puget Sound to an existing rail line that runs along the west side of I-5 through south Tacoma, Lakewood, Ft. Lewis, and DuPont.

The existing rail line under consideration is located along an 18-mile lightly used freight corridor owned by Sound Transit. Part of the bypass route is the same route that Sound Transit will use to extend Sounder commuter rail to Lakewood.

How many passenger round trips per day?

- Amtrak *Cascades* will operate seven round trips per day between Seattle and Portland
 - Includes one Coast Starlight trip
- Sound Transit will operate nine round trips per day to Lakewood
 - Tacoma Rail will operate six round trips per week

How many people actually take passenger trains on this corridor?

- 2010 ridership between Jan. – Nov. was up 13 percent from 2009
 - Seattle to Portland Segment: 540,428 passengers
 - Total Corridor (Eugene, OR to Vancouver, B.C.): 768,059 passengers
 - Amtrak Coast Starlight Seattle to Portland segment: 135,248 passengers
 - Coast Starlight is Amtrak's national service between LA and Seattle
- Amtrak *Cascades* Washington farebox recovery is increasing
 - 2008 – 46%
 - 2009 – 54%
 - 2010 – Over 60%

How will all these trains affect traffic?

- Only two trains per day travel through Lakewood during peak travel times
- Planned and proposed mitigation such as synchronized signals and better intra-community connections will help improve traffic flow
- Cascades trains take about [45 seconds to clear a crossing](#) – shorter than an average traffic light.

How fast will the trains go?

- Amtrak *Cascades* trains will travel at a maximum of 79 mph
- Sounder Commuter trains will average 40 mph with a maximum speed of 60 mph
- Tacoma Rail trains will travel at a maximum speed of 40 mph when Tacoma Rail upgrades its controlled track dispatch system.

Single Track or Double Track?

- Single track between Tacoma and 66th Street
- Double track from 66th to just west of Bridgeport Way
- There are five at-grade crossings over double track.

What is “high speed” passenger rail currently in Washington and Oregon?

- Top speeds of up to 79 mph
- Generally shared track with freight trains.

Why is WSDOT spending money on trains when budgets are tight?

- This project is funded with federal ARRA money
 - ARRA money for this project is legally purposed for intercity passenger rail
 - If we decline funding, the money and jobs will go to other states
- Trains are funded and subsidized as public transportation.

Won't these trains be noisy?

- New, continuous weld track reduces “clickety-clack”
- Trains will only run between approx. 7 a.m. and 10 p.m.
- Wayside horns are planned for all grade crossings in the project area
 - They are essentially speakers fixed at crossings
 - They direct audible warnings at crossings, eliminating the need for non-emergency use of train whistles

What is WSDOT doing to prevent collisions and fatalities?

- Education
 - Targeting schools, community events and town meetings
 - Reinforce and support Operation Lifesaver
- Engineering
 - Active warning devices at all rail/road grade crossings
 - Upgraded traffic signals, wider lanes and increased turning radii
 - Pavement markings and roadway medians
- Enforcement
 - Emphasis patrols at key problem areas
 - Trespassing is still a crime – focus is on preventing trespassing, not making the behavior safe.

Should WSDOT be conducting an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

- EIS is the next level of environmental review
- WSDOT is performing EIS level work in most areas of this project’s Environmental Assessment (EA)
 - Full EISs are costly, detailed and take several years to complete
 - Converting the EA to an EIS on this project would only add about six months
- An EIS identifies environmental impacts but doesn’t necessarily require mitigation – an EA does

Does WSDOT have any plans for grade separation at any rail/road crossings?

- WSDOT’s Cross Base Highway project (currently unfunded) plans a grade separation at Thorne Lane
- In the Environmental Assessment WSDOT is studying the feasibility of grade separations throughout the project area based on safety issues, travel counts, property impacts, socio-economic impacts and cost.

For more information about the Point Defiance Bypass project, contact Melanie Coon at coonm@wsdot.wa.gov or visit our website: www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/rail/pnwrc_ptdefiance/