

## Washington State awarded \$590 million for the Amtrak Cascades passenger rail program

On January 27, 2010, WSDOT received notification that Washington State had been awarded \$590 million in American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) stimulus funds through the High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) Program. The award is based on the over \$1.3 billion application that Washington State submitted to the HSIPR program in October 2009 for the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor (PNWRC).

### What is the ARRA High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program?

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which contained \$8 billion of federal funding for the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) Program.

This is the first major federal investment in high-speed intercity passenger rail outside the Northeast Corridor. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) was mandated to manage the grant applications and make all awards under the program by February 17, 2010.

In April 2009, the Obama Administration released a long-term plan for high speed rail in America. In addition to the \$8 billion awarded in 2010, the plan also includes \$1 billion a year for five years in the federal budget as a down payment to jump-start the HSIPR program.



### How does Washington State qualify for high-speed passenger rail stimulus funds?

Applicants for the HSIPR program were restricted to state transportation departments and Amtrak. Additionally, only applicants in a federally designated High-Speed Rail Corridor were considered eligible.

In 1992, the FRA designated the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor (Vancouver, BC – Eugene, OR) as one of five high speed rail corridors in the United States. This designation elevated our region to be eligible to compete for federal funds to assist the state with planning and implementing improved passenger and freight rail service throughout the corridor. Today, there are a total of 13 federally designated high speed rail corridors that qualify under President Obama's plan.

For over 15 years, Washington State has supported passenger rail service through the Amtrak Cascades service. Since 1994, Washington State has invested over \$331 million in capital and operations for intercity passenger rail.

### What will be the end result of this ARRA funding?

- Two additional daily round trips will be added between Seattle and Portland, for a total six, by approximately 2016.
- Travel time on the corridor will be reduced by at least 5 percent.
- On-time reliability will increase substantially, from 62 to nearly 90 percent.
- Major construction projects will be completed that will include building bypass tracks to allow for increased train frequency and multiple upgrades to existing track.
- Several safety-related projects will also be completed, including grade separations, upgraded signal systems, and positive train control.

# WSDOT and Amtrak Cascades®

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*Since 1994 the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has worked with railroads, Amtrak, the state of Oregon,*

*the Province of British Columbia, and others to provide fast, reliable, and more frequent intercity passenger rail service along*

*the Interstate 5 corridor. The service, known as Amtrak Cascades, provides travelers transportation options for their intercity trips.*



### For More Information:

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www.AmtrakCascades.com



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**What is WSDOT's role in Amtrak Cascades®?**

The Washington State Legislature instructed WSDOT to develop intercity passenger rail service between Portland, OR, Seattle, and Vancouver, British Columbia. WSDOT is responsible for planning and project identification; budget development; construction project management and reporting; operations oversight and reporting; local, regional, state, national, and international program coordination; public education; public involvement; and marketing activities. Since 1994, nearly \$1.0 billion in capital and operating funds has been invested in high speed intercity passenger rail in the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor. Washington State alone has invested over \$331 million for track and signal improvements, new train equipment, station construction and renovations, and train operations.

**What cities are served by Amtrak Cascades?**

Amtrak Cascades service connects 18 cities in the Pacific Northwest region along a 466-mile rail corridor that spans from Eugene, Oregon to Vancouver, BC. The average distance between stations is around 30 miles. These cities and adjacent communities are home to nearly eight million residents.

**How is the Amtrak Cascades service paid for?**

The operation of Amtrak Cascades is funded by passengers, the states of Washington and Oregon, and Amtrak. Funding from the state of Washington comes from taxes collected from the sale of new and used motor vehicles, rental cars, and vehicle weight fees. These funds are directed to WSDOT's intercity passenger rail program by the Governor and the state legislature. Some federal grants are also received by WSDOT for rail projects. It should be noted that no state or federal gas tax dollars can be spent on rail construction projects or Amtrak Cascades operations.

State and some federal funds go towards rail construction projects that allow Amtrak Cascades trains to run safely, reliably, more frequently, and with reduced travel times between cities. State funds are also used for day-to-day operation of the trains.



**How are the trains performing today?**

WSDOT measures the performance of Amtrak Cascades in a number of important ways. Key performance measures include ridership, on-time performance, customer satisfaction, and fare box recovery. Performance statistics are available in WSDOT's Gray Notebook quarterly report at: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/Accountability/PerformanceReporting](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Accountability/PerformanceReporting).

Amtrak Cascades service carried a total of 761,610 passengers in 2009. Although this represents a 1.7 percent decrease over 2008, it is the second highest annual ridership total since the inception of Amtrak Cascades service.

In 2009, state-supported Amtrak Cascades trains had a fare box recovery of 54 percent. Operating costs totaled \$31.2 million in FFY 2009, which was 2.1 percent lower than the previous year. This decrease was most likely due to reduced fuel costs compared with 2008. Operating revenues were approximately \$16.9 million for FFY 2009, a decrease of more than \$3.9 million (2.3 percent) over the previous year.

Total taxpayer subsidy for Washington state-supported Amtrak Cascades trains was \$14.3 million in 2009, a decrease of 1.9 percent over the previous year. Reduced operating costs coupled with a higher revenue yield in 2009 most likely contributed to the decrease in taxpayer subsidy. Operating costs include maintenance costs for the three state-owned train sets used in Amtrak Cascades daily operations.

On-time performance for Amtrak Cascades averaged nearly 72 percent in 2009, which is an 8 percent improvement over the 63.97 percent on-time performance for 2008.

**What improvements is WSDOT making to the Amtrak Cascades service?**

WSDOT has partnered with Amtrak on a major interior renovation on all coach and business class cars used on Amtrak Cascades. The \$9 million project began summer 2007 and is expected to be completed by 2013.

In 2008, both coach and business class cars were outfitted with new leather seating surfaces, updated interior color schemes and paneling, and new flooring. Other work

performed included the installation of new on-board computers and modifications to the restrooms and vestibules (areas between the train cars).



In 2010, WSDOT and Amtrak will install on-board Wi-Fi service on all five Amtrak Cascades train sets. Additionally, the Bistro and Lounge cars will undergo modifications to upgrade the interiors, improve passenger mobility and seating, and help Amtrak staff provide more efficient customer service.

On August 1, 2009, the second Amtrak Cascades train service to Vancouver, B.C. began after a one year delay. With the addition of this second train service, travelers from Oregon now have direct round-trip service between Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, B.C.

**Amtrak Cascades Milestones**

