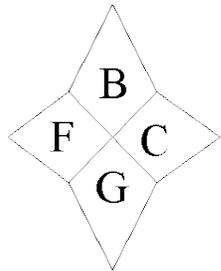


Benton-Franklin Council of Governments

Regional Rail Workshop for the Washington State Rail Plan

March 28, 2013

Hosted by:



Benton-Franklin Council of Governments



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**

Rail Division



Benton-Franklin Council of Governments

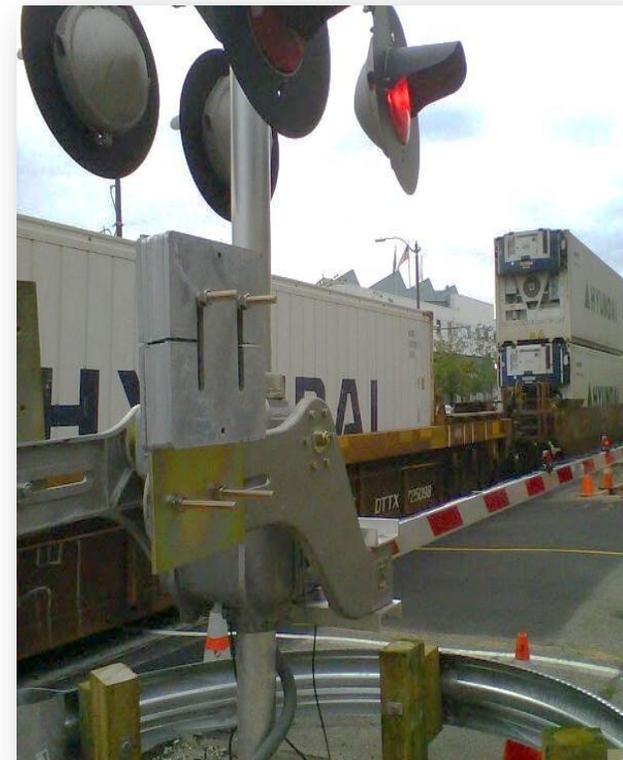
Regional Rail Workshop for the Washington State Rail Plan

Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCG), in partnership with WSDOT, hosted a regional rail workshop in Kennewick to solicit stakeholder input on the State Rail Plan, as well as regional freight planning efforts. Stakeholders were invited to discuss freight rail transportation in Benton, Franklin and Walla Walla Counties and to help develop the next [State Rail Plan](#). Workshop participants received an update on ongoing technical analysis and discussed priority needs and opportunities for the state rail system.

Freight rail is a vital component of the multimodal transportation system in the Mid-Columbia Basin. Short-line rail provides a critical link in successfully shipping and receiving agricultural products and other commodities from the rural areas of our region to the mainline rail system. Improvements to the system have been made, but in order to stay competitive globally, nationally and regionally, investment in rail improvement projects will be needed. – Introduction from Mark Kushner, BFCG

State rail plan overview

The Washington State Rail Plan will serve as a strategic blueprint for future public investment in the state's rail transportation system. It will provide an integrated plan for freight and passenger rail, including 5- and 20-year funding strategies, that meets federal and state requirements. The plan will inform the [State Freight Mobility Plan](#); guide WSDOT as it develops strategic freight rail partnerships to support essential rail service; and establish priorities for determining which freight rail investments should receive public support. It will also guide Washington as it works with Oregon and British Columbia to implement intercity passenger rail service. WSDOT will release the final State Rail Plan by the end of 2013.



In 2005-2006, WSDOT Freight Systems Division (FSD) worked closely with the Washington State Transportation Commission to develop the Freight Report in the 2006 Washington Transportation Plan. FSD has relied on that work as the state freight plan since 2006, updating the freight report's statistics in 2008. In January 2011, FSD started developing a new State Freight Mobility Plan to be published by December 2013.

Following completion of the State Rail Plan, the plan results will be incorporated into the State Freight Mobility Plan and Washington Transportation Plan.

BFCG role in freight/rail planning

BFCG actively works with both WSDOT and the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) on freight issues. As a historic rail hub, the preservation of mainline and short-line railroads is important to the local and regional economy.

In 2011, BFCG and WSDOT hosted a set of three eastern Washington focused workshops for the State Freight Mobility Plan, as well as the current work on the 2013 State Rail Plan. BFCG also sits on the Advisory Committee of FMSIB to assist in developing a statewide MAP-21 compliant freight plan.

Regionally, in 2008, BFCG issued the report "Freight Rail in the Benton Franklin Walla Walla RTPO," summarizing the status of freight rail in the RTPO, discussing the issue of rail abandonment, as well as addressing funding issues related to improvements on short-line rail systems. Additionally, policies in the 2011-2032 MPO/RTPO Regional Transportation Plan support freight mobility.



Workshop format

The goal of the workshop was to introduce the State Rail Plan; describe the timeline and highlight opportunities for public involvement; share information about the state's rail transportation system; and discuss eight specific needs that have been identified. These needs include the infrastructure, operational or institutional issues that are impacting the safety, capacity or efficiency of the state's rail system. The needs were identified through several different sources, including the technical work completed in the State Rail Plan and stakeholder outreach efforts.

The workshop was held on March 28 in Kennewick with 36 participants representing short-line railroads, ports, cities, and other advocacy groups.

The eight rail system needs discussed were:

- **Need 1:** Address constraints to ensure capacity meets future demand.
- **Need 2:** Preserve existing rail capacity and infrastructure.
- **Need 3:** Enhance the efficiency and reliability of existing services.
- **Need 4:** The rail system should support economic development by providing access to people and industry.
- **Need 5:** Preserve access to global markets by ensuring access to Washington's ports.
- **Need 6:** Prioritize cost-effective investments into the state's rail system.
- **Need 7:** Strengthen rail as an environmentally and community friendly mode of transportation.
- **Need 8:** Continue to support safe and secure passenger and freight rail movement.

The workshop had a 30-minute discussion to address:

- How do the statewide needs we identified reflect local and regional rail/freight needs?
- Did we miss any rail needs that are important for this region?
- What responses (capital, operating, policy/programmatic) should be considered in the State Rail Plan?
- What is the state's role in addressing the needs?



What we heard (summary)

Workshop participants were asked to go to the need that they believed was the most important need. This process determined that they would address seven of the eight needs. Need 3 was not addressed. Brainstorming brought up the following issues:

Need 1: Address constraints to ensure capacity meets future demand: Six participants discussed reopening the old Milwaukee Corridor from Ellensburg to Lind and the benefits, risks and options for hauling coal in Washington.

Need 2: Preserve existing rail capacity and infrastructure: Ten participants discussed the benefits and costs of preserving our rail capacity and infrastructure. The most important factors were cheaper to maintain now, rail capacity is limited by track conditions, investments in the rail system can lead to new business opportunities, and there is a realistic level of hauls that short lines could reach where they could be self-sufficient. Actions needed would be a dedicated state funding source for short lines, public campaign to explain benefits of rail, and tax credit program for short lines.

Needs 4 & 5: The rail system should support economic development by providing access to people and industry and preserve access to global markets by ensuring access to Washington's ports: Eight participants discussed the need to support economic development and preserving access to global markets for our ports. The most important factors identified were healthy (financial/infrastructure) short lines that focus on the first mile/last mile; a statewide increase in economic growth that could decrease the impact to the region due to congestion, emergency services, noise, and mobility; and better coordination of planning efforts that have a more deliberate regional outreach.

Needs 6, 7 & 8: Prioritize cost-effective investments into the state's rail system, strengthen rail as an environmentally and community friendly mode of transportation, and continue to support safe and secure passenger and freight rail movement: Five participants focused on investments to our state's rail system, including money for grade separations, opening the Ellensburg to Lind line and reducing noise in small communities.



Next steps

The next steps for the plan development include:

- Identify and evaluate responses to needs: capital projects, operational improvements, program and policy changes.
- Recommend priority actions to achieve vision and goals; create an implementation plan.
- Release draft Washington State Rail Plan for public review and comment in Summer 2013.
- Publish final Washington State Rail Plan in December 2013.



Workshop participants

City of Connell:	Gary Walton
City of Kennewick:	Peter Beaudry, John Hubbard, Ken Nelson, Steve Plummer
City of Pasco:	Rick White, Maryann Zukowski
Eastern Washington Gateway Railroad:	Eric Bickleman, Steve Gibson, John Howell
Frontier Rail, YCR:	Paul Didelius
HDR Engineering:	Mike Murray
Lampson Int.:	Bill Lampson
Pasco Chamber of Commerce:	Colin Hastings
PCC Railroad:	Ted Kadau
Port of Benton:	John Haakenson, Roy Keck, Bob Larson
Port of Kennewick:	Don Barnes, Gene Wagner
Simplot:	Terry Threlfall
Spink Engineering:	Bob Spink
Tidewater Barge Lines:	Andy Stephens
Tri-City & Olympia Railroad:	Rhett Peterson, Tobi Peterson
Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce:	Patrick Conrad, Lori Mattson
TRIDEC:	Bryson Bailey



Workshop project team

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Kerri Woehler, Rail Division



For more information:

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- Email comments to rail@wsdot.wa.gov
- Call the WSDOT Rail Division at 360.705.7900
- Write to the WSDOT Rail Division at P.O. Box 47407, Olympia, WA 98504-7407
- Fax comments to 360.705.6821