

# Regional Rail Workshop

for the  
Washington State  
Rail Plan

Blaine City Hall  
May 30, 2013

Hosted by:



whatcom council of governments



# Meeting Objectives

- Review state rail plan key findings
- Discuss priority needs and opportunities for the state rail system
- Share local/regional perspectives on rail system needs
- Understand next steps in the state rail planning process



# Agenda

9:20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• State Rail Plan</li><li>• Rail system overview</li><li>• Rail system needs</li><li>• Questions</li></ul>
10:10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New Stop Evaluation Study</li><li>• Questions</li></ul>
10:30	Group discussion: Local/regional perspectives on state rail system needs
11:20	Remaining questions and open discussion
11:35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• State Rail Plan next steps</li><li>• Reflections and closing remarks</li></ul>
12:00	Adjourn



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# Expectations

- The purpose of today's meeting is to share information and perspectives
- We'll all do our part to make this a productive meeting.
- Comments will be recorded and feedback will be incorporated in the State Rail Plan.
- WSDOT is not in a position to make decisions about service changes during this meeting.



# State Rail Plan Overview



# What is the Purpose of the State Rail Plan?

- Fulfills federal and state requirements.
- Provides an integrated plan for freight and passenger rail, including 5- and 20-year funding strategies, that meets federal and state requirements.
- Builds on previous plans and guides future efforts.
- Serves as a strategic blueprint for future public investment in the state's rail transportation system.



Years of collaborative, consistent planning and substantial state investment prepared WSDOT to compete for and ultimately secure nearly \$800 million in federal funds for passenger rail improvements.

It's time to be thinking about what's next for freight and passenger rail.

# Plan Methodology

- **Establish the vision:** What are we trying to accomplish?
- **Identify strengths and challenges:** In what ways are we achieving the vision? What obstacles are keeping us from getting there?
- **Develop options:** What strategies/projects will help us overcome the obstacles?
- **Evaluate and prioritize:** How well do the strategies/projects work? What are the advantages and disadvantages? How much do they cost? In what ways do the strategies/projects support the vision?
- **Create recommended implementation plan:** How do we implement the changes to achieve our vision?

# State Rail Plan Timeline



## 2014 and beyond – Plan Implementation →

Incorporate results into State Freight Plan and Washington Transportation Plan.

Continue collaborative planning with stakeholders and partners to refine and focus investment priorities.

Initiate scoping and project development to prepare for future funding opportunities.

# Stakeholder Feedback – Freight and Passenger Rail

- Improve the efficiency and reliability of existing rail services.
- Improve connections between rail and other modes.
- Strengthen rail as a competitive and environmentally-friendly transportation option.
- Maintain infrastructure in a state of good repair.
- Prevent loss of rail right of way.
- Encourage compatible land use development near rail infrastructure.
- Enhance safety on the rail and at at-grade crossings.
- Preserve and expand facilities and services to accommodate future demands.
- Develop inter-agency and public-private partnerships.
- Consider cost effectiveness and return on investment of public investments and monitor success.
- Achieve financial sustainability.

# Your Feedback

- Validate the needs we've identified.
- Provide local and regional perspectives on rail needs.
- Identify local and regional priorities.
- Discuss other options for addressing system needs and opportunities.



# State Rail System



# Freight Rail in Washington State

Class I Railroads: BNSF and UP

- Privately-owned enterprises.
- Fund their own system improvements.
- Own the majority of the rail infrastructure.
- Occasionally partner with the public sector on capital projects (grade crossings, etc.).

Short-line railroads:

- 23 throughout Washington.
- Mixture of private and public ownership.



# Passenger Rail in Washington State

Service	Sponsors	Daily Round Trips
<b>Long Distance - Coast Starlight and Empire Builder</b>		
Coast Starlight: Seattle to LA	Amtrak	1
Empire Builder: Seattle to Chicago	Amtrak	1
<b>Intercity Passenger Rail - Amtrak Cascades</b>		
Seattle to Vancouver, B.C.	WSDOT	2
Seattle to Portland, OR	WSDOT, ODOT, Amtrak	4
Portland to Eugene	ODOT	2
<b>Regional/Commuter - Sounder</b>		
Seattle to Everett	Sound Transit	4
Seattle to Tacoma/Lakewood	Sound Transit	9



# The Right Tool for the Right Job

Which is the *right* type of passenger rail to serve your transportation needs?

Light rail



Regional, commuter rail



Intercity passenger rail, emerging high-speed rail



Long-distance rail



*Short distance*

*Long distance*

Within a metro area

Suburbs to major metro

Between major metros

Cross-country



Washington State  
Department of Transportation

# Amtrak Cascades Intercity Passenger Rail

467-mile corridor with service between Vancouver, B.C. and Eugene through Seattle and Portland.

2012 performance:

- 11 daily trains totaling 4,015 annually
- Ridership exceeded 830,000
- Ticket revenues exceeded \$30 m
- FFY Farebox recovery 64.3%

Partnerships make it possible:

- BNSF, UP and CN own the tracks
- Amtrak operates the service
- Talgo and Amtrak maintain equipment
- Who pays:
  - The states of Oregon and Washington, Amtrak, and passengers pay for the service U.S. and Canada provide funds for border security



[www.wsdot.wa.gov/rail](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/rail)  
[www.AmtrakCascades.com](http://www.AmtrakCascades.com)



# Intercity Rail Connecting Major Economic Centers



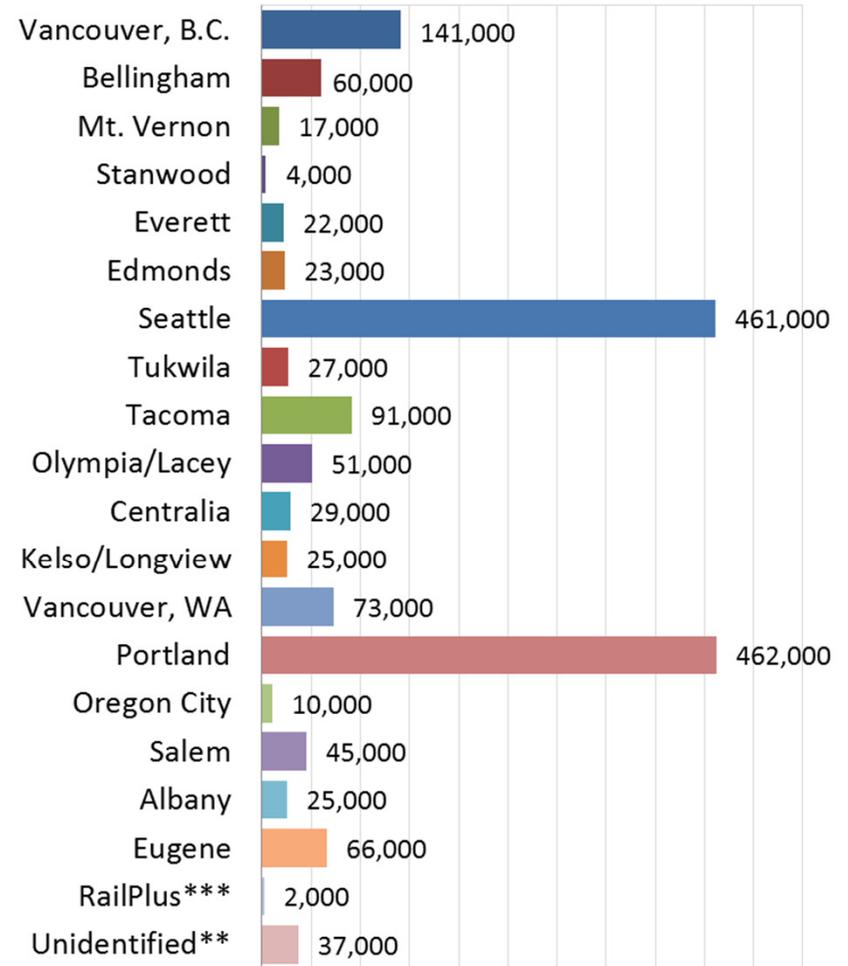
**Vancouver, B.C. (Metro)**  
 2.5 million residents  
 141,000 on/off



**Seattle (Metro)**  
 3.5 million residents  
 461,000 on/off



**Portland (Metro)**  
 2.3 million residents  
 462,000 on/off



\*On-Offs are a measurement of how many passengers got on and off the train at each station.

\*\*Unidentified passengers either deferred their trip to another day or were unidentified by Amtrak.

\*\*\*RailPlus are riders transferring from Sound Transit to Amtrak Cascades.

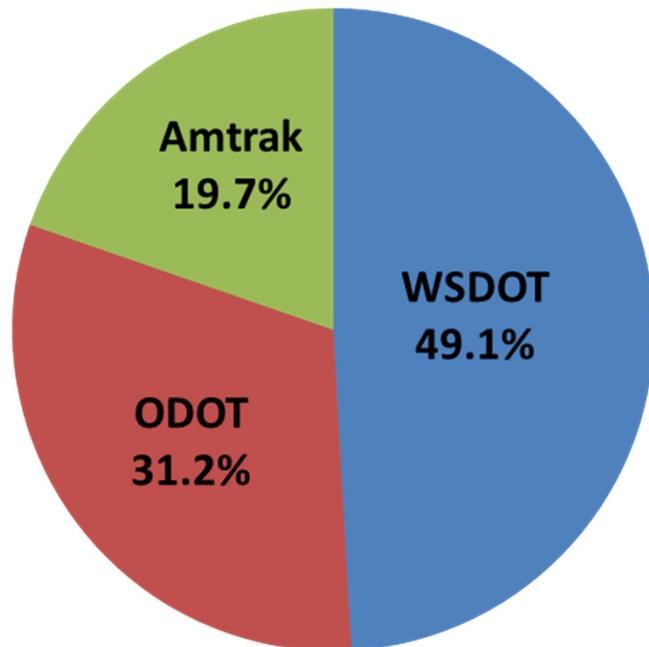
# Performance Measurement

- **On-time performance improves in 2012**
  - On-time performance in 2012 increased over 2011
  - Average OTP for 2012 was 75 percent; 5 percentage points higher than the previous year
  - WSDOT established an On-time Performance Task force in 2012
    - Meeting weekly with Oregon, British Columbia, Amtrak, BNSF Railway, Union Pacific, Sound Transit, and Talgo to review causes of delays and to institute procedures to reduce delays
    - Delays reduce schedule reliability and negatively impact ridership
    - Areas of review and action have included signal system failures, equipment failures and recovery times after incidents
- **Ridership** – 836,324 passengers rode Amtrak Cascades in 2012
- **Farebox recovery**, the percentage of total operating costs paid for by customer fares, for FFY 2012 is 64.3 percent

# Funding Responsibilities Will Change Dramatically

## Today:

Cost Sharing for 2011-2013,  
Based on Subsidy



## October 1, 2013:

Section 209 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) takes effect:

- Amtrak's contribution to operating subsidies will be \$0
- Washington and Oregon will assume 100% of operating subsidies for Amtrak Cascades
- It is estimated Washington will pay up to \$5 million more per year

# Addressing the Challenges

## Objectives:

- Deliver consistently on customer expectations for fast, reliable, and affordable high-speed rail
- Build revenue to cover the cost of operations
- Grow ridership in economic centers
- Pool resources for increased efficiencies
- Manage costs

## Strategies:

- Preclearance
- Capital improvements
- Washington and Oregon corridor approach
- Washington and British Columbia collaboration



# Preclearance for Amtrak Cascades

**Saves 10-minutes by eliminating international border train stop**

Beyond the Border: full preclearance at Vancouver, B.C. for passenger rail

## Results:

- Reduced travel time
- Improved on-time performance
- Reduces risk of unanticipated delays (can be up to 60 mins)

## Benefits:

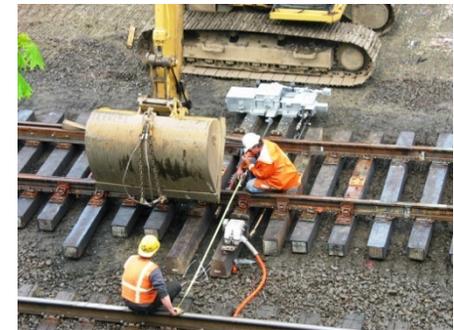
- Improves convenience for passengers
- Makes international rail travel a stronger component of the transportation system
- Supports strategy to increase ridership in our 2<sup>nd</sup> largest market



*Amtrak Cascades at the International Border. June 29, 2011. AaverageJoe/Michael Chu. Flickr. April 16, 2013. [www.flickr.com/photos/mikechu/5888854439/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikechu/5888854439/)*

# High-Speed Rail Capital Investments

- Federal high-speed rail funds - \$794.9 million  
ARRA = American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
- Supports overall program goal of more frequent and reliable Amtrak Cascades service
  - Two additional round trips between Seattle and Portland, for a total of six
  - Improved on-time performance to 88%
  - 10-minute schedule reduction between Seattle-Portland
- 20 projects in Washington building additional rail-line capacity and upgrading tracks, safety features, utilities, signals, passenger stations and advanced warning systems
- Supports an estimated 2,600 skilled construction and operating jobs for railroad crews and regional contractors



# Corridor Projects: Seattle to Vancouver, B.C.



# Long-Range Plan for Amtrak Cascades, 2006

Amtrak Cascades  
Planned Service:  
Seattle to  
Vancouver, B.C.

Vancouver, BC			
	Today	Mid-Point	2023
<b>Travel Times</b>			
To Seattle	3:55	3:25	2:37
To Portland, OR	N/A	6:40	5:22
<b>Round Trips</b>			
To Seattle	1	3	4
To Portland, OR	N/A	2	3

Mount Vernon			
	Today	Mid-Point	2023
<b>Travel Times</b>			
To Vancouver, BC	2:19	2:10	1:26
To Seattle	1:59	1:31	1:24
To Portland, OR	N/A	4:29	3:55
<b>Round Trips</b>			
To Vancouver, BC	1	3	4
To Seattle	2	3	4
To Portland, OR	N/A	2	3

Edmonds			
	Today	Mid-Point	2023
<b>Travel Times</b>			
To Vancouver, BC	3:27	3:03	2:15
To Seattle	0:28	0:21	0:21
To Portland, OR	N/A	3:52	3:19
<b>Round Trips</b>			
To Vancouver, BC	1	3	4
To Seattle	2	3	4
To Portland, OR	N/A	2	3



Bellingham			
	Today	Mid-Point	2023
<b>Travel Times</b>			
To Vancouver, BC	1:48	1:39	0:50
To Seattle	2:25	1:59	1:44
To Portland, OR	N/A	5:14	4:29
<b>Round Trips</b>			
To Vancouver, BC	1	3	4
To Seattle	2	3	4
To Portland, OR	N/A	2	3

Everett			
	Today	Mid-Point	2023
<b>Travel Times</b>			
To Vancouver, BC	3:03	2:42	1:55
To Seattle	0:52	0:40	0:39
To Portland, OR	N/A	4:11	3:37
<b>Round Trips</b>			
To Vancouver, BC	1	3	4
To Seattle	2	3	4
To Portland, OR	N/A	2	3

Seattle			
	Today	Mid-Point	2023
<b>Travel Times</b>			
To Vancouver, BC	3:55	3:25	2:37
To Portland, OR	3:30	3:00	2:30
<b>Round Trips</b>			
To Vancouver, BC	1	3	4
To Portland, OR	3	8	13

# Rail System Needs



# Rail System Needs

**State Transportation Planning Goals** set the direction for what we want to achieve and help us identify and prioritize needs.

- **Economic Vitality:** To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy.
- **Preservation:** To maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services.
- **Safety:** To provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system.
- **Mobility:** To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington State.
- **Environment:** To enhance Washington's quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment.
- **Stewardship:** To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the transportation system.

# Washington's Rail System Today

## Strengths:

- Providing good mobility for existing train volumes.
- Extensive network connects citizens and industry.
- Supports industries that contribute \$106 billion to GDP and support 1.2 million jobs.
- Most fuel-efficient mode and produces the least amount of carbon.

## Challenges:

- Bottlenecks, constraints and access issues on Class I system.
- Delays and reliability concerns.
- Deferred maintenance degrading level of service on short-line railroads.
- Access to national and global markets.
- Meeting future demand.
- Maintaining a safe rail system.

Washington State Rail System



# Rail Operations and Infrastructure Needs

- Address constraints to ensure capacity meets future demand.
- Preserve existing rail capacity and infrastructure.
- Enhance the efficiency and reliability of existing services.



# Rail's Role in Economic Development

- Support economic development by providing access to people and industry.
- Preserve access to global markets by ensuring access to Washington's ports.



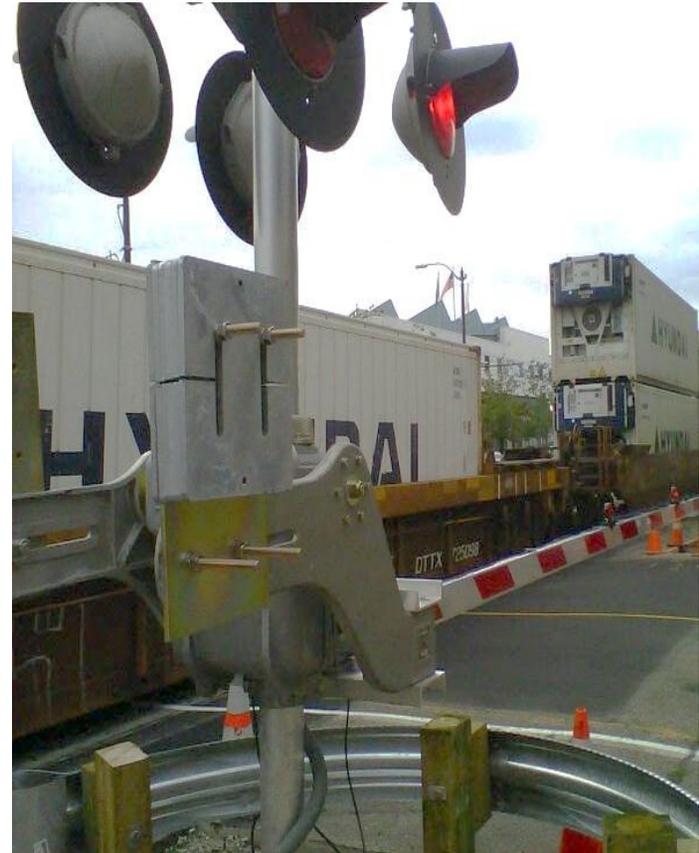
# Rail System Priorities and Goals

- Prioritize cost-effective investments into the state's rail system.
- Strengthen rail as an environmentally and community-friendly mode of transportation.
- Continue to support safe and secure passenger and freight rail movement.



# Next Steps in Plan Development

- 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.
- Continue collaborative planning with stakeholders and partners to refine and focus investment priorities.



# Questions?



# New Stop Evaluation for Amtrak Cascades

# Legislative Proviso

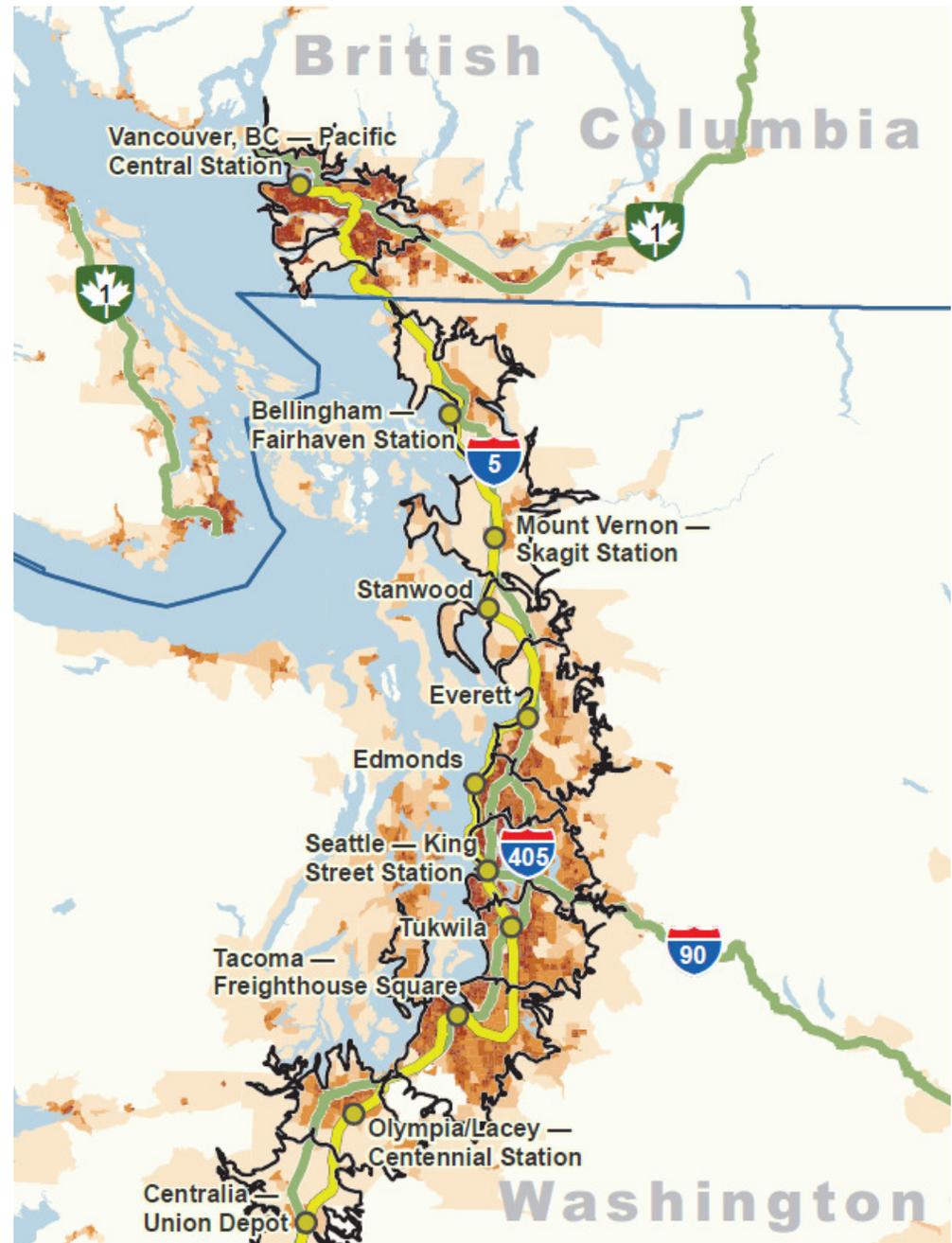
*\$300,000 of the multimodal transportation account—state appropriation is provided solely for the department to conduct a study to examine the interconnectivity benefits of, and potential for, a future Amtrak Cascades stop in the vicinity of the city of Auburn. As part of its consideration, the department shall conduct a thorough market analysis of the potential for adding or changing stops on the Amtrak Cascades route.*

# Guiding Principles

- We do not anticipate service changes before capital program completion in 2017.
- Amtrak Cascades service must align with goals and requirements of the high-speed rail program.
- WSDOT must fulfill its commitment to FRA: two additional daily round trips between Seattle and Portland, 88% on-time performance, and 10-minute travel time savings by 2017.
- Adding or changing stops has ripple effects across the entire system, so metrics are based on a corridor approach to evaluate the net change against the baseline.
- WSDOT will work to manage costs and increase ridership to reduce taxpayer subsidies.

# Corridor-Wide Market Analysis

- Service reliability and frequency are key to increasing ridership and revenue
- Densely populated areas have good access to Amtrak Cascades stations



Population density adjacent to Amtrak Cascades stations, 2010/2011 <sup>35</sup>

# Evaluation Criteria

- ***Consistent with State Transportation Planning Goals & State Rail Plan***
- **Operational Feasibility** – Are changes consistent with the Service Outcome Agreement? How do the changes affect other trains?
- **Customer Demand** – How will ridership change?
- **Station Suitability** – What site changes are necessary for Amtrak Cascades?
- **Interconnectivity Benefits** – How are transportation connections and externalities improved?
- **Fiscal Viability** – What is the bottom line?

# Next Steps

- Technical Team review and feedback on technical reports and draft final report.
- Final Report by June 30, 2013.
- Incorporate results into State Rail Plan.
- Public process to review criteria for adding or changing stops in late 2014.

# Questions?



# Group Discussion:

Local / regional  
perspectives on rail  
system needs



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# Remaining Questions and Open Discussion



# Reflections and Closing Remarks



# Thank you for joining us!



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