

# **Point Defiance Bypass Project**

## ***Advisory Team Kick Off***

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Program Director

Cascades High Speed Rail Program

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Secretary of Transportation

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# Program Vision

- Establish a dedicated high-speed track with trains operating at up to 150mph, with 13 daily round trips between Seattle and Portland.
  - Currently, Amtrak *Cascades* operates four daily round trips between Seattle and Portland at speeds up to 79 mph.
- Strategy:
  - Employ a cost-effective, step-by-step approach
  - Focus investments on projects that produce immediate benefits, while laying the groundwork for the future.



# Service and Ridership

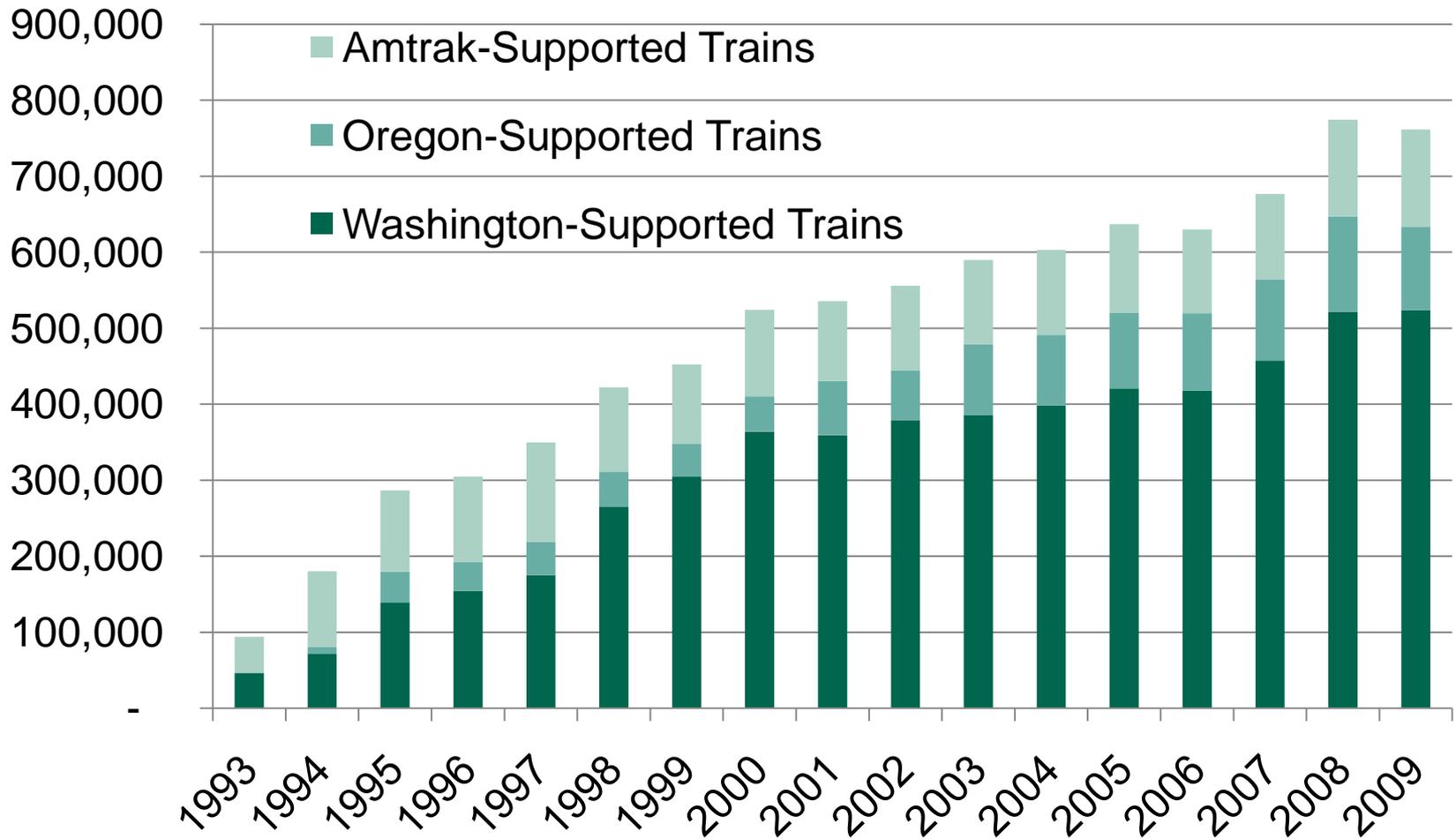
New ridership record for *Amtrak Cascades* in first quarter of 2010

- Increase of nearly 34,000 riders over 2009, making it the largest first quarter ridership since 1994.
- In February, ridership soared to 60,745 for the month for an amazing 34 percent increase over 2009.
- Growth due largely to the 2010 Olympic Games held in Vancouver, B.C.
- March recorded the highest ridership for the quarter at 67,039—an 11 percent increase over 2009.



# Amtrak Cascades Annual Ridership (1993-2009)

Number of Passengers



# ARRA High Speed Passenger Rail Program

- February 17, 2009 - President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) including \$8 billion for federal High Speed Rail funding.
- First major federal investment in High Speed Passenger Rail outside the North East corridor.
- Eligibility limited to state transportation departments and Amtrak.
- The Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor (PNWRC) is one of the 11 federally designated high speed rail corridors.



# Vision for High Speed Rail in America



# What is High Speed Rail?

Conventional Rail	Emerging High Speed Rail (HSR)	HSR – Regional	HSR and Intercity Passenger Rail (IPR) HSR – Express
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Traditional intercity passenger rail services of more than 100 miles.</li> <li>● As little as one, to as many as 7–12 daily frequencies.</li> <li>● Top speeds of up to 79 mph to as high as 90 mph.</li> <li>● May or may not have strong potential for future high speed rail service.</li> <li>● Generally shared track with freight trains.</li> <li>● Intended to provide travel options and to develop the passenger rail market for further development in the future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Developing corridors of 100–500 miles.</li> <li>● Top speeds of up to 90–110 mph.</li> <li>● Strong potential for future HSR Regional and/or Express service.</li> <li>● Primarily shared track with freight trains.</li> <li>● Advanced grade crossing protection or separation.</li> <li>● Intended to develop the passenger rail market, and provide some relief to other modes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Relatively frequent service between major and moderate population centers 100–500 miles apart, with some intermediate stops.</li> <li>● Top speeds of 110–150 mph.</li> <li>● Some dedicated and some shared track with freight.</li> <li>● Grade-separated.</li> <li>● Intended to relieve highway and, to some extent, air capacity constraints.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Frequent, express service between major population centers 200–600 miles apart, with few intermediate stops.</li> <li>● Top speeds of at least 150 mph.</li> <li>● Completely grade-separated, dedicated rights-of-way (with the possible exception of some shared track in terminal areas).</li> <li>● Intended to relieve air and highway capacity constraints.</li> </ul>

\*U.S. Department of Transportation/Federal Railroad Administration High-Speed Rail Strategic Plan - April 2009

# Cascades High Speed Rail Program



## Washington State High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Proposed ARRA Projects

1. Tacoma – D to M Street Connection
2. Tacoma – Point Defiance Bypass
3. Vancouver – Yard Bypass Track
4. Cascades Corridor Reliability Upgrades - South
5. Everett – Storage Track – WA
6. Amtrak Cascades® New Train Set
7. Kelso Martins Bluff – New Siding
8. Kelso Martins Bluff – Toteff Siding Extension
9. Kelso Martins Bluff – Kelso to Longview Jct.
10. Seattle - King Street Station Track Upgrades
11. Advanced Signal System

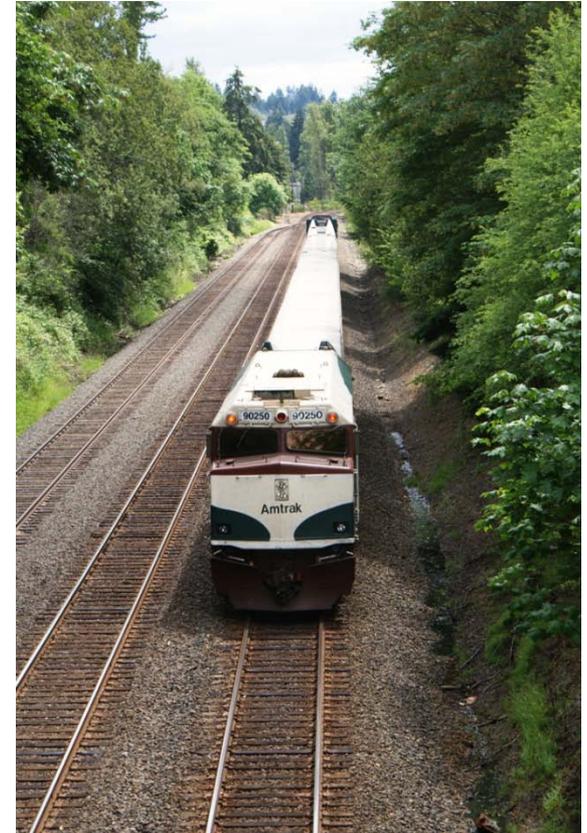


Projects that Span the Corridor **4** **6** **11**



## Project history – Point Defiance Bypass

- Initiated discussions in 2003 for additional Amtrak service between Seattle and Portland
- Reviewed existing route and options
- Constraints
- Timing with other work



# Project benefits

- Improved Reliability
- More Frequent Service
- Improved Freight Service
- Construction Jobs
- Safety Improvements (Crossings)



# Progress to date and current work

- Plans developed (may now change)
- Environmental work
- Environmental Summary (FHWA)
- Cultural Resources Survey/Discipline Report
- Noise, vibration, and traffic research



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Current Work: FRA Environmental Assessment

# Environmental Assessment Process

## Point Defiance Bypass Project

### Environmental Assessment Process and Timeline

	Technical Input	NEPA Process (National Environmental Policy Act) Purpose and Need	Community Input
Summer/Fall 2010	Screening criteria	Identify recommended opportunities for study	Open houses/ citizen input
Winter 2010/2011		Update and expand detailed environmental studies (discipline reports)	
Spring 2011		Prepare environmental assessment	
Summer/Fall 2011	Regulatory Agency Comments  Agency Review/Input	<b>Public Review of Environmental Assessment Public Meeting</b>	Public comments on Environmental Assessment
Winter/Spring 2012*		<b>Federal Rail Administration NEPA Decision</b>	

\* Timing dependent on public comments and FRA Review.

# Working with communities

## Community Input

- Scoping Letters
  - Review and Align with Neighborhood and Growth Plans
  - Review Noise and Vibration Impacts
  - Review Additional Safety Measures
  - Review Emissions
  - Model and Review Traffic Impacts
  - Review Traffic Calming Measures
  - Review/Consider Grade Separations
  - Incorporate Current Environmental Justice Comments
  - Review Peak Traffic Conflicts
  - Review Project Benefits/Impacts

# Open House Feedback

- Positive Feedback from public
  - Informative information stations
  - Effective visual displays
  - Knowledgeable staff providing consistent facts and details
  - Variety of groups represented (Tacoma Rail, Sound Transit, Operation Lifesaver)
  - Staff's sincere openness to listen with empathy
- Negative Feedback from Public
  - Worries about commute becoming longer because of more crossing delays
  - Noise could be an issue
  - Traffic congestion could be unbearable with the added crossings
  - Children could be at risk with high speed trains zipping along
  - Suicides have potential to increase

# Public Outreach Plan

- Written materials
- Media Relations
- Social media
- Special Events/Open Houses
- Leveraging Relationships



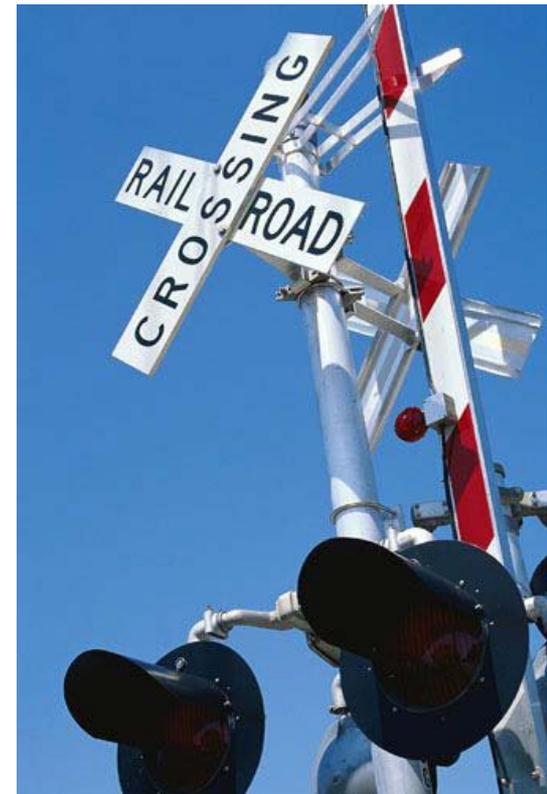
# Technical Advisory Team

## Roles and Responsibilities

- Capture concerns from scoping letters, open house, etc.
- Identify a criteria matrix for screening mitigation options:
  - Does it mitigate?
  - Cost criteria
  - Additional impacts as a result of mitigations
  - Does the mitigation require more mitigation?
- Identify mitigation opportunities
- Screen the mitigation opportunities with criteria established
- Submit recommendations to Executive Team

# Executive Advisory Team

- **Roles and Responsibilities**
  - Review and comment on technical team mitigation recommendations
  - Provide feedback to the Technical Team
  - Collaborate to finalize recommendations
  - Provide recommendations for the Environmental Assessment document



# Advisory Team Work Flow (Technical and Executive)

- Technical Advisory Team captures key elements/issues
- Identify screening criteria
- Identify and analyze mitigation opportunities
- Screen mitigation opportunities
- Submit mitigation recommendations to Executive Team
- Executive Team review and comment
- Feedback to Technical Advisory Team
- Executive Team finalizes recommendations
- Submit final recommendations to WSDOT

# Next Steps

- E-mail updates
- Conference call check-ins
- In-person meetings as needed
- Future meeting materials sent via e-mail



# Future meetings

- Review schedule (handout in binder)
- General agenda for first technical meeting
  - Review Concerns
  - Build Base Screening Criteria
  - Determine analysis priorities
  - Align data
  - Identify additional data needs

# For more information

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