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AAWA's 2021 Legislative Priorities

Increase Rail Safety

Safety is always AAWA's first priority. AAWA supports [legislation](#) that makes the train an even safer mode of transportation.

Restore Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom *Cascades* Service

Amtrak *Cascades* passenger rail service north of Seattle has been discontinued for almost a year. AAWA believes WSDOT and BNSF Railroad should come to an agreement to offer *Cascades* service with a temporary terminus in Blaine that would restore trains to Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties and provide useful connections to the state ferries, and San Juan and Island County destinations.

Complete the *Cascades* Long-Range Plan

Meeting our state's climate goals and addressing our mobility justice issues mean making trains a competitive travel option. Washington has fallen behind on implementing the [2006 Long-Range Plan for Amtrak *Cascades*](#). Last year's [Washington State Rail Plan \(2019-2040\)](#) states, "More planning is needed to develop an intercity passenger rail system in Washington." (p. 52) We must recommit to realizing the Long-Range Plan this decade.

Build upon the 2020 East-West Study

Implementing [East-West passenger rail service](#) will require [a higher-level study](#) that considers the externalities of passenger rail vs. other modes, the impacts of better mobility equity, and the opportunities for a full regional network that includes connections to places like Walla Walla and Boise.

Activate County Rail Districts

County rail districts (CRDs) are an option for funding rail infrastructure improvements in Washington. Counties with an existing CRD, such as Kittitas County, can receive matching funding from the state that applies to local rail projects.

Improve Regional Corridor Management

Amtrak Cascades is sponsored by both Oregon and Washington. Improving coordination between ODOT and WSDOT will help Cascades build upon the success it has experienced over the past several years.

Create a Northwest Rail Commission

When states work together on rail planning, they become more competitive applicants for federal grants. Creating a Regional Rail Commission of Northwest states would help make region-wide intercity rail projects a reality by improving coordination and opening up new funding opportunities.

Form a Rail Advisory Committee

Rail stakeholders in Oregon can provide feedback to a rail advisory committee that reports directly to ODOT. Washington needs its own rail advisory committee to improve communication between WSDOT and the public.