

Reviving a Rail Revolution

**Presentation by All Aboard Washington
to the Kiwanis of Olympia**

July 19, 2021

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What is World-Class Passenger Rail?



It's More Than Just Trains



It's Really Down to One Question

**Is it reasonably easy to
get there from here?**



AAWA's Vision

We believe that Washington state can **revive its rail revolution** and get back on track toward **creating a world-class passenger rail network**.

Our vision has been [published](#) in *Speedlines*, a [newsletter](#) of the American Public Transportation Association.

REVIVING A RAIL REVOLUTION:

Contributed by: Patrick Carnahan – All Aboard Washington

HOW WASHINGTON STATE CAN GET BACK ON TRACK TOWARD CREATING A WORLD-CLASS PASSENGER RAIL NETWORK

Amidst the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic, interest in passenger rail has increased markedly across the United States. With an enthusiastically pro-rail federal administration now in power, talk of our nation's "second great railroading revolution" has begun among advocates and transit blogs from coast to coast. But is this only our second, or even third, attempt at such a revolution? What about the one that started in the Pacific Northwest about 30 years ago, the one that aimed to create the most advanced rail system in North America?

WHERE IT STARTED

It was the early 1990s, and change was afoot in Western Washington. Many parts of the region were still recovering from the last recession in the 1980s, in addition to earlier declines of Boeing's space program and the logging industry. Bellevue and Redmond were feeling the impacts of Microsoft's meteoric rise. Amazon didn't even exist yet, but Washington's leaders were taking proactive steps to accommodate major economic and population growth. There was a new awareness of the environmental pollution caused by car dependence and the impossibility of "building our way out of" congestion with more highway lanes. The state was

steadily easing its way into implementing the 1990 Growth Management Act and several Commute Trip Reduction provisions, all to mitigate the impacts of a projected population boom in the Puget Sound. In 1991, the Washington State Legislature directed that a comprehensive assessment be made of the feasibility of developing a statewide 'High Speed Ground Transportation' (HSGT) system. The next year, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) designated the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor, which runs through the heart of Seattle, as a high-speed rail (HSR) corridor.

With the results of the earlier HSGT study in, the 1993 Washington State Legislature passed RCW 47.79 and created something revolutionary: a goal to build a regional HSR network connecting Seattle with Portland, Vancouver, BC, and Spokane by 2030. As recommended by the study, Washington and Oregon began implementing modern intercity passenger rail service on existing tracks between Vancouver and Eugene, OR, with the goal of increasing this service's top speed to 110 mph. From this, Amtrak Cascades originated, one of the nation's most successful intercity passenger rail services. Following the study's vision, the Washington State and Oregon Departments of Transportation both created bold long-range plans for Cascades that would dramatically increase their frequency and usefulness. Washington also studied the idea of using existing



Where It Started

1984

WASH Area RR
Passengers
Lloyd H. Flen

PRESENTATION TO
The Senate and House Transportation Committees
HIGH SPEED RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE
Western Washington Corridor
ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY STUDY
December 7, 1984

Presented by
Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc.
Washington Transportation Center

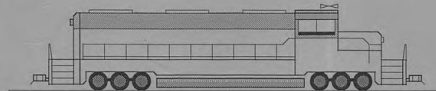
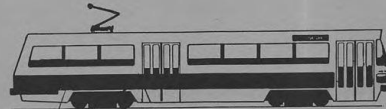
Sponsored by
Legislative Transportation Committee

**PARSONS
BRINCKERHOFF**

1988

**RECOMMENDED WASHINGTON STATE POLICY
ON FREIGHT AND PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE**

FINAL REPORT



Washington State Rail Development Commission
Olympia, Washington

December 1988

**High Speed
Ground Transportation**
Steering Committee

Gannett Fleming
ENGINEERS AND PLANNERS



High Speed Ground Transportation Study

Executive Summary

Report to the
• Governor
• Washington State Legislature
• Washington State Transportation Commission

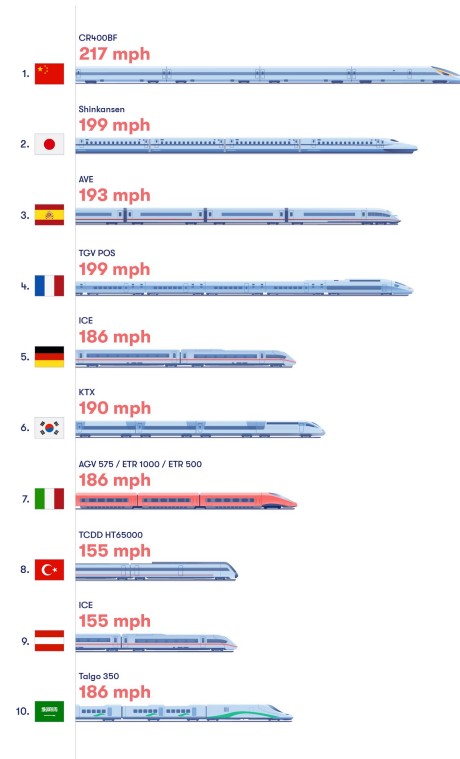
October 1992

Submitted by the High Speed Ground Transportation Steering Committee
Prepared by Gannett Fleming, Inc.

Building a Solid Foundation

What do **9** of the world's **10** most advanced HSR systems have in common?

They were built atop conventional intercity passenger rail services similar to Amtrak *Cascades*.





Building a Solid Foundation

Questions?

For more information on the Pacific Northwest High Speed Rail Corridor contact:



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Department of Transportation**
Transit, Research &
Intermodal Planning Division
Public Transportation Office,
Rail Branch
Transportation Building
Olympia, Washington 98504-7370
(206) 705-7900



Oregon Department of Transportation
Transportation Development Branch
Public Transit Section
131 Transportation Building
Salem, Oregon 97310
(503) 878-8201

Pacific Northwest

High Speed Rail

Corridor:

Tracks to the Future

Anyone who has driven a car or flown in a passenger jet knows that many areas of the Pacific Northwest have growing transportation concerns. Traffic jams, decaying highways and congested airports are daily aggravations. And the problems are expected to only get worse.

But there may be an alternative. One that's fast, convenient, efficient and environmentally sound. That alternative is high speed rail.

The vision of high speed trains carrying passengers in the Pacific Northwest rolled a bit further along the track in late 1992, when the Federal Railroad Administration designated the Pacific Northwest High Speed Rail Corridor as one of five high speed rail corridors in the United States.

It is the only rail corridor in the nation with both international and bi-state ties, extending from Eugene, OR, through Seattle, WA, to Vancouver, BC. It stretches 464 miles and includes approximately 134 miles in Oregon, 296 miles in Washington and 34 miles in British Columbia.

What is a high speed rail corridor?

A high speed corridor is a federally designated rail corridor between two or more major metropolitan areas where high speed rail offers the potential for cost-effective public transportation. To be considered "high speed," the corridor must have rail speeds above 90 mph or can reasonably be expected to have such speeds in the future. The Federal Railroad Administration determines which corridors qualify as priority high speed rail corridors, making them eligible to receive federal funding for improvement projects.

What are the goals for the corridor?

The ultimate goal for the corridor is to permit operational speeds of up to 125 mph for intercity passenger service. The long range service goal is to provide up to eight round trips daily from Portland to Eugene, nine round trips between Portland and Seattle and four round trips between Seattle and Vancouver, BC.

There are two short-term goals for the corridor: one is re-establishment of service between Seattle, WA, and Vancouver, BC, by October 1994. The other goal is increased frequency of service between Eugene, OR, and Seattle, WA, along with track improvements to allow maximum speeds of 79 mph. Currently, speeds along the corridor average 47 mph.

Oregon and Washington have jointly developed a comprehensive program of specific projects, totaling nearly \$1.3 billion, to achieve top speeds within the corridor and to allow increased frequency of service. With federal financial support, the Pacific Northwest corridor could have all required improvement work underway by the year 2000.

Why is the Pacific Northwest High Speed Rail Corridor important?

The Pacific Northwest High Speed Rail Corridor parallels Interstate 5 and connects the metropolitan areas of Portland, Seattle and Vancouver, BC. Population along the I-5 corridor is currently 7.7 million and is expected to increase by nearly 40 percent within the next 20 years. Intercity travel is expected to increase by more than 75 percent.

Already, the impacts of rapid growth are being felt within the region, resulting in highway and airport congestion, air pollution, urban and suburban sprawl and lost economic productivity. Ways to accommodate this growth are being explored to protect the quality of life enjoyed by residents of the Pacific Northwest and to ensure economic vitality and competitiveness in the global economy.

Development of high speed rail will play a key role in creating a balanced, region wide, multimodal transportation system. Enhanced rail passenger service offers a safe, efficient, all-weather and environmentally responsible alternative to building more highways or increasing airport capacity.

How will high speed rail be implemented?

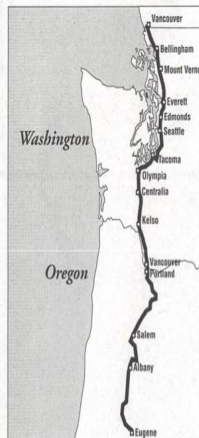
Corridor development is a cooperative effort between the states of Oregon and Washington, Burlington Northern Railroad, Southern Pacific Railroad, Amtrak and the Province of British Columbia. Agreement has been reached that achieving a high speed rail system, given today's fiscal reality, should be done through incremental upgrades of existing Amtrak service.

An incremental approach permits enhanced rail passenger service to be offered immediately and at an affordable price by using the existing rail infrastructure. It allows continuing improvements in reliability and frequency, while reducing travel times and enables service to expand as ridership increases and funding allows.

Of the estimated \$1.3 billion needed for the Pacific Northwest High Speed Rail Corridor, approximately \$800 million will be required in Washington, \$450 million in Oregon and \$25 million in British Columbia.

This sizable investment is needed to improve grade crossings, upgrade signals, renovate depots, extend centralized traffic control and build new track and bridges. Additional trains will be acquired as ridership increases. Capacity improvements, such as double tracking and high speed crossovers, to minimize conflicts between freight and passenger trains will also be provided. A significant effort will be focused on updating and eliminating grade crossings to avoid conflicts between rail and automobiles.

Pacific Northwest High Speed Rail Corridor



What kind of train will be used on the corridor?

Initially, improvements will be made to allow conventional diesel engine trains to run at higher speeds along the corridor.

Future efforts will focus on use of tilt-technology high speed trains. Trains of this type are designed to run on existing freight rail track, eliminating the need to purchase expensive right of way to build additional track. Tilt technology allows travel up to 30 percent faster through curves than conventional trains, without discomfort to passengers.

How will this benefit the Pacific Northwest?

High speed rail is a key component in creating a more direct link between our major metropolitan cities and at the same time strengthening all transportation systems in the Pacific Northwest. It could cut pollution by reducing auto and jet travel. It could also extend the life of existing highway systems and has the ability to lessen airport congestion.

We no longer can meet traffic demands simply by building more freeways or continually adding traffic lanes to existing routes. A high speed rail corridor is a step toward a balanced transportation system that will help meet the Pacific Northwest's mobility and livability needs in the years to come.



AAWA's 3 Es

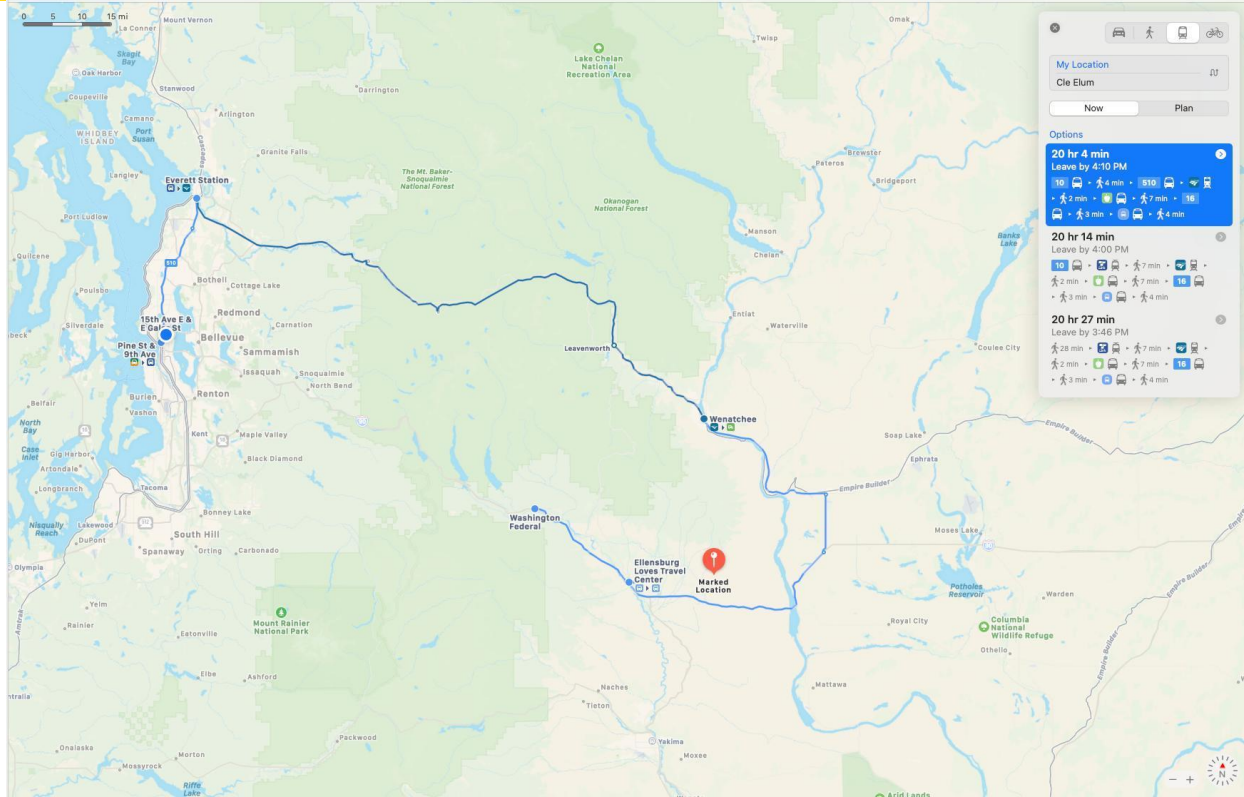
- Equity
- Environment
- Economy

Emphasizing Equity & Accessibility

Did you know?

People live outside of the Puget Sound, too!

And for those who do, it's really hard to get around without a car.



Quick Environment & Climate Action

We have less than 10 years to cut emissions by **45% of 2010 levels**.

Do we have enough time for I-5 Corridor HSR to be our primary solution?

Top Priority: Mode Shift From Auto

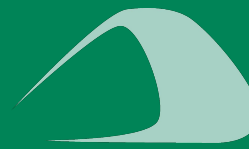
Transportation: 29% of U.S. emissions

Autos: 82% of transportation emissions

Boosting Local & Regional Economies

Induced travel is valuable to WA communities

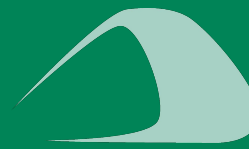
- \$84 per day-trip visitor
- \$366 per overnight visitor
- \$7m tourist spending impact of East-West passenger train service



The Bottom Line

Northwest HSR will not succeed without a solid conventional intercity passenger rail network supporting it.

World-class HSR starts with a strong commitment to the *Cascades*.



AAWA's Current Efforts

- Lead the Pacific Northwest Rail Forum at the [Pacific Northwest Economic Region 2021 Summit](#).
- Conduct discussions throughout the state on community transportation needs during the [AAWA 2021 Train Trek](#).
- Support creation of a Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Working Group.
- Support the Amtrak reauthorization bill and the Invest in America Act for rail infrastructure.

YOU Can Help Make It Happen!

\$7,000 by August 12

Our Fundraising Goal

Visit aawa.us/impact/2021-train-trek/
to make the 2021 Train Trek happen

Questions?

Contact us at
(360) 529-5552
(509) 213-0070
or
aawa.us



Amtrak's *Empire Builder* at Yakima, Aug. 1971. Photo: Drew Jacksich.