

Current and Emerging Passenger Rail Needs

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Washington's Mobility Crisis

Amtrak *Cascades* and expanded passenger rail must be used to

- **Speed economic recovery**
- **Pursue environmental goals**
- **Enhance equitable mobility access**

in our state.

Intercity passenger rail is critical to enhancing mobility access, reducing highway congestion and realizing environmental goals in completing a statewide transportation system.

Significant Cuts to Passenger Rail

Due to the pandemic, Cascades service has been:

- **Discontinued entirely** north of Seattle, to Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties
- Reduced to **one train daily** Seattle - Tacoma - Olympia - Vancouver WA - Portland - Eugene



© TNRP Video

Age of cars



Some Cuts Restored

In addition, these trains were reduced from daily to three departures weekly (restored to daily service by American Rescue Plan beginning May 24):

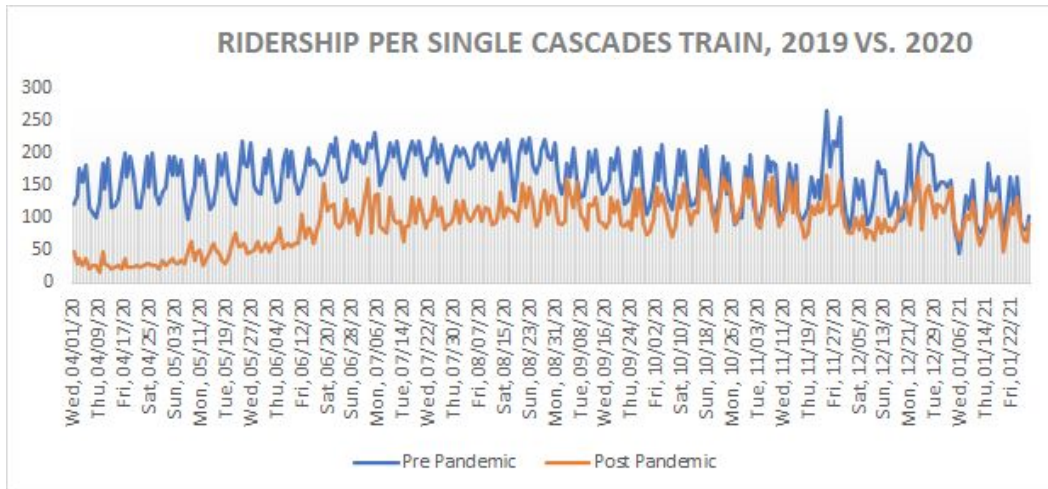
- ***Empire Builder***, serving Seattle - Everett - Wenatchee - Spokane and Portland - Vancouver WA - Pasco - Spokane
- ***Coast Starlight***, serving Seattle - Tacoma - Olympia - Vancouver WA - Portland - California

Pre-pandemic Amtrak *Cascades* service has not been restored.

<https://montanafreepress.org/2021/03/08/relief-package-will-reinstate-daily-amtrak-service/>

State must consider how soon to restore full service.

But *Cascades* Per-Train Demand Has Returned



The trend from the beginning of the pandemic induced shutdown last March to the present day shows a clear return of ridership.

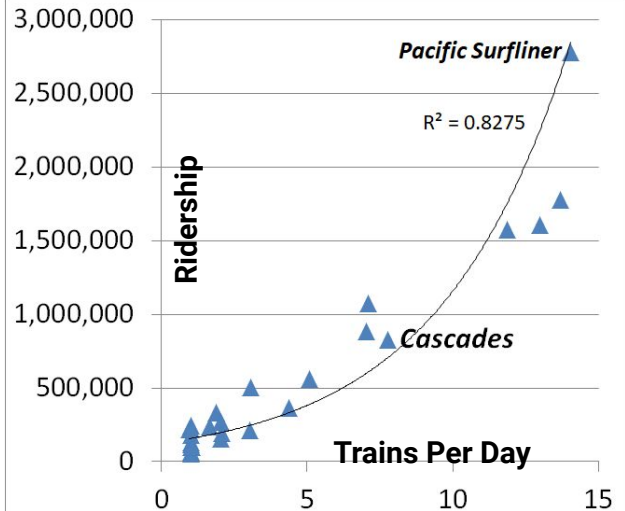
Peaks in pre pandemic ridership (in blue) on this graph are not as high given a 50% artificial reduction in capacity to maintain social distancing - the more recent large spikes represent the holiday season - but the return of average post pandemic passenger loading (in orange) is clear.



Restore *Cascades* Service

- **Restore pre-pandemic frequencies** as have ferries and local transit
- Increase Seattle-Portland *Cascades* service **from 4 to 6 round trips** as planned before 2017 DuPont accident
- If *Cascades* behaves like other rail corridors, 6 daily SEA-PDX round trips could easily generate **well over 1 million annual riders**

Cascades ridership in 2019 vs. other state corridors



Ferries and transit are doing their best to maintain optimum service, the *Cascades* should too

Amtrak ridership on state corridors around the country shows that Ridership grows exponentially with frequencies

Restore Service to NW Washington

Offer *Cascades* service to Blaine serving Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties.

- Provide critical connections to the state ferries, better linking the mainland to San Juan and Island Counties
- Restart service to Vancouver BC when border reopens

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Extend *Cascades* Service E-W

Fund complete analysis recommended by the limited preliminary research of the 2020 JTC Study, which assumed ridership would only be derived from car trips:

- Assess local **economic impacts and benefits**
- Evaluate **need for equity** in transportation access to underserved rural communities, including state's largest populations without service
- Investigate **capital and operating costs**

- Don't leave EA WA behind.
- Not equitable study : the study derived its ridership entirely from car trips. More ridership if we address these needs
- Intro to slide 13: UHSR very important...

Future Needs

- Develop more **efficient and effective connections** between passenger rail and other modes of transportation (recommended by 2019 Rail Plan)
- Create an **integrated network of services** including UHSR in Cascadia megaregion, and frequent services to smaller cities in all of Washington
- **Enhance and expand Amtrak Cascades** (recommended by 2006 Rail Plan, delayed due to revenue shortfalls)



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and underserved cities



Increase Mobility Access

As recommended by several plans and studies:

- Connect **local public transportation** more conveniently with intercity rail operations
- Provide **convenient and equitable rail services** throughout the state, both in existing *Cascades* corridor and east to west
- Reduce focus on **travel times**, following new USDOT guidance



- (following newly-proposed USDOT guidance on cost-benefit analyses)

Approve a Northwest Rail Commission

Legislation needed to authorize gubernatorial appointments to a regional rail commission. Such commissions, to be authorized by legislation currently under consideration in DC, will:

- **Coordinate interstate planning** for HSR and other rail corridors
- Increase state competitiveness for **federal matching funds**
- Allow for **cross-border cooperation** between states and provinces

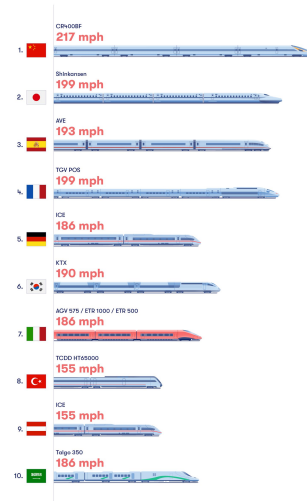


Cross border, UHSR governance

UHSR Must Build On Amtrak *Cascades* Service

9 of the world's top 10 HSR systems were built atop services like Amtrak *Cascades*:

- Creates a constituency of rail users that will demand HSR service
- Unites the entire region in support of rail services and public transportation
- UHSR's challenges will be magnified without better *Cascades* service



- Travel opportunities, rail in Japan, Taiwan, and across Europe
- Cascadia Rail and Cascadia HSR are all doing important work
- AAWA wants to help you get where we all need to go
- Conventional passenger rail service like Amtrak *Cascades* will help realize UHSR.
- Colleague Abe Zumwalt calls HSR the apex predator of ground transport: top of the food chain, needs a vibrant ecosystem below it
- No wonder 9 of the world's 10 most advanced HSR systems were built on top of existing rail service, especially intercity corridors

This image ranks high speed rail systems worldwide - the top ten high speed worldwide HSR corridors, ranked by speed and route mileage. All but ONE (can you guess which one?) was built using a foundation of very frequent conventional (sub 100mph) passenger rail service, such as the kind envisioned in the 2006 Cascades Long Range Plan.

China, Japan, Spain, France, Germany, South Korea, Italy, Turkey and Hungary all built High Speed Rail as an extension of their conventional passenger rail systems. Saudi Arabia is the one exception on this list. Which country is more analogous to our own? AAWA does not believe that 9 of 10 can be wrong.

This is to say that if Washington States wants to see UHSR in its future, an essential step to take NOW is investment in its conventional passenger rail network.

UHSR Must Build on Amtrak *Cascades* Service

“Ultra-high-speed ground transportation is **not intended to replace the Amtrak *Cascades*** intercity passenger rail system.... Amtrak *Cascades* trains serve **18 cities** in Canada, Washington and Oregon - more than an ultra-high-speed option would serve.”

WSDOT website:

<https://wsdot.wa.gov/planning/studies/ultra-high-speed-travel/ground-transportation-study>



- WSDOT recognizes that HSR can't replace the Cascades
- UHSR may not happen in Washington State without a robust underlying conventional passenger rail system

- [illegible]

- HSR is like an Interstate highway that needs connecting roads, or SeaTac Airport that needs local/regional connecting flights
- Amtrak *Cascades*, combined with other transit services across our state, is a market and constituency builder for HSR
- The more people are connected to the transportation network, the more people that will benefit from HSR and support its creation

This image is of the 2018 California State Rail Plan - can you pick out its High Speed Rail Corridor? You'd be forgiven if you could not - because it is woven into a comprehensive network of conventional passenger rail corridors that look a lot like the 2006 Cascades Long Range Plan - "Normal" 79 mph passenger trains, operating every hour, all day long. This way parts of the state not served by the high speed line support its implementation as well. --particularly in E and central WA

Questions?

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

Presentation available at
<https://www.aawa.us/take-action/>



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- We appreciate your time
- We look forward to working with the legislature and HSR advocates on building the future of Washington
- Visit our website to learn more about our priorities for enhancing *Cascades* and realizing HSR in the Northwest