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Testimony in support of HB 2287  
Addressing the assessment of rail safety governance in Washington state  
January 15, 2020

All Aboard Washington thanks the sponsors of HB 2287.

We are a nonprofit organization of citizens, businesses, and coalition partners that has promoted safe, reliable, frequent, competitive, and convenient passenger rail service connecting communities of all sizes, on both sides of the Cascades, for over forty years. We advocate improving the existing rail network, while working toward advanced high-speed service, to provide the people of Washington with improved mobility, both now and in the long term.

All Aboard Washington believes that the lack of coordination between state and local agencies and private entities was a significant contributing factor in the tragic train crash at DuPont on December 18, 2017. We believe that the provisions included in HB 2287 will reduce the chances that a similar incident will occur in the future.

We agree that a study of rail safety best practices is definitely warranted. Upon completion of the study, the Legislature, with feedback from stakeholders and the public, should then develop a comprehensive plan to manage rail safety statewide.

In the current fiscal environment, the state needs to use its existing resources as efficiently as possible. The results of Initiative 976 make it clear that the voters believe that "transportation as usual" is not adequate. The study provided for in HB 2287, and the plans to which it will lead, will make passenger rail -- which is already safer than any other mode of intercity transportation -- even safer, while taking advantage of existing public assets and investments.

The recent and very welcome interest shown by the riding public in more intercity passenger rail service will increase dramatically when they understand how safe the Amtrak Cascades service has been over the past few decades. The unfortunate accident that killed two friends of mine on the Point Defiance Bypass two years ago was the consequence of circumstances that would have happened regardless of the equipment being used. My colleague Lloyd Flem and several other colleagues in this room rode the ceremonial train on that corridor three days before the tragedy.. Speed was the cause of that accident.

While the state is studying best safety practices as per this proposed legislation, AAWA and Amtrak Cascades riders look forward to a restoration of service on the Bypass as soon as possible.

Please let us know what questions you may have.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this important issue with you.