



Oregon
Department
of Transportation

PASSENGER RAIL

MARCH 2010

OREGON UPDATE

Moving people in the Pacific Northwest

The federally designated Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor, or PNWRC, travels along rivers and through the valleys between Eugene, Oregon and Vancouver, British Columbia. It has been the subject of high-speed passenger rail planning and implementation studies since the 1970s. The Federal Railroad Administration defines “high-speed rail” as service that is reasonably expected to reach speeds of at least 110 mph. Though it’s not high speed intercity passenger rail has been running in the PNWRC since 1994.

Current service

Existing state-sponsored service in Oregon consists of two Amtrak *Cascades* trips per day and three Thruway bus trips per day, in addition to the Amtrak-sponsored *Coast Starlight* operating daily from Los Angeles to Seattle. Regional goals for passenger service include running up to six *Cascades* trips per day by 2030.

The future moves faster

Oregon’s goal is to provide reliable, safe, frequent and sustainable passenger rail service that is compatible with freight rail operations within the Oregon segment of the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor between Portland and Eugene. Specifically, Oregon wants to:

- Increase average passenger train speeds (from 42 to 65 miles per hour)
- Increase maximum passenger train speeds (from 79 to 110 miles per hour)
- Reduce passenger rail trip time between Eugene and Portland (from 2 hours and 35 minutes to 1 hour and 55 minutes – the same time as it takes to drive between these cities along the freeway)
- Increase on-time performance of passenger trains (from 68 percent to 95 percent or higher)

Ongoing research and assessment

The Oregon Department of Transportation is reviewing existing rail operations in the Willamette Valley, comparing routes and traffic levels, projected service and other aspects of freight and passenger rail volume.



Oregon has two freight lines that could host expanded passenger rail service in the future: the Union Pacific (UP) line from Eugene to Portland, where Amtrak runs today; and the Portland & Western Railroad, known as the Oregon Electric (OE) line, which runs approximately parallel to the UP line. Planners are currently adding to the state’s rail knowledge base by conducting further research and gathering input from residents, stakeholders, businesses and others.

Benefits for all

Rail is among the cleanest and most energy efficient of the passenger transportation modes. It reduces carbon emissions and, by giving travelers options, passenger rail also reduces congestion, improves safety for motorists and saves money.

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Funds support rail investments

The federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 allocated \$8 billion to jumpstart the development of improved high-speed intercity passenger rail service in the United States. The PNWRC received \$598 million. Of that amount, Oregon was awarded \$8 million in the first round for three projects:

- Replace the roof on Portland's historic Union Station, built in 1896.
- Conduct preliminary engineering for two rail projects to improve mobility and reduce congestion in north Portland.

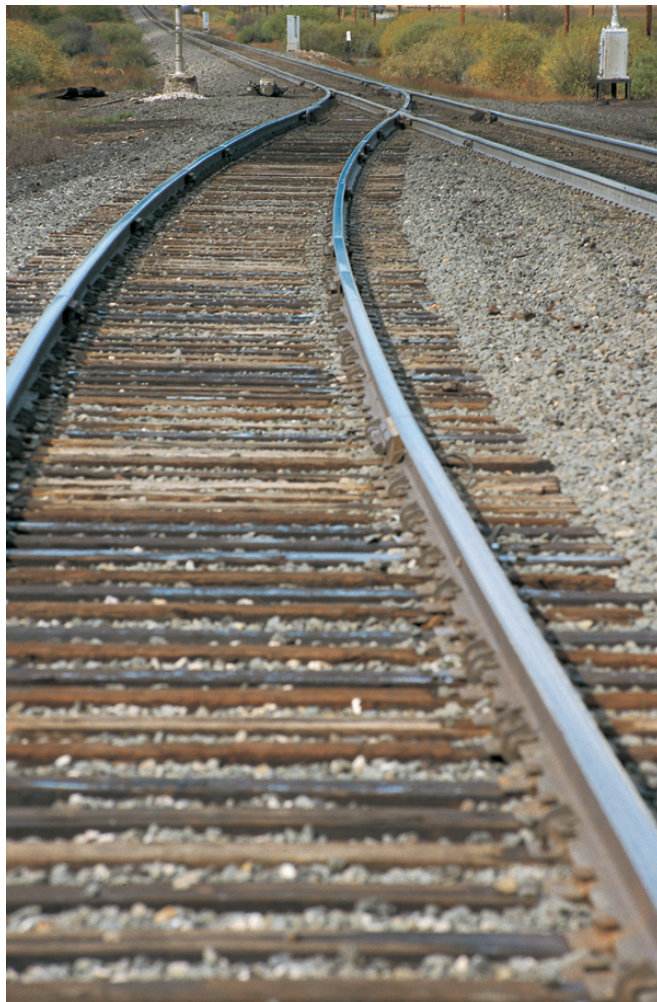
President Obama has pledged to include an additional \$1 billion for high-speed intercity passenger rail in each of the next five years' budgets. Oregon will continue to compete for federal funds in future rounds.

Next steps

The next steps in providing reliable, safe, frequent and sustainable passenger rail service in the Willamette Valley include a wide variety of design, engineering, and environmental studies in conjunction with a collaborative public involvement process to address overall rail system challenges and opportunities.

ODOT's Rail Division has begun preliminary work on updating the 2001 Oregon Rail Plan and is scheduling community and stakeholder meetings beginning spring 2010. Initial research and interviews with community stakeholders throughout the corridor have already identified concerns that must be addressed through a thoughtful and thorough public forum.

With these studies and further public involvement, Oregon's passenger rail system can continue to grow and benefit all Oregonians.



**To learn more, visit
www.oregon.gov/ODOT/RAIL.**

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