Our strategy

ODOT’s Public Transportation Division (PTD) and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) co-fund and contract with Amtrak to provide passenger rail services in the Pacific Northwest from Eugene, OR to Vancouver, B.C. This coordination supports passenger rail as a part of the statewide multimodal transportation network in Oregon and provides connections for regional travel on passenger rail.

PTD also funds the intercity Cascades POINT bus service that provides intercommunity service along the I-5 corridor. This POINT route is provided through a contract with a private transit company. Both Amtrak Cascades and Cascades POINT supplement the national passenger rail network and connect with local transit services along the I-5 corridor.

ODOT’s goal is to provide transportation options along this corridor that are reliable and safe. One indicator is the number of passenger rail and Cascades POINT bus rides provided.

ODOT recently completed a Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan (CIP), identifying needed infrastructure improvements and equipment to improve on-time performance, increase service reliability, and to provide more frequent passenger rail services. The CIP is the foundation for future project development and intended to support future Federal Railroad Administration, State of Oregon, local government, and private sector decisions on investments in passenger rail along the I-5 corridor. The completion of the CIP positions ODOT to be competitive for federal funds for infrastructure improvements.

About the target

The target was established pre-COVID, presuming a steady annual increase in passengers riding both Amtrak Cascades trains and Cascades POINT buses in Oregon. Increasing ridership is an ODOT priority;

Fact

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting decrease in demand led to service reduction to one round trip per day between Seattle and Eugene from April 2020 to May 2021.
however, returning to pre-COVID levels could take several years.

**How we are doing**

Ridership was expected to increase in 2017 with the addition of two roundtrips between Portland and Seattle. A derailment on the first day of the new service has delayed increasing service levels and hampered ridership growth. This has been exacerbated by ridership loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic that led to reduction in service levels and fewer people traveling.

The effects of COVID-19 on passenger rail and Cascades POINT ridership have been dramatic, including the suspension of one round trip train for a full year.

**Factors affecting results and what needs to be done**

ODOT evaluates ridership on every Amtrak Cascades train to determine which trains attract the most passengers. ODOT and WSDOT coordinate on the use of these data to adjust train schedules to achieve maximum ridership.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting decreases in demand led to the decision to reduce service to one round trip per day between Seattle and Eugene. In May 2021, Oregon returned to the 2019 service frequency, but comparable service between Portland and Seattle and between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C., has not resumed as of March 2022, thereby limiting options for long distance travel from Oregon to Seattle and Canada.

Since service in Oregon has resumed, Amtrak and ODOT have initiated education efforts to increase awareness of the services and the enhanced safety measures.

At the same time ODOT is working with Amtrak and the host railroad to determine which of the potential infrastructure investments, such as adding or extending sidings to reduce freight and passenger train interference, best improve on-time reliability, which is one of the keys to improving ridership.

ODOT will leverage state and federal funds to apply for grants through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to fund infrastructure projects to improve on-time performance and support increased service frequency, improving the passenger’s travel experience.

PTD will continue to analyze the impact of the pandemic and timing for recovery, and determine if the target remains reasonable.

**About the data**

PTD analyzes monthly ridership and on-time performance data provided by Amtrak and by MTR Western for Cascades POINT ridership.

**Contact information**

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**Data sources**

Amtrak  
MTR Western