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# Rail

## Overview and Table of Contents

This section provides information about rail and high capacity transportation used in or being planned for the state. High capacity transportation systems may include heavy, light, or commuter rail, but also may include other elements such as exclusive busways.

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# Freight Rail

## BACKGROUND

**Class I Railroads.** There are two Class I railroads operating in Washington State: the BNSF Railway Company and the Union Pacific (UP) Railroad.

**Class II Railroads.** There is one Class II railroad (Montana Rail Link) that operates in Washington State, but it does not own any railroad track in this state.

**Class III Railroads (Short-lines).** There are 20 short-line railroads and switching railroads operating within the state. These railroads serve local shippers and communities with links to the large Class I railroads. The following rail companies operate short-line railroads in Washington:

- *Eastern Washington* – Great Northwest, Palouse River and Coulee City, Kettle Falls International, Pend Oreille Valley, Eastern Washington Gateway, and Washington & Idaho;
- *Central Washington* – Tri-City and Olympia, Columbia River and Cascade, Columbia Basin, and Central Washington;
- *Western Washington* – Columbia and Cowlitz, Tacoma Rail, Puget Sound and Pacific, Portland Vancouver Junction, Meeker Southern, Ballard Terminal, and several switching railroads.

Public ownership of short-line infrastructure has grown over the last several decades. The Palouse River and Coulee City, Eastern Washington Gateway, Washington & Idaho, Tri-City and Olympia, Central Washington, Pend Oreille Valley, and Tacoma Rail operate on rail infrastructure owned by the state, a county, or a Port Authority.

**Economic significance of freight rail.** Freight rail contributes substantially to Washington State's economy. Some examples include the following:

- It increases seaport capacity by providing a means to quickly and efficiently move inbound containers from port areas to distant inland destinations.
- It provides an effective and economical means to move agricultural and industrial goods produced in Washington to distant market destinations.
- It encourages competition among modes in certain circumstances to keep freight rates reasonable.
- It reduces long-haul truck traffic on state's highways, reducing highway preservation costs and congestion in some circumstances.
- It supports Washington businesses and economic development.
- It provides an energy-efficient transportation mode with a smaller environmental impact.

Following is a map of the Washington State freight rail system by volume in 2010.



## GOVERNANCE

WSDOT is responsible for developing and implementing Washington’s State Rail Plan and programs.

## FUNDING

Funding for the Freight Rail Capital Program

- Funding for the Freight Rail Capital Program comes from the Multimodal Transportation Account (State and Federal), Essential Rail Assistance Account (State), and Transportation Infrastructure Account (State).
- The Multimodal Transportation Account (State) revenue source comes from the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax, Retail Sales Taxes, and Motor Vehicle Licenses.
- Federal comes from Federal earmarks for specific freight rail projects through Federal Rail Administration.
- The Essential Rail Assistance Account is funded by repaid loans from past freight rail projects.

The Transportation Infrastructure Account comes from transfer of funds from the Multimodal Transportation Account (State). Four programs are funded:

- Individual Capital Projects
- Freight Rail Assistance Program
- Freight Rail Investment Bank Program
- Palouse River and Coulee City Railroad (PCC)

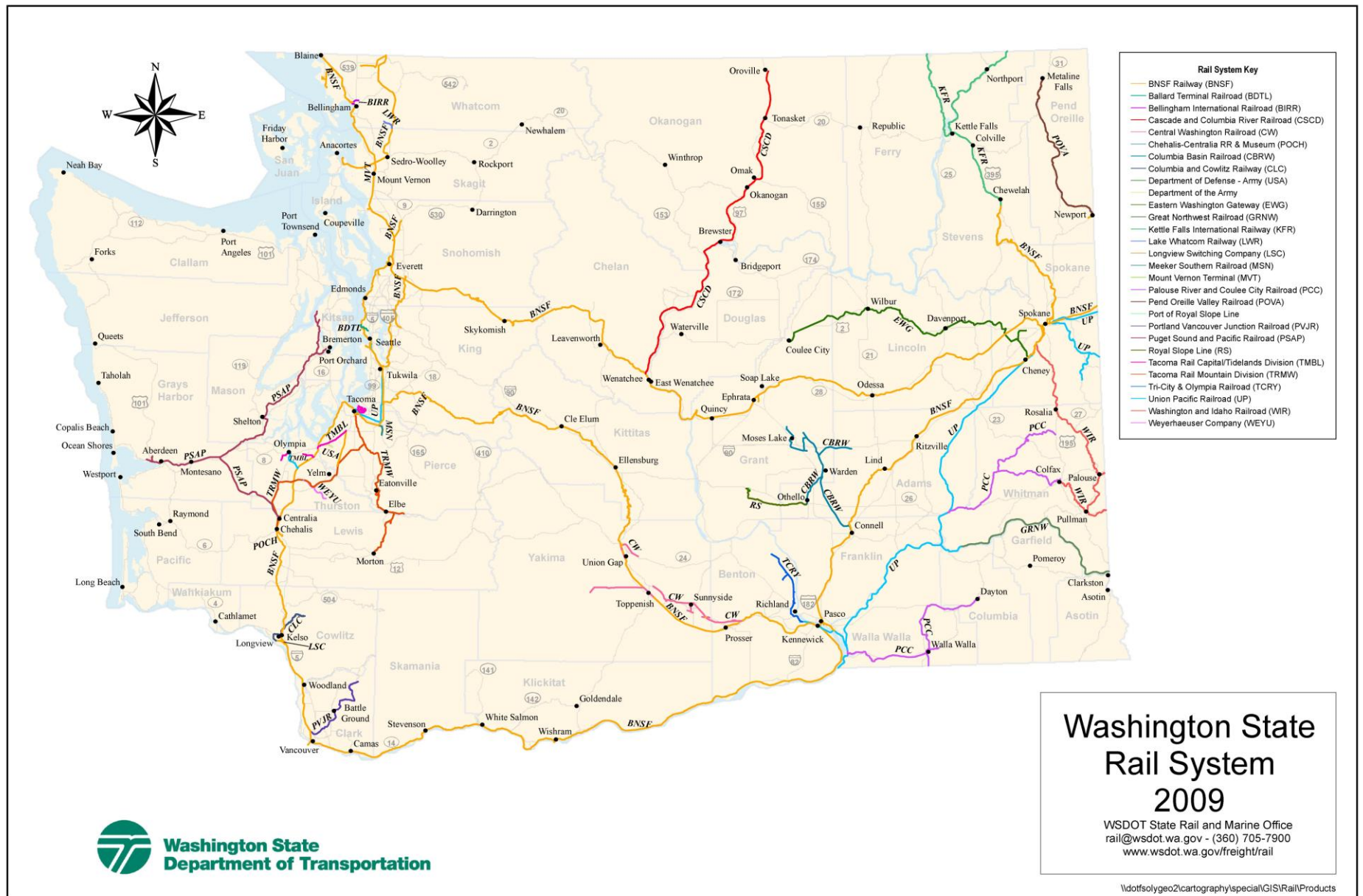
#### OTHER FREIGHT RAIL PROGRAMS

##### **Grain Train Revolving Fund**

- This revolving fund is a financially self-sustaining transportation program that supports Washington's farmers, short-line railroads, and rural economic development. The Washington State Grain Train Program operates without taxpayer subsidy. Operations of the Grain Train began in 1994 and the program has grown to a fleet of 100 grain cars.

##### **Produce Rail Car Program**

- This program, modeled on the successful Washington Grain Train program, provides refrigerated rail cars to help address the critical shortage of railcars for Washington farmers and agricultural shippers. Washington legislators passed a produce rail car law in 2003. Senator Murray secured \$2 million in federal funding from the 2004 and 2005 omnibus appropriation bills to make this project fully operational



## Intercity Passenger Rail (AMTRAK)

### BACKGROUND

- The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is developing a high-speed rail passenger program in the state to accommodate increasing intercity travel demands. The Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor from Vancouver, B.C. to Eugene, OR was originally designated under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 as one of five nationally designated corridors to be developed for high-speed rail passenger service.
- Ridership on WSDOT/Oregon DOT/Amtrak-sponsored service in the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor (Amtrak *Cascades*) has risen from 94,000 in 1994 to over 762,000 in 2009.
- National Railroad Passenger Corporation (also known as Amtrak) was formed by Congress in 1970 to operate rail passenger service.
- Amtrak provides intercity passenger service in Western Washington with connections to Central Washington, Eastern Washington, the Midwest, and California destinations, with total passenger volumes at Washington Amtrak stations exceeding 1,270,000 in 2009.
- Operates on over 900 miles of BNSF Railway track in the state and provides service to 18 cities. Three statewide corridors provide service between Vancouver, B.C. and Portland, OR; Seattle and Spokane; and Portland, OR and Spokane.

### GOVERNANCE

- WSDOT is responsible for developing and implementing Washington State's passenger rail program as specified in RCW 47.79 and 47.82.

### FUNDING

Funding for intercity rail passenger rail activities is provided by the following sources:

#### **Multimodal Account – State**

- The 2009-11 transportation budget as supplemented in the 2010 legislative session included an appropriation of \$257.5 million from the Multimodal Transportation Account – State, to carry out the following activities:
  - Operate two daily round trips between Seattle and Portland; one daily round trip between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C.; and one daily roundtrip between Portland and Vancouver B.C. (A third daily trip between Portland and Seattle is funded by Amtrak.)
  - Extend the rail siding at Mount Vernon; realign curves and provide yard tracks in Everett; make track, signal, and bridge improvements in Vancouver; construct the first phase of improvements on bypass of Point Defiance in conjunction with Sound Transit; rescope phases of the Kelso-Martin Bluff project, extend the siding passing facilities at Stanwood. These projects will create faster and higher-capacity infrastructure to further the corridor passenger program.
  - Complete a crossover project at Tenino to enhance service reliability of existing and future service.

- Complete new station at Stanwood
  - Improve track and signal system in conjunction with Sound Transit to improve access to King Street Station.
  - Overhaul Amtrak Cascades trainsets.

### **Multimodal Account – Federal and Local**

- \$640 million in federal funds from the Multimodal Account in 2009-11 was appropriated for:
  - Construction of track improvements near Blaine to facilitate train movements around the Customs inspection facility.
  - Design and construction of a roadway bridge in Vancouver, WA as part of the Vancouver Rail Project.
  - Construction of first phase of improvements on bypass of Point Defiance in conjunction with Sound Transit.
  - Improve safety at grade crossings under Section 1103(f) corridor hazard elimination program.
- WSDOT receives no federal funds for support of rail passenger operations.
- WSDOT applied for up to \$6 million grant from the FRA \$30 million available nationwide in 2008. This application was approved and is included in the figures above.
- WSDOT receives federal funds from the Federal Highways Administration for grade crossing improvements and from the Federal Transit Administration for station improvements.
- WSDOT applied for \$1.3 billion in federal funds from the \$8 billion ARRA High Speed Rail program. In January 2010 an award of \$590 million was to WSDOT and this will be used to continue to develop projects on the corridor. These funds are included in the figures quoted above.

### **Supplement to Intercity Passenger Rail: ARRA Grant for High Speed Rail**

#### **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) is a \$787 billion economic stimulus package signed into law by President Barack Obama on Feb. 17, 2009. A percentage of the package provides funding (contracts, grants, and loans) and the rest includes tax cuts and entitlements such as Medicaid and Social Security Administration payments. Washington state received \$492 million in ARRA funds for state and local highway projects, \$179 million for transit capital investments, and \$590 million in January 2010 for the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor. An additional \$161 million in rail funds was allocated to Washington from funds originally awarded to Wisconsin and Ohio. The grant funding was part of \$8 billion awarded to 13 rail corridors spanning 31 states. Only applicants in a federally designated High Speed Rail Corridors were considered eligible and the \$8 billion in ARRA funds did not require any matched funding.

WSDOT submitted its application with the goal of growing the Amtrak *Cascades* service by making the service more reliable by reducing rail congestion on the main line.

As a result of this funding Amtrak Cascades passengers will see:

- two additional daily round trips between Seattle and Portland, for a total of six;
- a reduction in travel times;
- improved on-time performance;

When funding agreements are signed, WSDOT, BNSF and Sound Transit will begin work on projects that make multiple upgrades to existing track between Seattle and Portland, as well as install an advanced signal system throughout the corridor.

**Grant schedule:**

- January 2010 – Washington awarded \$590 million in High Speed Rail Recovery Act funding for corridor improvements mostly between the Seattle to Portland segment.
- October 2010 – Washington was awarded \$31 million in 2009 and 2010 high speed rail funding appropriations (non ARRA). This funding is being used to increase capacity through Mount Vernon, build station improvements in Tukwila and at King Street in Seattle, as well as create an integrated freight and passenger rail plan.
- December 2010 – Awarded an additional \$161.5 million in ARRA funding redirected from Ohio and Wisconsin.

**Cascades High Speed Rail Program capital improvements**

- **D to M Street connection - Tacoma** - Allows bypass of congested Point Defiance route and extends Sounder commuter rail service to stations in South Tacoma and Lakewood.
- **Point Defiance Bypass – Tacoma** - Reroutes passenger trains to a rail line along the west side of I-5 through south Tacoma, Lakewood, and DuPont, improving safety and on time Seattle-Portland performance.
- **Yard Bypass Track – Vancouver** - Builds a 15,000 foot bypass track within the BNSF rail yard in Vancouver, separating freight and passenger traffic.
- **Cascades Corridor Reliability Upgrades – South (Nisqually to Vancouver WA)** - Improvements along the entire BNSF mainline corridor to improve Amtrak *Cascades* schedule reliability by improving track quality and reducing slow-orders.
- **Storage Track - Everett** - Eliminates a substantial rail yard bottleneck and helps achieve the second Amtrak *Cascades* round trip service to Vancouver, B.C.
- **Amtrak Cascades New Train Set** - Expanding train service to five round trips may require purchasing new rolling stock.
- **Kelso Martin’s Bluff – Multiple Improvements** - New sidings to accommodate arrival and departure of unit freight trains clear of the existing two-track main line, and third main track.
- **King Street Station Track Upgrades** - Improves schedule reliability for north and southbound trains arriving and departing King Street Station allowing Amtrak and Sound Transit passenger trains to simultaneously move in and out of the station.
- **Advanced Signal System – Corridor Wide** - Installs an integrated command, control, communications, and information system for controlling train movements.



The additional award of \$161m in redistributed ARRA funds requires the money be spent on projects that were part of the original application. In addition, a detailed analysis must be done to determine which projects should be funded based on the direct benefits to High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail.

#### **Non ARRA High Speed Rail Projects**

- **Tukwila Station** - Partners to construct a new train station at Tukwila for Sounder commuter rail and Amtrak Cascades intercity trains and Sea-Tac connection.
- **King Street Station Renovation and Seismic Retrofit** - Upgrades building and tracks.
- **Mount Vernon Siding Extension** - Relieves track congestion at Mount Vernon.
- **Integrated State Rail Plan** - Integrates and updates Washington's separate freight rail and passenger rail plans as one plan. It will address Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requirements to allow for better planning of public and private rail investment. This integrated plan makes Washington more competitive for future rail funding.

