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FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



## Rail Revisions to the 2023-2025 Transportation Budget

We propose these revisions in the interest of rapid mode shift to rail in the next 5-10 years on our existing rail network, for climate, health, and mobility. The first set of revisions, involving large allocations, pertain to the Rail -Program Y - Capital section. These are followed by revisions for the Rail - Program Y - Operating section.

### RAIL-PROGRAM Y-CAPITAL (Section 310 of the Governor's requested budget):

- In order to provide faster, frequent, more reliable service on the Amtrak Cascades, add a new item: “The department shall conduct preliminary engineering with an appropriation of \$40 million for two projects on the North-South corridor between Vancouver, B.C. and Portland/Eugene, Oregon, that will increase the speed, shorten trip duration, and improve reliability of Amtrak Cascades: Those two projects are (a) Point Defiance Bypass curve revision and (b) a third high-speed track between Nisqually and Big Hanford Rd, Centralia”. Based on Amtrak Cascades Long Range Plan (2006) estimates adjusted for inflation, the state match at 20% for federal CRISI grant (remaining 80% funding) = \$40 Million.
- Amend (5)(a) to ensure that state-owned track improvements are not constrained by PCC system revenue. This is critical so that track and bridge restoration and repair can be accelerated to prepare for a potential dramatic increase in volumes, up to 2 million tons of wheat annually. The Legislature should add at least \$10,000,000 per year to the budget for the restoration of the state-owned PCC System in the next biennium. The appropriation can leverage a state match for federal support, but it must not be made conditional upon receiving federal matching funds.
- Modify Transportation Document 2023-1 Proposed Transportation Project List, Rail Program (Y) to make \$50 Million (LEAP list project #L2021074 ) available for all rail capital upgrade projects, not reserved exclusively for an ultra high speed ground transportation system.
- In developing LEAP project list for multiple budget periods, include in Rail Capital projects for the 2025-2027 biennium, 30% of the construction cost of the Point Defiance Bypass curve revision and third high-speed rail track between Nisqually and Big Hanford Rd, Centralia projects which have preliminary engineering funded in the 2023-2025 biennium. Based on Amtrak Cascades Long Range Plan (2006) estimates adjusted forward for inflation, the state match of 20% (federal grants cover 80%) = \$80 Million.

### RAIL-PROGRAM Y-OPERATING (Section 223 of the Governor's requested budget)

- Amend (1) “The department is directed to continue to pursue efforts to reduce costs per rider and improve service, increase ridership, and review Amtrak Cascades fares and fare schedules. Within 30 days of each annual cost/revenue reconciliation under the Amtrak service contract, the department shall report annual credits to the office of financial management and the legislative transportation committees. Annual credits from Amtrak to the department including, but not limited to, credits due to higher ridership (~~(, reduced level of service,)~~) and fare or fare schedule adjustments, must be (~~((used to offset corresponding amounts of the multimodal transportation account—state appropriation,))~~)

deposited into a dedicated passenger rail account for improvements to the Amtrak Cascades service, which ~~may~~ ~~(must)~~ be placed in reserve."

- Amend (2) "The department shall ~~((consider applying for))~~ pursue and apply for all possible federal grant opportunities that support the rapid development of ((the)) faster, more frequent and reliable Amtrak Cascades service. Grant submittals must align with the department's federally required service development plan and state rail plans, including updates to the Long Range Plan for Amtrak Cascades (2006), and partnership agreements with Amtrak as the service provider and ((BNSF Railway as)) the applicable host railroad. These federal grant applications shall be made by December 1, 2023, and the department shall report to the legislature by December 31, 2023."
- We ask legislators to adopt Solutionary Rail's Eight Point Plan for rail connectivity in Southeast Washington. We therefore request:
  - Amend (3)(a), regarding allocation of \$5,000,000 to the Joint Transportation Committee rather than to WSDOT for an analysis of highway, road, and freight rail transportation needs and options to accommodate the movement of freight and goods that currently move by barge through the lower Snake River dams. "The assessment ~~((will))~~ shall include quantitative analysis based on available data as well as qualitative input gathered from tribal governments, local governments, freight interests, and other key stakeholders, including rail advocacy organizations in Washington. The analysis must include the following:
    - (i) Existing volumes and traffic patterns and the wear and tear, emissions, safety costs of these current patterns;
    - (ii) Potential changes in volumes and traffic patterns immediately following the loss of freight movement by barge and over the following 20 years;
    - (iii) Identification of potential infrastructure and operational improvements to existing highway, road and rail, including additional access to facilities, needed to accommodate the higher freight volumes, maximize price competition, increase resilience and expand connectivity to enable short line rail service to connect to both class 1 railroads (UP & BNSF) as well as Columbia River barges;
    - (iv) ~~Identification~~ Benefit cost analysis of rail line development options including: the existing state-owned rail from Colfax to Pullman, Fallon and Moscow, state-owned railbed from Pasco to Hooper and Benge via the rail-banked southern portion of the Columbia Plateau Trail, as well as abandoned railbed for potential reconnection of Thornton to Rosalia, Thornton to Oakesdale, Colfax to Garfield, Bolles to Starbuck and Lyons Ferry, Pullman to Genesee via Colton, and investments in existing privately and publicly owned rail in Columbia County and Walla Walla County,"
  - Add a new item (3) (a) (v): "Benefit cost analysis of restoring track to FRA class 3 standard (40mph freight/60mph passenger) on routes with potential for future passenger service such as Pullman to Marshall, Pullman to Hooper, and Hooper to Pasco."
  - Add a new item (3) (a) (vi): Draft plan for expanding the governance of the PCC Authority to include Franklin County, Columbia County, and any county where state-funded rail improvements are made to improve service around the lower Snake River;
  - Add a new item (3) (a) (vii): Analysis of converting WA state-owned PCC track infrastructure to an open access system in order to increase utilization and competition for freight and passenger service;
  - Add a new item (3) (a) (viii): Evaluation of the necessity, benefits, and cost of expanding the WA state Grain Train program to provide both additional rolling stock for increased wheat volumes, as well as expanding the program to lease locomotives including Tier 4 diesel-electric and/or battery-electric locomotives to reduce fuel costs and emissions, increase independence and

competitive potential for short line railroads, and traction energy vs braking energy analysis to identify routes where regenerative braking may offer a significant reduction in fuel cost and energy savings;

Add a new item (3) (a) (ix): “Evaluation of dam removal impacts on existing bridges that cross the Snake River; and”

Add a new item (3) (a) (x): “Cost estimates for development and implementation of identified needs and options including right of way acquisition, planning, design, and construction.”

Amend (3) (b) to read, “The ~~((department))~~ Joint Transportation Committee shall provide a final report to the governor and the transportation committees of the legislature by ~~((December 31, 2024))~~ December 31, 2023.”

- Strike all of (4) a-d. Truck parking should not be funded from the multimodal transportation account but from the motor vehicle account instead. Strategies for freight mobility must prioritize mode shift from truck to train, to decrease the need for truck parking, especially near ports.
- Strike all of (5). Consideration of abandonment of existing state-owned track between Colfax and Pullman must be postponed until after the study and design funded in (3) is completed and its findings are implemented.
- Amend (6) “The Washington state department of transportation shall continue to pursue restoring Amtrak *Cascades* service to pre-COVID service levels, and to the service levels committed to through the department's obligation of funding from the American recovery and reinvestment act. The department shall then continue to improve and increase service according to the high growth scenario in the 2019 State Rail Plan and according to an updated Long Range Plan for Amtrak Cascades (2006). A status report must be provided to the transportation committees of the legislature and the office of financial management by September 1, 2023.”
- Add a new item: \$250,000 for a benefit cost analysis of electrification of Class I rail yards in WA state.
- Add a new item: \$250,000 for a benefit cost analysis of electrification of Tacoma Rail, to include benefit cost analysis of electrification via catenary as well as battery.
- Add a new item: \$500,000 for a benefit cost analysis and economic impact analysis of establishing fast, frequent East-West passenger rail service via Stampede Pass tunnel.
- Add a new item: “The department shall re-establish a dedicated Rail Office staffed with experts in rail engineering and operations so that maximum planning with private and public entities and the tribes can be accomplished beginning in the 2023-2025 biennium, for:
  - The SE Washington rail network (improved transport options for agricultural goods),
  - East-West Service via Stampede Pass tunnel (serving central WA and inland ports), and
  - North-South service on the Amtrak *Cascades* corridor.
  - The Rail Office will promote the improvement of rail transportation in the state, with priority given to rail infrastructure and service to routes that are part of and physically connected to the “general railroad system of transportation” as defined in 49 CFR 209 Appendix A. PS
- Add a new item: “The department shall create a dedicated rail account for the sole purpose of providing the DOT with state match funds readily available for federal grant applications. The Legislature hereby requires WSDOT to seek all applicable federal grants as they become available, to promote the improvement of rail transportation in the state, with priority given to rail infrastructure and service to routes that are part of and physically connected to the “general railroad system of transportation” as defined in 49 CFR 209 Appendix A.”

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