

**To the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee  
on Transportation and Economic Development**

**From Jon Nuxoll, Eugene**

**Testimony in support of Amtrak *Cascades*, March 30, 2015**

I am here to support continued Eugene-Portland rail passenger service, by restoring the governor's \$10.4 million request for *Cascades* trains.

This is a service I use regularly to go from Eugene to Salem, Portland and points north about three times as often as I drive, to avoid I-5 congestion as well as traffic and parking in downtown Portland or Seattle, and to be able to make use of that time by working rather than driving. For the taxpayers, it's also a less costly investment than additional lanes on I-5.

I am a teacher and I have regularly used Amtrak's "Schools on Trains" service to bring students to this capitol building and to the Mission Mill Museum, as well as exhibits in Portland and Seattle. As I teach in a private school without its own bus, this is an especially useful transportation option for field trips.

All forms of transportation are subsidized. The federal government currently provides over \$800 per passenger for essential air service from Pendleton, the City of Salem subsidized air service there, and public and private funding funds air service out of Eugene.

There has been discussion about per-passenger subsidies for rail, calculated in different ways, but nothing else. How, for instance, do we figure the per-passenger cost of the \$365 million to build and then rebuild six miles of U.S. 20 at Eddyville? Or \$150 million each for Eugene's Belt Line interchange or for access to outlet malls at Woodburn? Those three projects

alone would fund Oregon's rail program for 133 years. What is the per-passenger subsidy for snow removal on Cascades passes or ice removal in the Columbia River gorge? Mudslides on Highway 101? Oregon State Police? I benefit from these services, too, but they never seem to be under the microscope like the *Cascades*, which makes up about two-tenths of one percent of ODOT's overall budget.

In the last year, ridership numbers in the Eugene-Portland corridor have been skewed in part by a change of schedule focusing on Portland-Salem commuter traffic, with a drop in ridership that has dropped ridership at a time Amtrak is enjoying record ridership nationally. That had a big impact especially in Eugene, when schedule changes over a year ago occasioned a little-publicized meeting that drew about 130 people. Judging from passenger boardings I see in Eugene, over half of the passengers use this service to go north of Portland; that is a more difficult option with schedules put in place last year. This is an easy fix; this needs to be looked at more as a service between the Willamette Valley and Washington.

It seems incredulous to be arguing for maintenance of this service before a Legislature that has otherwise shown support for a multi-based transportation system. After investment in two new train sets, the most ADA-accessible mode available, plus remodeled stations in Portland, Oregon City, Salem, Albany and Eugene, we should be discussing more service, not fighting to hold on to what we have. California and Washington are moving forward to expand rail passenger service. I wish we were talking about improvements like theirs, but for today I'm asking is that the state hold on to what we have.



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