



**DATE:** March 4, 2019

**TO:** Joint Committee on Transportation

**FROM:** Hal Gard, Administrator, ODOT Rail and Public Transit Division

**SUBJECT:** HB 2603(-1) – Passenger Train Delay Study

## **INTRODUCTION**

House Bill 2603 directs ODOT to study passenger train delays and report to an interim committee of the Legislative Assembly on or before September 15, 2020.

## **BACKGROUND**

Passenger rail is part of the state's intermodal and intercity transportation system. It provides an important transportation option for residents and visitors traveling the congested I-5 Corridor and connecting to Oregon's communities, regional, and out of state destinations.

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) manages the Amtrak Cascades intercity passenger rail service along the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor in partnership with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). This partnership enjoys the seventh highest overall ridership among intercity passenger rail services across the country.

Amtrak Cascades operates on private rail lines owned by Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe. Though Amtrak Cascades trains are, per federal law and guideline, permitted to run on these private lines, passenger rail trains often experience interference with freight trains using the same lines.

## **DISCUSSION**

Passenger train delays are often attributable to freight train interference due to timing of dispatch and slow speeds. Rail sidings are a critical component supporting overall rail operations in the state; however, the majority of freight trains operated in Oregon can fit within existing rail sidings.

The (-1) amendment to HB 2603 directs ODOT to report on issues known to contribute to passenger-freight interference, including: delay while waiting for arrival of opposing train; delay resulting from overtaking a slower train; delay related to length of siding; and delay due to mechanical failures.

HB 2603, with the (-1) amendment, will analyze the most common causes of passenger train delay and will provide the Legislative Assembly a more complete picture of how to improve passenger train operations.