

**HB 2603 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**

**Carrier:** Rep. Nathanson

**Joint Committee On Transportation**

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**Action Date:** 03/27/19

**Action:** Do pass with amendments and rescind subsequent referral to Ways and Means. (Printed A-Eng.)

**House Vote**

**Yeas:** 6 - Evans, Findley, Lewis, McKeown, McLain, Witt

**Exc:** 1 - Noble

**Senate Vote**

**Yeas:** 4 - Bentz, Beyer, Boquist, Frederick

**Exc:** 1 - Gelser

**Fiscal:** Has minimal fiscal impact

**Revenue:** No revenue impact

**Prepared By:** Alexa Diaz

**Meeting Dates:** 3/4, 3/27

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**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

Directs Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to study Amtrak service delays. Directs ODOT to report to interim committee of the Legislative Assembly, including recommendations for changes, by September 15, 2020.

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

- Efforts to boost passenger rail in region
- Length of rail sidings cannot accommodate longest trains in Willamette Valley
- Double track through region would reduce delays
- Public investment versus private investment in rail infrastructure

**EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:**

Replaces the measure.

**BACKGROUND:**

Oregon has 2,344 route miles of railway, which are used for both freight and passenger trains. Approximately half of the rail is operated by Union Pacific Railroad and BNSF Railway, while the remaining half is operated by regional, local, and switching and terminal railroads. According to the Association of American Railroads, in 2017, Oregon's total rail freight tonnage was 64.8 million tons. Freight carries commodities such as wood and paper products, farm-related products, chemicals, transportation equipment, petroleum, metal products, stone, scrap materials, and varied wholesale and retail shipments. Passenger train service in Oregon is served by Amtrak that runs from Seattle and Los Angeles and from Portland and Chicago. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) contracts with Amtrak to operate two daily round trips between Portland and Eugene. In ODOT's contract with Amtrak, it states that service will be on-time at least 80 percent of the time. In 2018, Amtrak service between Portland and Eugene was on-time on 73.3 percent of trips throughout the year. The Oregon State Rail Plan states that being reliable and on-time is one of the challenges to increasing ridership. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, rail congestion is occurring as freight bottlenecks in areas where freight and passenger trains conflict, and where there is limited space for local pickup and delivery.

House Bill 2603-A directs ODOT to study Amtrak train delays and to report findings to the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly related to transportation by September 15, 2020.