

SB 14 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Joint Committee On Transportation

Prepared By: Patrick Brennan, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 2/28

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs the Department of Transportation to study options for restoring passenger rail service in Oregon between Portland and Ontario. Requires Department to submit findings of the study to the Legislative Assembly's interim transportation committees by September 15, 2024.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon currently receives passenger rail service from Amtrak via three routes: the Amtrak *Cascades* provides service from Seattle, Washington to Eugene, Oregon; the Amtrak *Coast Starlight* traverses the entire north-south span of Oregon, connecting Seattle and Los Angeles, California; and the Amtrak Empire Builder provides service from Portland to Chicago, Illinois, though Portland is the only stop within the State of Oregon.

A now-defunct Amtrak route, known as Amtrak *Pioneer*, operated from 1977 to 1997. The route connected Seattle to Portland, then traversed the Columbia River Gorge on the Oregon side to Pendleton, before turning south to Ontario and into Idaho, eventually turning south at Pocatello and terminating in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Senate Bill 14 directs the Oregon Department of Transportation to study to explore options for restoring passenger service from Portland to Ontario along the route formerly traversed by the Amtrak *Pioneer*.