

SB 14 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Joint Committee On Transportation

Action Date: 05/18/23

Action: Do pass with amendments and requesting referral to Ways and Means. (Printed A-Engrossed.)

Senate Vote

Yeas: 4 - Boquist, Findley, Frederick, President Wagner

Exc: 1 - Woods

House Vote

Yeas: 7 - Boshart Davis, Evans, Helfrich, Mannix, McLain, Nathanson, Pham K

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

Prepared By: Patrick Brennan, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 2/28, 5/18

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to study options for expanding passenger rail service in Oregon and to submit report to interim committees of Legislative Assembly related to transportation no later than September 15, 2024. Authorizes ODOT to enter into agreements with other jurisdictions related to mutual planning for improved passenger rail service, including ultra-high-speed ground transportation within the Cascades Rail Corridor and specifies that any agreements must include providing passenger service to Eugene. Limits biennial expenditure on ultra-high-speed service development to the lesser of 50 percent of moneys available to ODOT for passenger service or \$1 million. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Current passenger rail service compared to past service
- Potential to restore passenger rail service to eastern Oregon
- Shared passenger and freight service on same rail lines

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Replaces the measure.

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 (ODOT) to study options for expanding passenger rail service in Oregon and to submit its findings in a report to the Legislative Assembly by September 15, 2024. The measure also permits ODOT to enter into agreements with other jurisdictions for improved passenger rail service, including ultra-high-speed service, provided that any such plan include passenger rail service to Eugene.