

February 21, 2023

Members of the Oregon Joint Committee on Transportation,

The Pacific Northwest Economic Region's Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (PNWER RIA) supports HB 2691 and HB 2692. The two bills will enhance regional collaboration of Northwest states on passenger and freight rail enhancements. The bills will also facilitate multi-state and bi-national advocacy in pursuing major new federal rail infrastructure and Amtrak funding for a fairer distribution of new federal infrastructure funds.

PNWER is a public private partnership formed in 1991 and embedded in Oregon state statute. Our governing board is comprised on legislators from five Northwest states that make up PNWER – Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Alaska. Five Western Canadian provinces and territories – including British Columbia – are also members in this unique multi-state, bi-national compact.

Last year, PNWER was awarded a \$1.3 million grant from the Build America Bureau of the US DOT to launch a Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA) program. The PNWER RIA team has developed a unique approach to enhanced northwest rail funding called **High Performance Rail (HPR)**, which proposes to accelerate public and private investment in rail infrastructure by identifying projects that have co-benefits for both freight and passenger rail service.

As a multi-state organization, the PNWER RIA understands the importance of coordination and joint planning between the Departments of Transportation in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia to ensure transportation infrastructure supports and serves the residents of all three jurisdictions. Our High Performance Rail approach is focused on identifying multi-state, short- and medium-term investments in rail operations and improvements to help the region access new federal IJA / BIL funding, and expanded Amtrak funding, to accelerate ODOT and WSDOT rail and service delivery plans to add more roundtrips between Portland to Eugene, Seattle to Portland, and Seattle to Vancouver, B.C.

The HPR approach also supports the long-term study of Ultra High Speed Rail in the Amtrak Cascades corridor - including the Portland to Eugene segment, which was part of the original high speed rail corridor list designated in the 1991 ISTEA - Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act.

Passage of HB 2691 and 2692 will accelerate this type of bi-state cooperation and rail investment in the critical four-year time frame remaining on BIL and Amtrak funding. We encourage committee support.

Sincerely,



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