

HB 3233 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Joint Committee On Transportation

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Meeting Dates: 2/4

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs the Department of Transportation to work with Washington State Department of Transportation and the British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to develop plans for a shared regional approach to Cascades freight and passenger rail planning, funding, and communications within the corridor.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The Pacific Northwest is served for passenger rail service by the daily *Amtrak Cascades*, which provides regional service between Vancouver, British Columbia and Eugene, as well as by the *Coast Starlight*, which provides daily service between Seattle and Los Angeles. Both services are operated under Amtrak; this north-south service is augmented by bus service, as well as the *Amtrak Empire Builder*, which runs between Portland and Chicago.

The Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor is one of a number of high-speed rail initiatives throughout the United States under varying levels of development. During the past several years, the State of Washington conducted a series of feasibility studies for "ultra high speed ground transportation" that could potentially operate in excess of 200 miles per hour, linking Vancouver, B.C., Seattle, and Portland. One recent study estimated the cost of such a system between \$24 billion and \$42 billion.

House Bill 3233 directs the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to conduct with its counterparts in Washington State and British Columbia to develop a shared regional approach to Cascades rail planning and freight rail service. The measure directs ODOT to submit biennial reports to update the Legislative Assembly's interim transportation committees on the progress of the initiative.