

HB 3233 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**Carrier:** Rep. Nathanson**Joint Committee On Transportation****Action Date:** 04/08/25**Action:** Do pass with amendments. (Printed A-Eng.)**House Vote****Yeas:** 5 - Evans, Gamba, Mannix, McLain, Nathanson**Exc:** 2 - Boshart Davis, Helfrich**Senate Vote****Yeas:** 4 - Gorsek, Meek, Pham, Weber**Nays:** 1 - Starr**Fiscal:** Has minimal fiscal impact**Revenue:** No revenue impact**Prepared By:** Patrick Brennan, LPRO Analyst**Meeting Dates:** 2/4, 4/8**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

The measure directs the Oregon Department of Transportation to work with the 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. It also adds requirements to the state passenger rail plan related to boosting capacity, upgrading track and related infrastructure, and information regarding federal infrastructure grant applications submitted and their final disposition. The measure also requires the Department to submit a quarterly report on passenger rail performance to the Joint Committee on Transportation.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Federally-recognized high speed rail corridor
- Multiple organizations involved in corridor development
- Importance of passenger rail in corridor
- Expected population growth in corridor
- State support is important factor in receiving federal support
- Question whether Department has the capacity for additional workload

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

The amendment adds language from House Bill 3231 (2025) related to updates to the state passenger rail plan, with modified reporting requirements. It modifies reporting requirements related to trilateral coordination between Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia.

BACKGROUND:

The Pacific Northwest is served with 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.

HB 3233 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Bill 3233 A 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. It also adds several additional topics for the state passenger rail plan to cover and requires a quarterly report from the Department to the Joint Committee on Transportation regarding passenger rail service in Oregon.