

Submitter: Kevin Kincaid
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3233

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, and members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 3233. In order to serve the transportation needs of the citizens of Oregon while also protecting our environment, the state needs to develop a strong rail network. Highway expansions are expensive, inefficient, and contribute to CO2 emissions and other pollution. The state should be aggressively pursuing rail expansion in order to be a climate leader on transportation, and we should be doing it in concert with the two other governments that we already share a rail corridor with.

In the past years, Oregonians have already shown their interest in train based transit. Amtrak as a whole had a record breaking year in 2024, but specifically in Amtrak Cascades in Oregon there was a surge in ridership in the last year. This was following the increase in daily round trips between Portland and Seattle from 4 to 6. Investing in improvements to train capacity promotes ridership.

There are many different options for how the Pacific Northwest could improve train transit. On-time performance is often impacted by conflicts with trains in sections where there is only one-track. Purchasing tracks and building two track lines can help with increasing capacity to handle additional trains, especially if we want a strong rail corridor down the existing cascade stations. Our state also needs to pursue developing a truly high-speed rail line. European and Asian countries have demonstrated the effectiveness of high speed rail, and the Pacific Northwest should pursue such a fast and efficient travel method. As train speed and performance increases and there are more daily train trips, ridership will also increase as it becomes more efficient than car travel or plane travel.

One more important thing that should be part of the shared document is expanding Amtrak Network coverage. Washington has several eastern cities that are only served by limited long-distance coverage, and Oregon has none. The frequency of the Cascades line should be extended to communities across the Pacific Northwest, so that more citizens are able to easily travel via rail. Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia should seek to expand effective travel to the whole region, including the Eastern cities and coastal communities.

Now is the time for Oregon to begin investing in a cleaner and more efficient method of transportation. I urge you to support HB 3233 to ensure that the Pacific Northwest builds the rail network we need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.