



# Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

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**DATE:** February 4, 2025

**TO:** Joint Committee on Transportation

**FROM:** Suzanne Carlson – Administrator  
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**SUBJECT:** HB 3231 – Passenger Rail Strategies

## INTRODUCTION

HB 3231 directs ODOT to include strategies related to boosting capacity, infrastructure, upgrading and improving rail tracks, and information on federal grant submittals in a new biennial report. The measure requires a report be submitted every even year.

## BACKGROUND

The Amtrak Cascades operates from Eugene, Oregon to Vancouver, BC. The State of Oregon is responsible for managing the Amtrak Cascades service operations in the vast majority of Oregon, and Washington State is responsible from north of Portland, Oregon. The service is operated by Amtrak and operates over privately owned infrastructure.

With the passage of [HB 3401](#), the 2015 Legislature directed ODOT to develop a [Passenger Rail Plan](#) with the purpose of increasing ridership and revenue and submit quarterly reports to the Legislature. The reporting requirements included information on a marketing strategy, strategies to boost ridership and tourism with passenger rail in Oregon, and a summary of the number of passengers and on-time performance for the previous quarter. The most recent [report](#) was published on January 29, 2025.

The Oregon Passenger Rail Service Development Plan (SDP) was adopted by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in 2021. The Service Development Plan provides specific improvement and expansion projects and locations for intercity passenger service between Eugene and Portland over the next 20 years.

Last year, Oregon's rail ridership was 164,660, exceeding the previous 2012 record by 20 percent. The Amtrak Cascades Corridor had the highest ridership growth of all state-supported services in 2024, with a 27 percent growth in ridership. This was attributed to the addition of two roundtrips between Portland and Seattle, providing more options and improving connectivity in Oregon. Ridership was supported by simplified fare structures, service enhancements, and marketing efforts by ODOT and Washington State's Department of Transportation (WSDOT). During 2024, important infrastructure upgrades at Peninsula Junction in Portland was completed and ODOT applied for

federal grants for infrastructure investments in Portland and Eugene.

## DISCUSSION

Rail is a critical component of a safe, efficient, and accessible multimodal transportation system. ODOT appreciates the Legislature's continued leadership and efforts to advance passenger rail in Oregon. The measure builds on the work set in motion from HB 3401 (2015) and the Passenger Rail Plan and is in alignment with reporting efforts underway by the Department.

The measure expands ODOT's reporting requirements directed in HB 3401 (2015) to continue the passenger rail quarterly report and adds a new biennial report. HB 3401 directed ODOT to report on the status of the Passenger Rail Plan, including strategies for marketing; boosting ridership; boosting tourism; boosting capacity; and improving railroad tracks and infrastructure. HB 3231 adds a biennial reporting requirement, similar to the HB 3401 quarterly report to include strategies for boosting capacity and an information on federal rail infrastructure grant applications.

Additionally, [HB 2918](#) (2013) directed ODOT to partner with WSDOT and British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (BCMOTI) for work related to the Cascades Rail Corridor and required the Department to provide a passenger rail status report to the Legislative Assembly every other odd-numbered year. The 2025 [Passenger Rail Report](#) was published on December 31, 2024.

The accompanying proposed measure, [HB 3233](#) (2025) expands ODOT's reporting requirements directed in HB 2918 for the Passenger Rail Report. HB 2918 (2013) directs ODOT to report on the status of agreements with WSDOT and BCMOTI regarding the Corridor; the performance of passenger rail service within the Corridor; and the financial status of the Corridor and financial needs for passenger rail service within the Corridor. HB 3233 (2025) expands the HB 2918 (2013) report to include freight rail and infrastructure improvements with WSDOT and BCMOTI.

The existing reporting requirements in HB 2918 and HB 3401, and the reporting requirements in proposed measures HB 3231 and HB 3233, create duplicate reporting requirements with inconsistent reporting cycles. To streamline efforts, increase efficiency, institute consistency, and maximize resources, ODOT offers the following for consideration: consolidate the existing report (HB 2918) and new proposed reports directed in HB 3233 and HB 3231, into a single, comprehensive biennial report.

By combining the existing and proposed new reporting requirements, ODOT would be able to provide a single, comprehensive, biennial report to the Legislature capturing the following information:

- The status of agreements with WSDOT and BCMOTI regarding the Cascades Rail Corridor.
- The performance of passenger rail service within the Cascades Rail Corridor.
- The financial status of the Corridor and financial needs for passenger rail service within the Cascades Rail Corridor.
- The shared vision, goals and objectives for passenger rail service and freight rail service within the Cascades Rail Corridor. *(new)*
- Plan to achieve performance goals, manage fleet assets, share costs, prioritize investments,

- improve infrastructure and resolve interagency disputes within the Cascades Rail Corridor. *(new)*
- Proposals for funding options to support the infrastructure improvements and operation of passenger and freight trains within the Cascades Rail Corridor. *(new)*
- Development of federal funding applications consistent with the shared plans within the Cascades Rail Corridor. *(new)*
- Oregon's Passenger Rail Plan, including:
  - o A marketing strategy for passenger rail in Oregon.
  - o Strategies to boost ridership for passenger rail in Oregon.
  - o Strategies for boosting tourism with passenger rail in Oregon.
  - o Strategies for boosting capacity for passenger rail in Oregon. *(new)*
  - o Strategies for upgrading and improving railroad track and related infrastructure.
  - o Status of federal rail infrastructure grant applications. *(new)*

With one biennial report, ODOT will be able to provide more comprehensive information and maximize reporting efforts with efficiency while streamlining resources, and policy makers will have a one-stop shop document – telling the full story of passenger rail in Oregon and the Cascades Rail Corridor.

## **CONCLUSION**

HB 3231 builds on the work of the Passenger Rail Plan and expanding reporting requirements. The measure requires ODOT to submit a biennial report to the Legislature on the status of the Passenger Rail Plan initiatives. To streamline efforts, increase efficiency, and maximize resources, ODOT offers for consideration, the Legislature consolidates existing reporting requirements and proposed reporting requirements into one biennial report to provide more comprehensive information for policy makers and to streamline the Department's resources.