

Submitter: David Strohmaier
On Behalf Of: Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3231

Chair and members of the committee,

My name is David Strohmaier, and I serve as chairman of the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA), a regional rail authority and political subdivision of the state in Montana. I write in support of HB 3231, because the work of the Oregon Department of Transportation and the effects of this bill have implications at a regional scale, well beyond the borders of Oregon.

BSPRA is currently the project sponsor of the Big Sky North Coast Corridor—a 2,300-mile-long passenger rail corridor connecting Chicago to Portland/Seattle, formerly known as the North Coast Hiawatha route. This corridor is now in the Federal Railroad Administration’s Corridor Identification and Development Program and we are currently in the scoping phase of creating a service development plan for the route. One route option will include Portland, Oregon, as the terminus of the route.

In order to adequately plan for the renewal of this long-distance passenger rail service, connecting eight states from Illinois to Oregon, it is vitally important that states along the corridor have robust and up-to-date passenger rail planning documents that lay out a vision for rail infrastructure improvements and acknowledge the synergy between freight and passenger operations, and do so at a scale that takes into account multi-state and multi-jurisdiction projects.

Thanks for the opportunity to offer testimony, and I urge you to support HB 3231, which provides clear strategic direction from the Oregon legislature to the Oregon Department of Transportation on passenger rail planning.

David Strohmaier
Chairman, BSPRA