

Submitter: David Strohmaier
On Behalf Of: Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3233

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 3233, 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 that connects eight states, from Illinois to Oregon, it is vitally important that states along the corridor are coordinating and collaborating with one another on freight and passenger rail operations. From our perspective, it is critical that Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia work together on rail planning and rail infrastructure investments since that work will impact and benefit long-distance passenger rail service at a much larger scale, including the Big Sky North Coast Corridor. And while we would love to see this bill take an even more expansive approach to coordination that would direct the Oregon Department of Transportation to actively engage other states in the Greater Northwest Region, including Montana, HB 3233 is a step in the right direction of enlarging the scale of rail planning to account for the interconnectedness and cross-jurisdictional nature of both freight and passenger rail operations.

Thanks for the opportunity to offer testimony, and on behalf of the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority, I urge you to support HB 3233.

David Strohmaier
Chairman, BSPRA