

Submitter: Robinson Foster  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3231

Robinson Foster comment on HB 3231:

It is core Climate Rail Alliance policy that, because freight trains and passenger trains use the same tracks, capital improvements to track capacity for one by definition benefits the other. This is called cross financing.

Cross financing was recognized de jure by federal law in the Interstate Commerce Commission enabling acts of the 1890s. Cross financing is de facto practiced by Oregon taxpayers every time one of the many Oregon Rail Plan projects are completed, see Appendix C,  
[https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Planning/Documents/Oregon\\_State\\_Rail\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Planning/Documents/Oregon_State_Rail_Plan.pdf)

Therefore, if Oregon taxpayers are to invest about one billion dollars to improve Amtrak Cascades service, (see the 2021 ODOT plan, <https://www.oregon.gov/odot/RPTD/RPTD%20Document%20Library/OPR-CIP-Tier-1-FEIS-and-Record-of-Decision.pdf>), then a joint powers agreement needs to be made between the state and the Union Pacific Railroad to include operation of innovative and iconoclastic new rail freight services that leverage mode shift truck to rail in the same way this track capacity investment will leverage mode shift automobile to rail.

The core benefit to taxpayers is that a portion of the new freight revenue will cross finance, or contribute to paying for the track capacity capital costs for this mode shift, and the ongoing maintenance of this track capacity.

Three innovative and iconoclastic new freight services include carrying any highway legal vehicle, (e.g., big rigs, straight trucks), short haul intermodal, (e.g., containers otherwise put on I-5 in Portland by the Union Pacific Railroad and BNSF Railway), and access to the Amtrak Cascades route by Class II and Class III railroads to serve new customers.

Scenarios for all three innovative service categories include use the taxpayer built Mid-Willamette Intermodal Center.

This facility is otherwise dormant with the exception of occasional use by the Union Pacific Railroad to stage personnel and equipment to maintain the tracks, to park passing rail freight cars for repair, and to park large blocks of rail freight cars being swapped between passing trains.

The value of the taxpayer investment in the Mid-Willamette Intermodal Center and the passenger quality track capacity connecting it to the state and North America, and the value of its use by the railroad needs to be recognized, enumerated, and formalized in a joint power agreement.

By innovating the cross financing of rail freight and rail passenger in the Amtrak Cascades corridor, where capital improvements and track capacity are already in place to at least accommodate demonstration service, then the same strategy can be applied to develop freight rail and passenger rail in other corridors, (e.g., Portland-Boise-Salt Lake City), growing the economies of scale in an expanding network of rail corridors for passenger and freight alike.

Please learn more about this subject from the ten-minute, book promotion video for *The Climate Emergency: Trains-An Effective Response* by Tom White of the Climate Rail Alliance, see [https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_hTzf2L2Pzo](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=_hTzf2L2Pzo)

Please cross reference my comments on HB 3231 with my comments on HB 3233 for the interstate and international collaboration required to growing the economies of scale in an expanding network of rail corridors for passenger and freight alike.

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I am a member of Climate Rail Alliance and the Association of Oregon Rail & Transit Advocates. Both organizations are members of the Move Oregon Forward Coalition, a project of 1000 Friends of Oregon. The above remarks are my own. The organizations have not yet taken a position on them.