

All Aboard **NORTHWEST**

Charles Hamilton, Co-Executive Director

PO Box 22225 / Seattle, WA 98122-0225

541-568-6700 / 206-222-3735 / 208-600-1096 / allaboardnw.org

Testimony on SB 1202

April 8, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 1202. I am Charles Hamilton, speaking on behalf of [All Aboard Northwest](http://AllAboardNorthwest.org), the passenger rail working group serving the Greater Northwest.

As required by Section 209 of the [Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008](#), passenger rail routes less than 750 miles long must be paid for by the states, so the Amtrak *Cascades* service between Eugene, Portland, Seattle and Vancouver BC is managed by the Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation, .

But ODOT, like its counterparts in other states, focuses mostly on highways. ODOT's rail functions are part of the [Public Transportation Division](#), which is almost impossible to find on the [agency's website](#) unless you know what you're looking for.

Oregon is not alone in including rail in an "everything that's not highways" office. Washington has the WSDOT Rail, Freight and Ports Division. Wisconsin DOT has the Bureau of Transit, Local Roads, Railroads and Harbors. You get the idea.

But in a [2023 address to a group of mayors](#), former Administrator Amit Bose of the Federal Railroad Administration said that state transportation departments need to beef up the number and expertise of the staff who handle rail projects.

“It’s really important that your state departments of transportation have a robust rail program. Passenger rail is a specialized craft. We need to make sure we have the resources and a focus on that. It’s not the same as building roads. It is absolutely different.”

In these difficult times, it is more important than ever for states to provide safe, reliable, frequent, competitive, and convenient passenger rail and transit services that meet the needs of everyone in the region, including low-income, tribal, and rural communities, people with disabilities, locations where transportation alternatives are limited, and the thirty percent of the population that does not drive. An Oregon Rail and Transit Department will help make that happen.

Thank you for your support of Senate Bill 1202..