2019 Washington State Rail System Plan

An Integrated Plan for Future Rail Growth and Action

FAST Freight Advisory Committee
June 13, 2018
Overview

Goals and Objective

Draft Scope

Regional Trends and Issues

Schedule

Next Steps
Objective and Goals

Objective
Provide a framework for accommodating growth and implementing strategic actions for future passenger and freight rail service

Goals
• Identify a preferred growth/performance for Amtrak Cascades
• Identify performance objectives for the state-owned shortline rail system
• Identify strategies to improve connections between rail and other modes
Draft Scope

Key Tasks

• Describe rail system and economic effects
• Detail institutional framework and funding sources
• Update emerging trends and issues
• Analyze rail system
• Review performance measures
• Outline strategies and investments
Economic vitality:
The Palouse region identifies the rail system as critical in moving freight through the region and in maintaining competitive markets.

Rail transportation is identified as necessary for the Port of Lewiston to be competitive as an intermodal distribution center. The Great Northwest Railroad, a shortline, provides a direct link between the port and the main lines of the BNSF Railway and the Union Pacific Railroad.

The Puget Sound Regional Council identifies the transportation system that provides for the efficient movement of freight and goods as critical for the region’s economic prosperity.
Regional Trends, Issues, Needs

System Preservation:
The Okanogan region identifies railroad infrastructure degradation as a trend. Deteriorating railroad beds means that trains have to travel slower, reducing a competitive advantage of rail.

The Southwest Washington region identifies lack of investment to maintain and improve the short line system as a trend, including replacement of obsolete track components, bridges, and crossings that will allow the use of newer, more efficient 286,000-pound rail cars that are now standard.

The Northeast Washington region identifies the need to maintain the existing transportation system. Such activities include maintaining all at-grade railroad crossings.
Safety:
The Southwest region identifies **trespass fatalities** as an issue in Lewis County.

The Yakima region identifies preparing for **collisions involving hazardous materials** on railroads as a safety issue.

The Thurston region identifies rail bridges as an issue for safety and mobility, due to **restricted width**. The rail overpass on Rainier Road in Lacey and Minnesota Street in Rainier are examples.
Mobility:
The Peninsula region identifies multimodal passenger connectivity as an issue. MTA operates 10 fixed routes in its service area with connections at the Kamilche Transit Center, Olympia Transit Center, the Bremerton Transportation Center, and the Brinnon Store which, in turn provides access to AMTRAK and other services.

The Quad County region identifies rail bottlenecks on Stevens Pass due to increasing rail volume, and on Stampeded Pass due to vertical clearance limitations for double stacking containers.

The Spokane area identifies container terminal access as an issue. BNSF markets intermodal service in the Spokane area typically as trailer on flatcar (TOFC) service between Spokane and St. Paul or Chicago.
Environment:
The Thurston region identifies extreme heat as an issue that could increase the risk of fires on wooden trestle bridges and deform rail lines consisting of joined track.

The PSRC region identifies greenhouse gas emissions and particulates from vehicles including buses, trains, and ferries as an issue. Although these initially enter the air, they can also settle in and contaminate surface waters.

The Skagit region identifies environmental constraints as an issue. The BNSF Bridge project crosses the Skagit River and therefore would have environmental constraints.
Stewardship:
The Southwest region identifies the importance of reconstructing, relocating, or reinforcing infrastructure so that it is more resistant to landslides, erosion, flooding, tsunamis, and other natural disasters.

The Skagit region identifies the integration of land use and transportation policies and working to better manage the transportation system will provide for optimum efficiency and effective movement of people and goods.

The Thurston region identifies the need to update and expand strategies to keep rail corridors intact if faced with abandonment.
Outreach Plan

Outreach

• **April – June 2018**: Initial scoping to solicit input and information

• **July – December 2018**: In-progress updates to present results of analysis for feedback

• **January – May 2019**: Sharing the draft version of the plan and soliciting feedback on analysis and strategies.

Schedule

• **December 2018**: Internal review of plan

• **March 2019**: Public review of plan

• **May 2019**: Plan complete
Next Steps

Supplement regional issues and trends with additional research and input

Launch technical analysis of demand, capacity and connectivity

Conduct regular updates

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