

Rail Monthly Update



April 2015 – in review

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Progress continues on Amtrak Cascades high-speed rail projects

The ARRA-funded Amtrak Cascades high-speed rail program now has 10 of its 20 projects in construction, with another 7 projects completed. Three more are in design and will start construction this year. All must be completed by spring 2017. Recent updates include:

- **Locomotives:** Construction activities started on individual components of WSDOT's eight new Siemens locomotives. This marks the tenth project currently in construction and another major milestone of the high-speed rail program. WSDOT's new state-of-the-art locomotives will be faster, more reliable and fuel efficient. They will be placed into service in 2017.
- **Vancouver Rail Yard Bypass:** One portion of this project, Tract A, which included relocating the yard's train turntable and mechanical building, is operationally complete. The remaining portion, Track B – a rail yard bypass and sewer relocation – will be completed in May 2016. When finished, the project will reduce congestion and allow trains to move through the rail yard more quickly.
- **Corridor Reliability Upgrades South:** Tie replacement work on this project was completed in March, while work to clean ballast and resurface the area around the tracks will continue until 2016. The project upgrades rail infrastructure from the Nisqually Junction to the Columbia River in Vancouver.

WSDOT involves stakeholders in Freighthouse Square station design workshop

As part of the larger Tacoma Point Defiance Bypass project, a new train station at Freighthouse Square is critical to a new, inland rail route that will reduce congestion and make passenger rail more reliable.

Construction on the station is scheduled to begin in early 2016 with a station opening in 2017. WSDOT continues to be committed to involving stakeholders and the community with the station project.

To date, WSDOT has met three times with the subgroup of the City of Tacoma's citizen advisory committee (CAC), keeping members apprised of design progress and working through any challenges. A focused workshop in April that brought the CAC subgroup, city representatives, Amtrak station experts and Sound Transit representatives together resulted in a design solution with broad buy-in from all parties, allowing the design process to move forward. Participants reached consensus on the exterior façade and inside design of the new station at Freighthouse Square.

Another key method leading to successful communication and support for the project are one-on-one meetings with the WSDOT Rail Division managers team's lead architect, CAC chair and City of Tacoma representative to discuss design issues and principles. In April, WSDOT Rail Division managers also presented a project update to the Tacoma City Council.

Annual Performance Report measures ridership and revenue

WSDOT tracks Amtrak Cascades performance records to help guide decision making for capital investment and service expansion for 2015 and beyond. According to the recently published Annual Performance Report for Amtrak Cascades, several findings for 2014 and 2013 revealed similar statistics. For example, approximately 781,000 passengers traveled on Amtrak Cascades passenger trains between Eugene, Oregon, and Vancouver, British Columbia, in 2014. This is about the same number of passengers as compared to the previous year (807,000 passengers in 2013). The ticket revenue also was near the same in 2014 (\$28.3 million) as compared to 2013 (\$29.2 million). Farebox recovery in Washington state was also very close when comparing 2014 (58.1 percent) to 2013 (59.5 percent). Several other findings remained consistent for both years, such as:

- The two months with the highest number of Amtrak Cascades passengers were July and

August

- Four stations with the highest number of passengers (from highest number to lowest number) were Seattle; Portland; Vancouver, British Columbia; and Tacoma
- The two city pairings that netted 45 percent of all corridor revenue were Seattle/Portland and Seattle/Vancouver, British Columbia.
- First-time information in the Annual Performance Report included Washington-specific on-time performance figures (70 percent) and new trainsets purchased by ODOT (Talgo Series 8 trainsets entered the Amtrak Cascades service in January 2014)