Amtrak Cascades: 2020 Performance Data Report

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WSDOT Rail, Freight, and Ports Division
February 2021
Contact: rail@wsdot.wa.gov or 360-705-7900
Performance Dashboard – 2020

In 2020, Amtrak Cascades transported 172,000 riders with $6,514,000 in ticket revenue.

5-Year Monthly Ridership Comparison – 2016-2020

5-Year Monthly Ticket Revenue Comparison – 2016-2020

10-Year On-Time Performance – 2011-2020
Washington-supported trains only

Total Operating Cost, Revenue & Farebox Recovery Rate – 2011-2020
Washington-supported trains only

February 2021
WSDOT Rail, Freight, and Ports Division
Overview – 2020

The Amtrak Cascades intercity passenger rail system is a service funded by Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). As sponsors and good stewards of state funds, WSDOT is committed to monitoring and reporting on Amtrak Cascades’ performance.

This 2020 Annual Performance Data Report provides historical perspective trends in ridership, ticket revenue, passenger miles, on-time performance, and operating costs. It is designed to offer a quick reference for citizens, policymakers, and stakeholders interested in understanding how the state sponsored passenger rail program performs.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant changes to Amtrak Cascades service through most of 2020. Beginning on March 17, 2020 service levels started being reduced to comply with state directives restricting non-essential travel. All Amtrak Cascades service between Seattle and Vancouver, BC was suspended due to the closure of the Canadian border. In addition, service between Seattle and Portland was reduced from four daily round trips to a single round trip that continued on to Eugene, OR. Amtrak also instituted a nationwide policy limiting ticket sales to just 50% of capacity on all trains.

As a result of reduced service, ridership decreased 79% from 829,000 in 2019 to 172,000 in 2020. Ticket revenue totaled $6.5 million in 2020, a decrease of 80% from $33.2 million in 2019.

On-time performance continues to challenge Amtrak Cascades service, although 2020 showed an increase in reliability, at 62% compared to 58% in 2019. However, on-time performance is still below the goal of 88% that was contractually negotiated with track-owner, BNSF, and operator, Amtrak.

Service levels will be re-introduced in the future as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and ridership demand increases.
10-Year Ridership with Historical References – 2011-2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ridership</th>
<th>Highlights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>172,000*</td>
<td>Amtrak Cascades reduced service to one round trip between Seattle, WA and Eugene, OR (down from two round trips between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C., four round trips between Seattle and Portland, OR, and two round trips between Portland and Eugene) due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and reduced demand. Ridership decreased 79% and revenue decreased 80% compared to 2019.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>824,000*</td>
<td>Ridership increased nearly 3% and revenue increased 6% compared to 2018. On-time performance improved significantly over the course of 2019, rising from 45% in the first quarter to 71% in the last quarter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>802,000</td>
<td>New Charger locomotives successfully complete first year of operations in the Pacific Northwest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>811,000</td>
<td>All remaining federally-funded capital projects completed. WSDOT’s Stay Back From The Tracks safety campaign launched. Point Defiance Bypass derailment in December.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>817,000</td>
<td>Ridership increased by approximately 10% over the previous year. Five of WSDOT's ARRA program construction projects completed, for a total of 14 of 20 projects completed. Pets on Trains program began in March.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>745,000</td>
<td>New Tukwila Station dedicated in February. 20 years of Amtrak Cascades service commemorated at Pacific Central Station in Vancouver, British Columbia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>781,000</td>
<td>ODOT added two trainsets to the Amtrak Cascades service: Mt. Bachelor and Mt. Jefferson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>807,000</td>
<td>WSDOT and ODOT assumed all operations costs not covered by ticket revenues; federal assistance eliminated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>836,000</td>
<td>Second phase of major upgrades to Seattle’s King Street Station began.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>848,000</td>
<td>WiFi service added to trains. Agreement reached with Canada to continue second train to Vancouver, British Columbia. Amtrak Cascades achieved highest ridership level to date.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ridership numbers are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

*Effective on 10/1/2019, Amtrak revised its ridership reporting policy. Cascades ridership reported for 2019 and 2020 has been adjusted to reflect that policy change.
Note: On October 1, 2013, the federal government shifted responsibility for funding Amtrak Cascades services completely to the states, in accordance with the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008. WSDOT and ODOT contract with Amtrak to operate the Amtrak Cascades service and it is now funded completely by ticket revenue and state funds.

*Effective on 10/1/2019, Amtrak revised its ridership reporting policy. Cascades ridership reported for 2019 and 2020 has been adjusted to reflect that policy change.
10-Year Ticket Revenue by Funding Partners – 2011-2020

$35,000,000
$30,000,000
$25,000,000
$20,000,000
$15,000,000
$10,000,000
$5,000,000
$0

2011  $30.3M  $30M  $29.2M  $28.3M  $28.5M  $30.2M  $29.6M  $31.3M  $33.2M  $33.2M
2012  $30.4M  $30M  $29.2M  $28.3M  $28.5M  $30.2M  $29.6M  $31.3M  $33.2M  $33.2M
2013  $29.2M  $28.3M  $28.5M  $30.2M  $29.6M  $31.3M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M
2014  $28.3M  $28.5M  $30.2M  $29.6M  $31.3M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M
2015  $28.5M  $30.2M  $29.6M  $31.3M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M
2016  $30.2M  $29.6M  $31.3M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M
2017  $29.6M  $31.3M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M
2018  $31.3M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M
2019  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M
2020  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M  $33.2M

Washington  Amtrak  Oregon

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10-Year Passenger Miles by Segment – 2011-2020

Passenger miles are the person miles traveled by Amtrak Cascades passengers between their origins and destinations along the corridor.

*Effective on 10/1/2019, Amtrak revised its ridership reporting policy. Cascades passenger miles reported for 2019 and 2020 has been adjusted to reflect that policy change.
5-Year Monthly Ridership Comparison – 2016-2020

- 2020: 172,000 Annual Ridership
- 2019: 824,000 Annual Ridership
- 2018: 802,000 Annual Ridership
- 2017: 811,000 Annual Ridership
- 2016: 817,000 Annual Ridership

*Cascades service reductions began in March 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic*

*All Amtrak Cascades service between Seattle and Vancouver, BC was suspended; service between Seattle and Portland was reduced from four daily round trips to a single round trip that continued on to Eugene, OR.*
Starting March 2020, all Amtrak Cascades service between Seattle and Vancouver, BC was suspended; service between Seattle and Portland was reduced from four daily round trips to a single round trip that continued on to Eugene, OR.
5-Year Monthly Ticket Revenue Comparison – 2016-2020

- 2020: $6,514,000 Annual Revenue
- 2019: $33,243,000 Annual Revenue
- 2018: $31,266,000 Annual Revenue
- 2017: $29,608,000 Annual Revenue
- 2016: $30,216,000 Annual Revenue

*Cascades service reductions began in March 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic*

*All Amtrak Cascades service between Seattle and Vancouver, BC was suspended; service between Seattle and Portland was reduced from four daily round trips to a single round trip that continued on to Eugene, OR.*
Starting March 2020, all Amtrak Cascades service between Seattle and Vancouver, BC was suspended; service between Seattle and Portland was reduced from four daily round trips to a single round trip that continued on to Eugene, OR.
Annual Ridership by Segment – 2020

Total ridership for 2020 = 172,000

Insight into travel patterns can be gained by looking at where riders travel. The three segments of the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor are defined as between Eugene and Portland, between Portland and Seattle, and between Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia. Individual trains can operate within a segment or across segments. When a rider boards the train in one segment and gets off the train in another (for example, boards in Bellingham and gets off in Olympia), that rider is said to “cross segments” as depicted along the top of the graphic below. Ridership values do not include transfers. Understanding where riders travel is a useful way to see how the entire corridor operates as a unified system.

These figures do not include nearly 500 passengers who changed their travel plans or were not able to be tracked by Amtrak.

Ridership numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred.

*Starting March 2020, all Amtrak Cascades service between Seattle and Vancouver, BC was suspended; service between Seattle and Portland was reduced from four daily round trips to a single round trip that continued on to Eugene, OR.
Annual Pets and Bicycles on board – 2016-2020*

Pet and bicycle numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred.

*Starting March 2020, all Amtrak Cascades service between Seattle and Vancouver, BC was suspended; service between Seattle and Portland was reduced from four daily round trips to a single round trip that continued on to Eugene, OR.
## Annual Station On-Offs – 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>On-Offs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>97,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacoma</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver, WA</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver, BC*</td>
<td>19,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympia/Lacey</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugene</td>
<td>13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tukwila</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellingham*</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelso/Longview</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralia</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albany</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon City</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everett*</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonds*</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Vernon*</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified**</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanwood*</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail Plus***</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On-Offs are a measurement of how many passengers got on and off the train at each station.

*As of March 2020, all north segment trains were suspended due to the closure of the Canadian border resulting in no further ridership for Edmonds, Everett, Stanwood, Mt. Vernon, Bellingham, and Vancouver, B.C. stations.

**Unidentified passengers either deferred their trip to another day or their tickets were not scanned by Amtrak.

***Rail Plus are riders using regional transit passes called Orca Cards to travel on Amtrak Cascades trains between Seattle, Edmonds, and Everett. In 2020 there were around 400 Rail Plus riders.
Annual Ticket Revenue by City Pair – 2020
Revenue per City Pair and Percentage of Total Revenue

Top six city pairs = $3,844,000  59%
All city pairs = $6,514,000

Revenue numbers are rounded to the nearest 1,000.
“All Others” include over 120 city pairs as well as unidentified riders not associated with a specific city pair.
A passenger ticket provides passage between two stations – the origin station and the destination station. Ticket revenue for each ticket is split equally between the origin and the destination stations.

*As of March 2020, all north segment trains were suspended due to the closure of the Canadian border resulting in no further ridership and reduced ticket revenue for Edmonds, Everett, Stanwood, Mt. Vernon, Bellingham, and Vancouver, B.C. stations.

**Unidentified passengers either deferred their trip to another day or their tickets were not scanned by Amtrak.

***RailPlus are riders using regional transit passes called Orca Cards to travel on Amtrak Cascades trains between Seattle, Edmonds, and Everett.
Per the Service Outcome Agreement between Amtrak, BNSF, and WSDOT that took affect in January 2018, the on-time performance goal was raised from 80% to 88%. Between 2011 and 2016, annual on-time performance was relatively stable and ranged between 67% and 74%. It dropped to 47% in 2017, and gradually bounced back to 62% percent in 2020.
Total Operating Cost, Revenue and Farebox Recovery Rate – 2011-2020, Washington-supported trains only*

*$7.1 million of CARES act funding was received in 2020 to help reduce the financial impacts of COVID-19 on the Cascades service. That amount is not included in the total operating cost or revenue calculation.