

**Cascadia High-Speed Rail:
Connecting Our Region to a Sustainable Future
October 2023 Update**



We need to start planning now for a clean transportation solution to move our growing population.

If we don't act now to accommodate the nearly four million more people who are expected to call Cascadia home by 2050, our current problems — traffic congestion, housing affordability and increasing climate change — will only get worse. We need to move fast and embrace big, bold ideas that will prepare us for the continued growth. High-speed rail should be part of the solution. By creating better connections between the anchor cities and the communities in between, we can catalyze innovation, shared prosperity, and job creation, and help us sustain our unique quality of life for future generations.

The capacity of a high-speed rail line typically exceeds the peak capacity of a four-lane interstate highway or a two-runway airport. It could double the transportation capacity on the main U.S. Interstate-5/British Columbia Highway 99 (I-5/Highway 99) corridorⁱ. The Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) estimated adding just one lane to Interstate 5 between Oregon and British Columbia will cost \$105 billion. Rail provides capacity while also addressing climate change: rail travel has historically been one of the most environmentally friendly modes, generating 12 times less CO₂ emitted than air and 3 to 5 times less than automobilesⁱ.

We have a unique opportunity to secure federal funding.

The federal government is making significant investments in infrastructure, including rail. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act added \$12 billion for the development of intercity passenger rail corridor services, for which Cascadia high-speed rail is eligible.

In 2022 the Washington State Legislature invested \$4 million to continue Cascadia rail project planning and appropriated \$150 million as a match to secure federal funding. Oregon and British Columbia have also invested in the project. Other regions of the country are developing high speed rail corridors. Cascadia has taken the critical first steps and now federal funding is needed to advance the project.

In Spring 2023, WSDOT, in partnership with the Oregon Department of Transportation, submitted three federal grant applications:

1. Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program: This application requests \$197.6 million in funding to be matched by \$49.4 million in Washington state funds. If successful, the funding will be used to begin stakeholder and tribal engagement, identify station locations and rail alignment, establish a governance structure, and develop a funding and finance strategy.
2. Corridor Identification and Development Program – Cascadia UHSGT: If successful, this grant will fund development of a Cascadia UHSGT service development plan and a feasibility study for a future extension to Eugene, Oregon.

- Corridor Identification and Development Program – Amtrak Cascades: If successful, this grant will fund development of service development plan to improve the existing service.

Members of Washington’s congressional delegation have urged the U.S. Department of Transportation to approve WSDOT’s applications for funding.

There is a strong coalition of support urging action on high-speed rail.

For more than five years, a broad group of stakeholders and the states of Oregon and Washington, along with the Province of British Columbia, have been collaborating on a vision of ultra-high-speed ground transportation in the Cascadia region. This year more than 60 Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia business, community, and labor organizations and elected officials signed on to letters of support for federal funding for the Cascadia project.

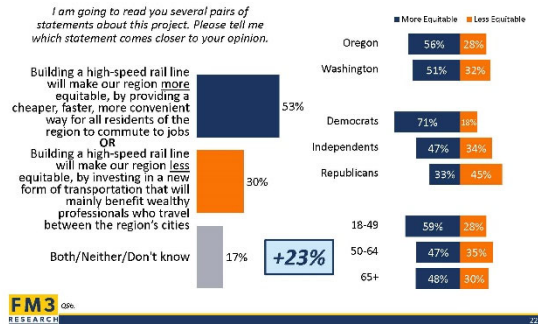
There is broad public support for investing in high-speed rail. A 2021 survey found more than three in five voters in Oregon and Washington support establishing a regional, high-speed rail project. Underlying this support are the broadly shared beliefs the region needs more transportation options to help the economy and address climate change. The public sees high-speed rail as having positive impacts on traffic and the economy and making the region more equitable by providing a chapter, faster, and more convenient transportation option for all residents.

We can deliver large infrastructure projects, which only get more challenging and expensive the longer we wait.

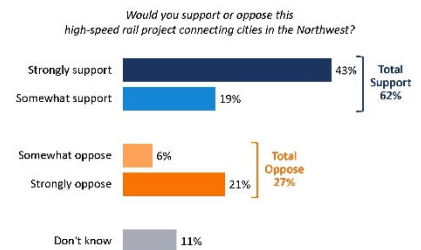
As our region continues to grow and communities become denser, building new infrastructure to connect communities will become more difficult and costly. King County voters rejected the Forward Thrust measure in 1970, which was estimated to cost \$1.34 billion (\$440 million in local funds; nearly \$900 million in federal funds) to build 500 miles of bus routes and 49 miles of rail. Approximately 30 years later, Sound Move (1996), Sound Transit 2 (2008), and Sound Transit 3 (2016) are delivering 116 miles of light rail, commuter rail from Lakewood and Everett to Seattle, bus rapid transit, and regional bus service at a cost of \$75.7 billion.

For more information, visit fastforwardcascadia.com

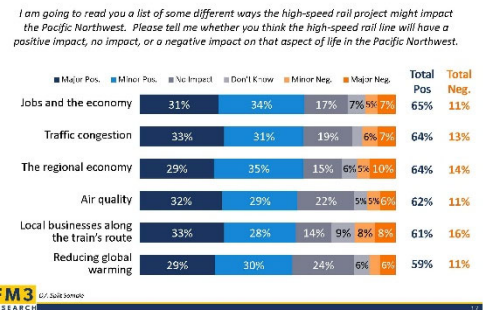
By a 23-point margin, voters believe the rail line will make the region more equitable.



More than three in five support high-speed rail—and two in five “strongly support” it.



Majorities feel the project would positively impact the economy, traffic, air quality and global warming.



¹ 2019, WSDOT Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation Business Case Analysis