

Washington State Legislative Rail Priorities 2026 - Rail Can't Wait Coalition

Building a rail network that connects and empowers communities with reliable, equitable, and sustainable transportation options



WASHINGTON PHYSICIANS
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Priority	Policy Solution
1. Establish dedicated revenue for Intercity Passenger rail. Funding needed for improvements for Amtrak Cascades and East-West Service.	- Utilize CCA revenue (Climate Commitment Act - Carbon Emissions Reduction Account) - Dedicate the property tax revenue paid by railroads to fund state rail projects - Tax jet fuel for non-emergency regional flight, and/or apply landing fee for non-emergency private jets - Create special Tax Districts empowering counties and municipalities to fund infrastructure improvements for intercity passenger rail, similar to Transportation Benefit Districts - Tax class 1 railroads for the volume of diesel fuel burned within the WA state border - Scale over a decade to meet The Joint Transportation Review (pg 55) estimate of \$5-13 billion
2. Expand matching CCA funds to include all qualified Corridor Identification and Development (CID) Programs in WA State	- Amend the 2025-2027 biennium budget through 2026 supplemental requests, and redistribute the allocation that extends through the period identified in LEAP Transportation Document 2025-2 ALL PROJECTS as developed April 26, 2025, Rail Program (Y), page 34 line item 000 L2021074 https://www.fiscal.wa.gov/statebudgets/2025proposals/Documents/ct/LEAPDoc2025-2.pdf
3. Designate Amtrak Cascades Rail Capital appropriations for project implementation, not planning	- Specify that Capital allocations are for building projects such as those eligible for FRA matching grant programs, e.g.: \$3.6 million in rail capital budget, expanded to \$12 million over next three biennia in LEAP, see page 33, line item 000 R00003A Cascades Corridor Delivery Program https://www.fiscal.wa.gov/statebudgets/2025proposals/Documents/ct/LEAPDoc2025-2.pdf
4. Implement goals of ESHB 1837 Minimum 88% OTP, ≥ 14 round trips between Seattle and Portland, ≥ 5 round trips between Seattle and Vancouver BC, Shorten trip times, reduce emissions and energy use, achieve these goals by 2035	- Build modest budget projects in the near term, for example: Centralia and Kelso cross-over projects with first available funds and grant opportunities such as CRISI - Expand second mainline track and passing sidings in SEA-Canadian border segment - Ensure SDP includes infrastructure upgrades to achieve the service level needed - Negotiate requisite agreements among WSDOT, Sound Transit, Amtrak, and BNSF to implement SDP according to the specifications and intention of ESHB 1837 - Provide necessary funding for project implementation; ensure agreements have accountability mechanisms

5. Maximize modeshift to rail by optimizing OTP, trip times, and frequency on Amtrak Cascades	- Integrate Nisqually-I-5 highway improvement highway planning with rail alignment change between DuPont and Nisqually - Implement rail alignment change on the Point Defiance Bypass south of Dupont, design for 100 mph - Build 110 mph dedicated passenger tracks along the existing corridor between Nisqually and Chehalis - Achieve trip times of 2.5 hours Seattle-Portland and 2.1 hours Seattle-Canadian border
6. Electrify rail yards and ports in near term and begin planning line electrification	- Commission a study to characterize the emissions impacts of rail yards in Washington state, including a benefit-cost analysis of replacing yard and local service locomotives with ZE locomotives - Establish program planning for mainline electrification similar to the car and truck Transportation Electrification Strategy (RCW 43.292),
7. Ensure accountability to contracts	- Enforce contracts' Statement of Purpose to achieve minimum 88% OTP and other contractual metrics; - Enforce terms of the 2011 Service Outcomes Agreement among WSDOT, BNSF and Amtrak by utilizing the full scope of mechanisms it provides
8. Re-establish a dedicated Rail Office	- Establish a dedicated rail office staffed with professional expertise in rail engineering and operations, to elevate the role of rail transportation in overall transportation planning and implement cost-effective projects with near-term benefits
9. Provide mechanisms for public input regarding rail programming	- Create a Rail Advisory Committee to meet the needs of stakeholders, rail professionals, labor, citizens, and Tribal members' participation in rail decision-making - Create a Passenger Rail Opinion Group
10. Develop a professional rail education and training program to build a well-trained rail workforce	- Develop professional rail curricula in state college and university engineering programs, utilizing historic and modern rail knowledge - Develop job-training programs for technical colleges - Fund a task force with academic and rail experts to develop a scope of work and budget for curricula
11. Establish East-West Passenger Rail Service through Central Washington	- Coordinate with Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority to plan the Washington segment of long-distance service under the FRA Service Restoration initiative and CID program - Fund a benefit-cost analysis of restoration of state-sponsored east-west passenger rail service via Stampede Pass, connecting Seattle, Auburn, Ellensburg, Yakima, Tri-Cities, and Spokane
12. Reconnect SE WA shortline network for farmers and shippers	- Commission a benefit-cost analysis for a Rosalia-to-Pasco Shortline Access Corridor using state-owned track and state-owned rail banked and abandoned right-of-way

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