

# The Washington State Rail Plan

**Paula J. Hammond, P.E.**  
Secretary

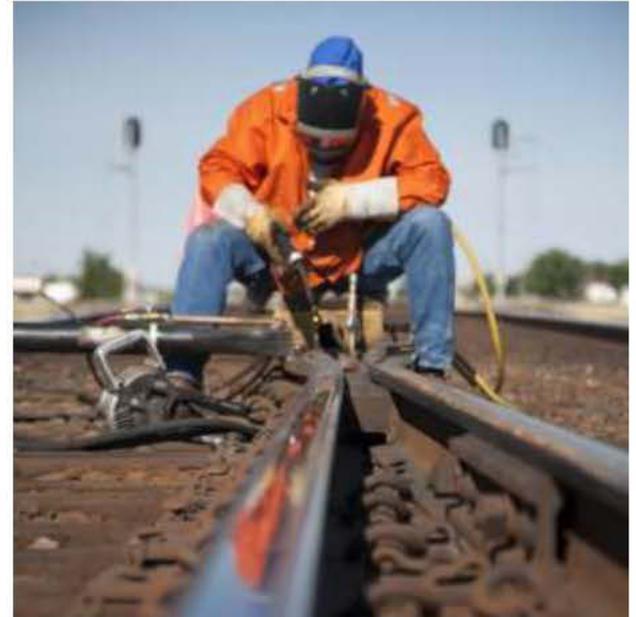
**Steve Reinmuth**  
Chief of Staff

**John Sibold**  
Cascade Rail Corridor Director  
State Rail Office

**Washington Transportation Commission**  
**February 21, 2013**

# Presentation outline

- Purpose of the plan
- Schedule and milestones
- Rail system overview
  - passenger
  - freight
- Themes in this update
- Next steps



# WSDOT's Role in Rail Transportation

- Rail is an integral part of the state multi-modal transportation system.
- Freight rail moves the state's goods to local, national and international markets and contributes to the economic vitality of the state.
- High-speed ground transportation offers a safer, efficient and environmentally-responsible alternative to increasing highway capacity.
- WSDOT pursues improvements through partnerships (Class I railroads, short line railroads, Amtrak and others), investing public funds on the private system for public benefit.



# What is the Purpose of the State Rail Plan?

- Fulfills federal and state requirements.
- Provides an integrated plan for freight and passenger rail, including 5- and 20-year funding strategies, that meets federal and state requirements.
- Builds on previous plans and guides future efforts.
- Serves as a strategic blueprint for future public investment in the state's rail transportation system.



Years of collaborative, consistent planning and substantial state investment prepared WSDOT to compete for and ultimately secure nearly \$800 million in federal funds for passenger rail improvements.

It's time to be thinking about what's next for freight and passenger rail.

# Collaborative Planning for Amtrak Cascades

Washington, Oregon & British Columbia



*Cascades Rail Corridor Workplan endorsement,  
January 31, 2013*

Working across borders to build positive results:

- Improve efficiency through tri-party agreements for joint operation of the corridor.
- Address emerging issues through Washington-British Columbia Joint Transportation Executive Council.
- Develop common strategy for the corridor:
  - Coordinate Washington and Oregon state rail plans
  - Develop a single plan for the corridor
  - Develop a joint investment strategy that identifies highest priority improvements for the corridor

# Building on Previous Plans

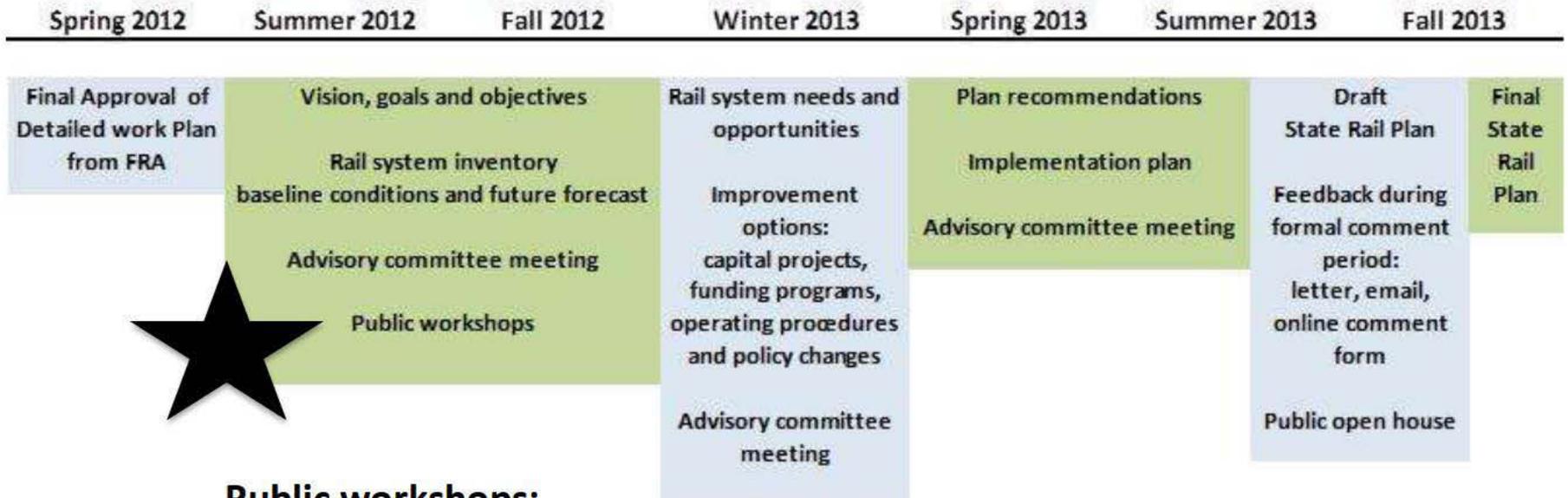
## **2006 Statewide Rail Capacity and System Needs Study, Washington State Transportation Commission:**

- The state should continue to participate in the freight and passenger rail systems where there are public benefits to Washington State, and businesses and communities in Washington.
- Recommends policies, procedures and approaches to government and management of the state's programs and assets to help make effective and responsible improvements to the rail system.
- Points to, but does not recommend, specific improvements to the rail system.

## **2010 Washington Transportation Plan:**

- Keep moving forward with incremental high-speed passenger rail improvements
- Local transportation plans should protect rail corridors from encroachment by incompatible land uses and also provide for future expansion.
- Participate in preserving and improving the rail transportation system where there are sufficient public benefits.
- Identify and improve gaps in inter-modal connectivity for freight movement
- Accommodate the needs of an aging population through universal design principles for all modes.

# State Rail Plan Timeline



**Public workshops:  
October/November 2012**



# Plan Methodology

- **Establish the vision:** what are we trying to accomplish?
- **Identify strengths and challenges:** in what ways are we achieving the vision? What obstacles are keeping us from getting there?
  - **Capacity analysis:** highlights areas when action may be needed to accommodate anticipated demand
    - FRA requires rail system capacity analysis in state rail plan
    - Just one of many tools to assess needs and opportunities
    - Available capacity depends not only on infrastructure, but scheduling strategy, use of technology and other business decisions
- **Develop options:** what strategies/projects will help us overcome the obstacles?
- **Evaluate and prioritize:** how well do the strategies/projects work? What are the advantages and disadvantages? How much do they cost? In what ways do the strategies/projects support the vision?
- **Create recommended implementation plan:** how do we implement the changes to achieve our vision?

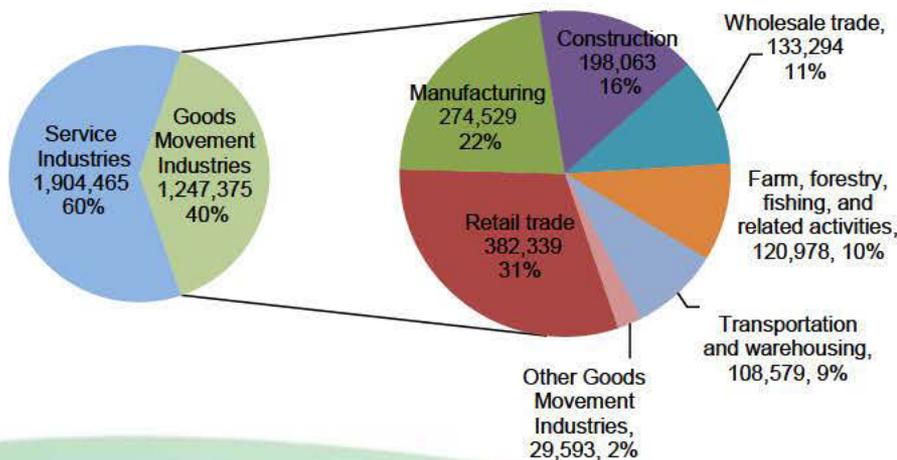
# Washington State Rail Network



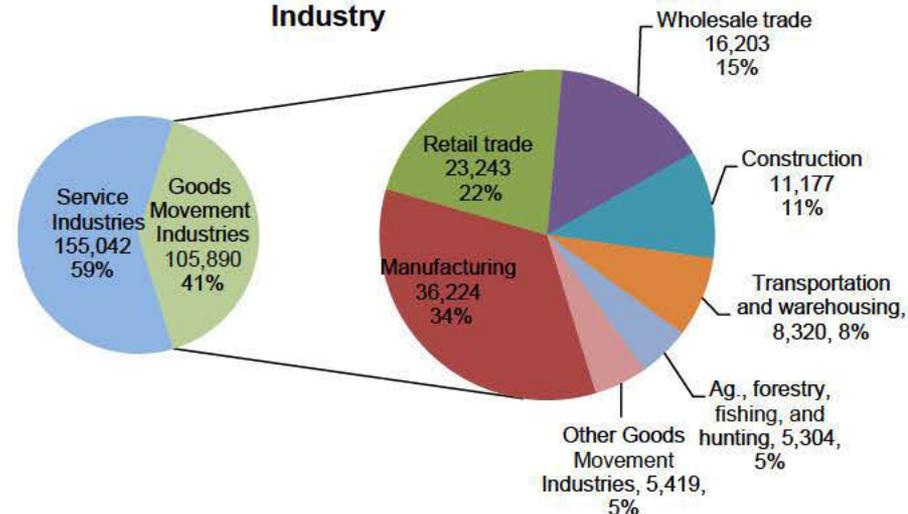
# Economic Significance of Freight Rail

- In Washington, the freight rail industry provides:
  - \$396 million in Class I wages and retirement benefits in 2010
  - 3,700 jobs from Class I railroads
  - Tax revenue from \$19 billion in real and personal property
- Freight rail also supports goods movement industries that comprise 41% of Gross State Product and 40% of total state employment.

2010 Employment by Industry



2010 Real GSP Contribution (current \$Millions) by Industry



# 2009 Freight Rail Plan: Issues and Needs

- Rail abandonments and at-risk lines
- Port access
- Intermodal connectors
- Capacity/bottlenecks
- Clearances
- Passenger rail
- Heavy-axle load rail cars (shortline)
- Competition
- System preservation
- Underserved markets
- Emerging issues:
  - North-south corridor
  - East-west corridor
  - Positive train control
  - Dedicated high-speed passenger rail track
  - Inland waterway system

**109 projects**

**Costs exceed  
\$2 billion**

**90% unfunded**

# Types of Passenger Rail

Light rail



Regional, commuter rail



Intercity passenger rail, emerging high-speed rail



Long-distance rail



Short distance

Long distance

Within a metro area

Suburbs to major metro

Between major metros

Cross-country

Local/  
Regional

Local/  
Regional

State

Federal

# Existing Passenger Rail in Washington State



Service	Sponsors	Daily Roundtrips
<b>Long Distance - Coast Starlight and Empire Builder</b>		
Coast Starlight: Seattle to LA	Amtrak	1
Empire Builder: Seattle to Chicago	Amtrak	1
<b>Intercity Passenger Rail—Amtrak Cascades</b>		
Seattle to Vancouver, B.C.	WSDOT	2
Seattle to Portland, OR	WSDOT, ODOT, Amtrak	4
Portland to Eugene	ODOT	2
<b>Regional/Commuter—Sounder</b>		
Seattle to Everett	Sound Transit	4
Seattle to Tacoma/Lakewood	Sound Transit	9

# High-speed Rail Capital Investments

- Federal higher-speed rail funds - \$794.9 million
- Supports overall program goal of more frequent and reliable Amtrak Cascades service
  - Two additional round trips between Seattle and Portland, for a total of six
  - Improved on-time performance to 88%
  - 10-minute time savings
- 20 projects in Washington building additional rail-line capacity and upgrading tracks, utilities, signals, passenger stations and advanced warning systems
- Supports skilled construction and operating jobs for railroad crews and regional contractors



# HSR Capital Project Highlights

Five projects underway in 2012 and five more projects starting construction in 2013

- King Street Station Seismic Retrofit
  - Steel reinforcement continues, on track for spring 2013 completion
- New tracks operationally complete in Everett
  - Cascades trains avoid congestion through busy rail yard
- Track upgrades underway from Seattle to Vancouver, WA
  - Improves track durability and reduces speed restrictions
- New elevated track going in at Port of Vancouver
  - Separates freight and passenger trains
- Slope stabilization work to prevent mudslides
  - FRA agrees to project scope, design work underway



*New steel in King Street Station's upper floor*



*New soldier pile wall for retaining the hillside next to the new track area*



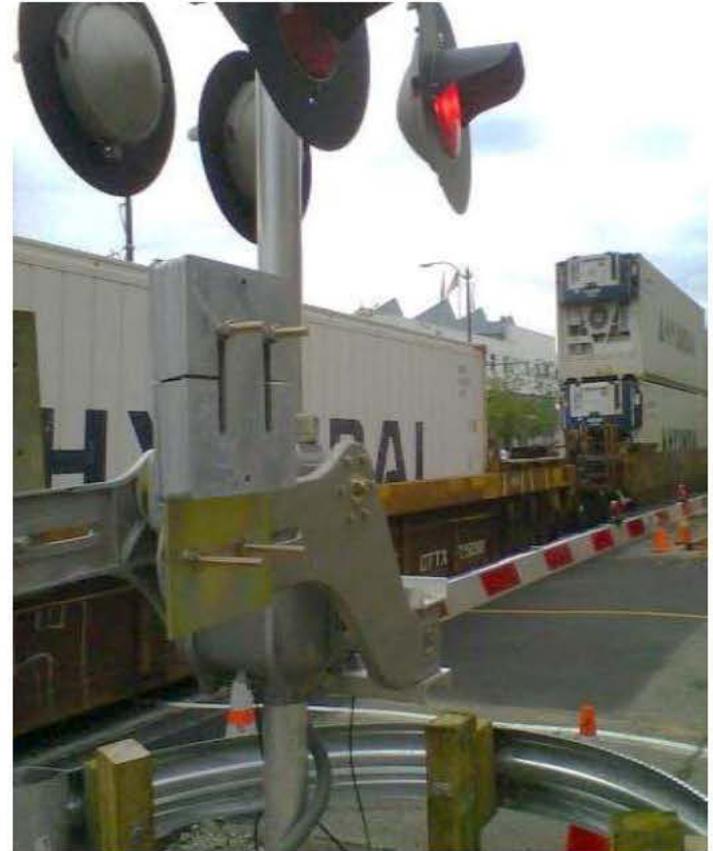
*Crews replace worn track near Vancouver, WA*

# Stakeholder Feedback – Freight and Passenger Rail

- Improve the efficiency and reliability of existing rail services
- Improve connections between rail and other modes
- Strengthen rail as a competitive and environmentally-friendly transportation option
- Maintain infrastructure in a state of good repair
- Prevent loss of rail right-of-way
- Encourage compatible land use development near rail infrastructure
- Enhance safety on the rail and at at-grade crossings
- Preserve and expand facilities and services to accommodate future demands
- Develop inter-agency and public-private partnerships
- Consider cost effectiveness and return on investment of public investments and monitor success
- Achieve financial sustainability

# Next Steps in Plan Development

- Define the set of problems and opportunities that will be the focus of plan recommendations.
- Identify and evaluate responses: capital projects, operational improvements, program and policy changes.
- Recommend priority actions to achieve vision and goals; create an implementation plan.
- Release draft Washington State Rail Plan for public review and comment in Summer 2013.



# Plan Implementation

- Incorporate results into State Freight Plan and Washington Transportation Plan.
- Continue collaborative planning with stakeholders and partners to refine and focus investment priorities.
- Initiate scoping and project development to prepare for future funding opportunities.



# Questions?

For more information please contact:

John Sibold, Cascades Rail Corridor Director  
State Rail Office  
(360) 705-7900 or [siboldj@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:siboldj@wsdot.wa.gov)