



ABOUT THE WASHINGTON STATE RAIL CAPACITY & SYSTEMS NEEDS STUDY

Project

The Washington State Transportation Commission is undertaking a statewide study of strategic freight and passenger rail system needs, challenges and opportunities. The study will review the current powers, authorities, and interests the state has in freight and passenger rail and will recommend policies for state participation and ownership of rail infrastructure and service delivery. The study will also prepare a plan for managing state owned rail assets. The Commission has retained a multi-disciplinary consultant team lead by Cambridge Systematics to conduct the study.



Transportation Commission Involvement

The Commission is keenly interested in the content and results of the study. The Commission has appointed four Commissioners to serve on a Rail Study Team, with responsibility for reviewing and commenting on work-in-progress and making recommendations to the full Commission.



Summary of Study Tasks

The study will look comprehensively at operational, capacity, institutional, economic and policy issues, including:

- Description of the existing rail system, characteristics of demand for rail services, and current public and private sector plans for future rail investment and operations;
- Analysis of the role of rail in the overall transportation system and in the state, regional and national economies (including analysis of the role of rail in industry supply chains and changes in trade patterns and supply chain trends that will impact the role of rail);
- Rail capacity demand and constraints for mainline, short-line and passenger rail operations, including institutional, operational and capacity constraints;
- Rail operations strategies and improvement options;
- National initiatives and funding opportunities for the state's rail program;
- Development of the rationale for state rail policies and analysis tools for evaluating policy and program options;
- Development and analysis of state rail policy options; and
- A state rail asset management plan.

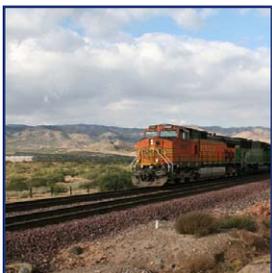


Stakeholder Outreach Opportunities

Hearing from stakeholders across the state is a major priority and focus for the study, and the project team has designed a stakeholder outreach program that is broad and inclusive. Comments from stakeholders will be solicited in multiple ways:

- Telephone interviews with key participants;
- Four facilitated regional listening sessions to be held across the state this spring;
- Project website postings and e-notices of draft materials available for review and comment; and
- Commission Rail Study Team meetings including a possible Technical Resource Panel.

All stakeholders will have opportunities to provide comments on the project throughout the year – at the listening sessions, by attending the Commission's Rail Study Team meetings, and by reviewing materials on the website and e-mailing comments.





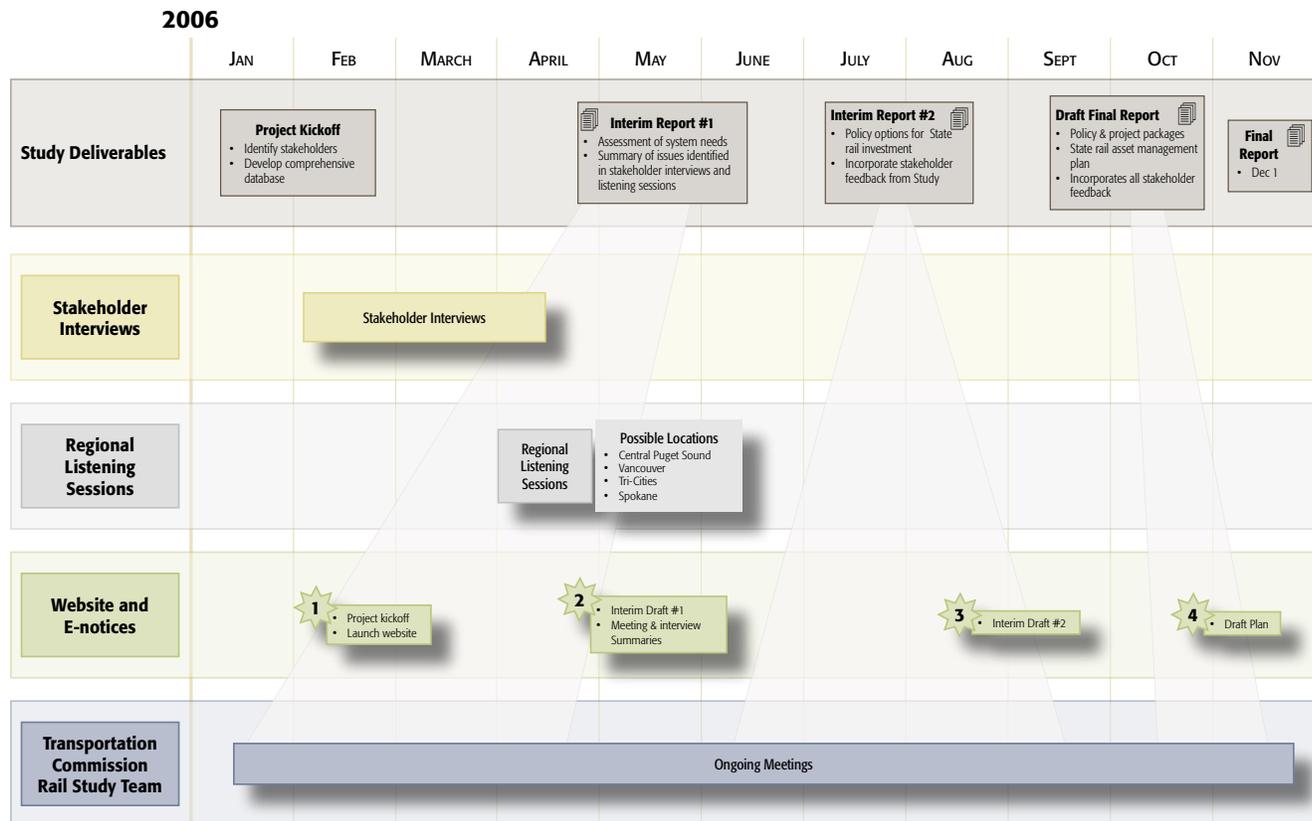
RAIL CAPACITY & SYSTEMS NEEDS STUDY (cont.)

Stakeholder Outreach Schedule

The study spans January through November 2006 and includes frequent and ongoing means for obtaining stakeholder comments. Between January and April, work will focus on preparing a “state of the system assessment.” This will include evaluation of the role of rail in the economy and in the state’s transportation system, and a detailed review of current and projected capacity needs, constraints and operational issues. An interim report addressing these topics will be completed by the end of April.

Through the spring and summer, the study will focus on developing the rationale for public rail policy and developing analytical approaches to assessing the public benefits of state involvement in rail. A second interim report laying out preliminary policy options will be available by the end of August 2006.

The draft final report will be presented to the Transportation Commission in October; the final report is due by December 1. This final report will include an asset management plan, an analytical plan to assessing investment alternatives, a rail investment plan, and a plan for ongoing stakeholder involvement in state rail policy discussions.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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www.wstc.wa.gov/Rail

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