

Reviving a Rail Revolution

Presentation by All Aboard Washington
to the Washington State Transportation Commission
July 21, 2021

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Background

- Passenger service via Stampede Pass discontinued in 1981
- *Empire Builder* rerouted over Stevens Pass





The Need for Passenger Rail

- No service is available to many central and eastern Washington cities.
- Bus service has decreased.
- I-90 congestion has increased.
- Some do not drive; others do not want to drive due to safety and congestion concerns.
- Some cannot afford to fly, are fearful of flying, not physically able to fly, or their community has no air service.

June 2001 WSDOT Feasibility Study

“...analysis indicates that Amtrak service along Stampede Pass is physically and operationally feasible.”

Washington State

**East-West Passenger
Rail Feasibility Study:
A Preliminary Analysis**

2017 Ridership Assessment Study

Marketing study showed considerable interest in, and need for, cross-state passenger train service through South Central Washington.

- Commissioned and funded by AAWA
- Performed by Central Washington University

[Available online at aawa.us: Stampede Pass Rail Study](http://aawa.us:StampedePassRailStudy)

AN ASSESSMENT OF REINSTATING PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE ON THE STAMPEDE
PASS CORRIDOR

Noah Westbay & John Bowen
Central Washington University
December 2017

A report sponsored by All Aboard Washington (AAWA)

2020 JTC Feasibility Study

Final Report
July 2020

Feasibility of an East-West
Intercity Passenger Rail System
for Washington State



Washington State Joint Transportation Committee
Our ref: 23685001

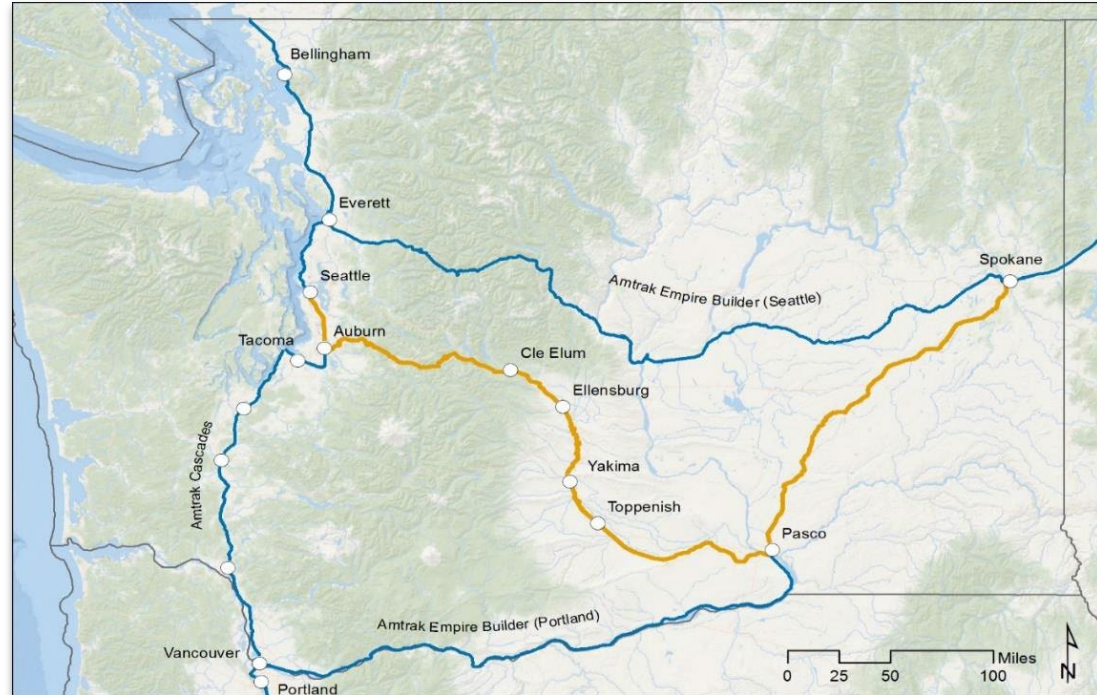


steer

- AAWA supported a 2019 budget proviso to fund a \$250,000 study of the East-West Intercity Passenger Rail System.
- Study conducted by STEER under the direction of the Joint Transportation Committee.
- Final report issued July 2020.

2020 JTC Feasibility Study

Purpose: To assess the feasibility of Spokane-Seattle service through Central Washington via BNSF Stampede Pass tracks (Tri-Cities, Yakima, Ellensburg)



July 2020 JTC Feasibility Study (*STEER*)

Key findings:

- The service is technically & operationally feasible.
- High level of community support.
- Could generate ridership above or comparable to other Amtrak State supported services.
- Cost (based on 2 Spokane-Seattle round trip trains daily):
 - Infrastructure improvements: \$140M
 - Equipment: \$280M

AAWA Comments re *STEER* Study

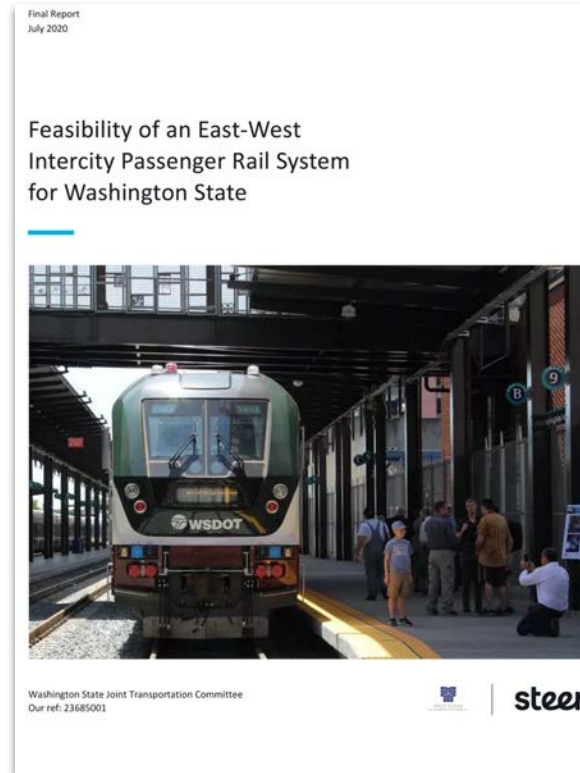
STEER comment	AAWA response
<p>Ridership model was developed using cell phone data and surveys of existing travelers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● STEER includes only ridership diversion from automobiles, not from other modes. ● Amtrak data shows only 47% of rail passengers in Washington are derived from cars. ● 20% of Washingtonians do not have a driver's license.
<p>Journey times will be long due to slow speeds and the high number of freight services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Slower travel time through mountainous terrain can be expected. ● Primary use of the service is to travel to/from cities along the route, not necessarily from Seattle to Spokane. ● Time competitive with other modes between some city pairs.

AAWA Comments re *STEER* Study

STEER comment	AAWA response
Infrastructure cost includes 4 new stations, \$17M ea. (Cle Elum, Ellensburg, Yakima, Toppenish)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ellensburg and Toppenish stations are privately owned. Both are potentially available for passenger rail use.
Infrastructure cost includes 2 platform extensions, \$6M ea. (Auburn, Tukwila)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Only needed if 8 coach trains are used● Could benefit Sound Transit

STEER Recommendation

“... further work will be required to confirm or refine...findings, including service definition, track and station design along with possible ridership and financial outcomes.”





What is Needed Next?

Benefit-Cost Analysis to measure the value of:

- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- Safety benefits (reduced highway fatalities, injuries, property damage)
- Reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
- User benefits (reliability, accessibility, increased resilience)
- Transportation to rural and underserved areas

Required as part of application for U. S. DOT discretionary grant programs.



What is Needed Next?

Economic Analysis to measure the impact on:

- Retail spending
- Business activity
- Tax revenues
- Jobs/wages
- Quality of life
- Property values



Our Requests to WSTC

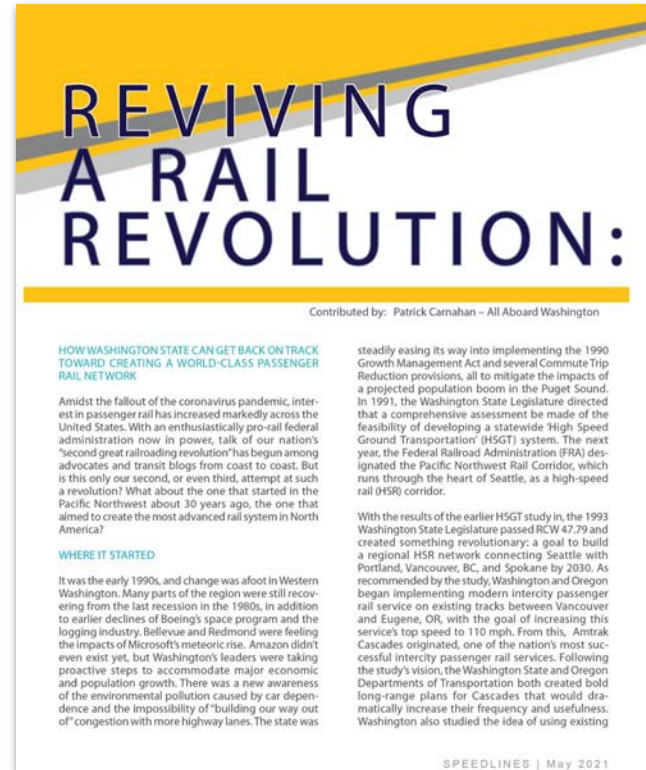
- Recommend that a **Cost-Benefit Analysis and Economic Analysis** be performed to evaluate restoration of passenger rail service via Stampede Pass.
- Establish a Passenger Rail Opinion Group.
- Name the Tacoma Amtrak station at Freighthouse Square in honor of those who lost their lives in the Amtrak accident at DuPont in 2017.



AAWA's Vision

We believe that Washington state can **revive its rail revolution** and get back on track toward **creating a world-class passenger rail network**.

Our vision has been [published](#) in *Speedlines*, the [newsletter](#) of the American Public Transportation Association.



AAWA's Current Efforts

- Lead the Pacific Northwest Rail Forum at the [Pacific Northwest Economic Region 2021 Summit](#).
- Conduct discussions throughout the state on community transportation needs during the [AAWA 2021 Train Trek](#).
- Support creation of a Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Working Group.
- Support the Amtrak reauthorization bill and the Invest in America Act for rail infrastructure.

Questions?

Contact us at
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or
aawa.us



Amtrak's *Empire Builder* at Yakima, Aug. 1971. Photo: Drew Jacksich.