WSDOT PCC Short-line and Amtrak Cascades

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

Ron Pate | Director, Rail, Freight and Ports Division
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PCC short-line railroad

- Allows eastern Washington farmers to ship products via rail from remote locations
- Serves Grant, Lincoln, Spokane, Adams, and Whitman counties
- Largest short line in the state - 297 miles
- Owned by WSDOT, with contracted operators for three separate lines
- Operators maintain each of their sections
- PCC Rail Authority - intergovernmental entity formed by counties - oversees business and economic development
- WSDOT funds infrastructure improvements to all segments to improve operations
- Federal funding of $5.6 million received through 2018 BUILD grant
- Matching $5.6 million in Connecting Washington funds
- BUILD grant work will be completed in 2022
- Many improvements still needed
Amtrak Cascades then and now

Amtrak Cascades service in 2021 compared to 2019

- WSDOT and ODOT contract with Amtrak to operate the service
- Currently three daily trips in each direction between Seattle and Portland, with two continuing to Eugene
- All service north of Seattle suspended due to border closure
- More than 90% decrease in ridership and revenue in 2020
- Currently at 65% ridership compared to 2019
Returning to Point Defiance Bypass

Timeline of Sound Transit and Amtrak activities

- **Readiness Review #1**
  - Systems Integration Testing
  - Project Team prepares for Readiness Review #1

- **Readiness Review #2**
  - Crew Qualification / Simulated Service
  - Project Team prepares for Readiness Review #2

- **Systems Integration Testing Phase**

- **Crew Qualification / Simulated Service Phase**
  - Project Team prepares for Readiness Review #3

- **WE ARE HERE**

- **FRA Review**
New Tacoma station

- Construction completed in 2017
- Conducted extensive public engagement and convened a Citizen Advisory Group to provide input on station design
- Part of the largest multi-modal transit hub in the state
  - Sounder commuter trains to Seattle
  - Tacoma Link light rail
  - Sounder and Pierce Transit buses
  - Greyhound and Trailway buses
  - Auto and bicycle parking
- All modes identify this area as the Tacoma Dome Station – including Sound Transit signage on the station platform shared by Amtrak and Sounder trains
- Recommend naming the WSDOT-owned Amtrak Cascades station the “Tacoma Dome Station”
Looking ahead

• Anticipate returning service to Canada in 2022
• Will add back more trips between Seattle and Portland as demand increases – ultimately getting to six daily roundtrips
• Seeking to leverage state capital dollars by using them to match federal grants – currently awarded:
  – BUILD grant for PCC
  – Two CRISI grants for landslide mitigation
  – State of Good Repair grant for new train sets
• Closely watching Congressional infrastructure package, if passed:
  – Increased funding for discretionary grant programs
  – National funding for rail equipment
• New Cascades trainsets arriving 2025 time period
  – Eight new trains for Amtrak Cascades
• Amtrak Cascades Service Development Plan
  – Analyzing scenarios for future service
  – Consultant just hired
Questions?

For more information on the WSDOT PCC Short-line and Amtrak Cascades, please contact:

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