

## Statement on High-speed Rail in the Cascades Corridor

Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (**AORTA**)

**AORTA** (Association of Rail and Transit Advocates) supports the study of high-speed rail in the Cascades Corridor. The U.S. lags behind in the development of this modern, efficient mode of public transportation, and the Cascades Corridor is one of the most heavily travelled in the nation. Indeed, the Congressional Research Service has identified this corridor as one of the primary federally designated high-speed rail corridors.<sup>1</sup>

**AORTA** believes, however, that primary emphasis must be on increased frequency, reliability and connectivity before adding high-speed rail in the Pacific Northwest. Such intermediate improvements will have a dramatic, positive impact on ridership. Increased ridership will generate familiarity with rail's potential, and grassroots support needed for further investment.

"High-speed rail" (generally defined as speeds of 155 mph or more) cannot be successful without an adequate system of more conventional rail and transit serving intermediate and outlying communities. A train that stops every twenty miles is not going to be a high-speed train, as a train needs over 10 miles to accelerate to this speed, and 20 miles to decelerate to a stop. Furthermore, passengers need to be able to get to and from high-speed rail stations by means other than private low-occupancy vehicles. Building huge parking facilities, like those adjacent to airports, shifts traffic congestion from the major arterials currently carrying commuters through urban areas to the arterials carrying them to high-speed rail stations.

Other intermediate steps should include reducing trip time (by adding more conventional rail capacity) and implementing higher-speed rail (e.g., 125 mph) — both of which could be accomplished with improvements to existing rail infrastructure, without the huge financial investment required for acquisition and development of the completely grade-separated structures needed for truly high-speed rail.

High-speed rail in the Pacific Northwest is a good long-term goal, a laudable vision for future passenger transportation in this corridor. But to succeed, it needs to be built on a solid foundation of more conventional rail and transit in the region.

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<sup>1</sup> "Improving Intercity Passenger Rail Service in the United States," June 25, 2019