

December 17, 2018

Jennifer Sellers, Passenger Rail Program Manager
Oregon Department of Transportation
1110 SE Alder St. Suite 301
Portland, OR 97241

Dear Ms. Sellers:

On behalf of the University of Oregon, I am writing to express the university's strong support for improved passenger rail service along the Cascadia corridor, especially between the Portland metropolitan area and the Eugene/Springfield area. We applaud the planning now underway and support the track, signal, and communication improvements in Alternative 1.

Passenger rail service through this corridor helps to connect the state's research universities in the southern Willamette Valley with our economic and population hubs in Portland-Vancouver, WA. Better passenger rail service will also support the success of the new Knight Campus for Accelerating Scientific Impact and the scientific innovations that will occur there. The UO's growing partnership with Oregon Health & Science University requires faster and more reliable access between Eugene and Portland for both researchers and students. Passenger rail provides a vital mode of transportation to the UO's more than 30,000 students, faculty, and staff as well as many visitors.

Passenger rail service has been important to the UO since our founding, but the designation of the Cascadia corridor in 1992 for high-speed rail and improved passenger service is an opportunity that must be realized. With more than 5,000 UO students from the Portland area and numerous graduate program offerings at UO Portland, students, faculty, and visitors frequently travel to and from the Portland region to do business on campus or with UO-affiliated companies and research institutions including OHSU and the new Knight Campus as well as Oregon State University and Portland State University. The popularity of Amtrak service with the UO community is illustrated by the frequently used Amtrak bus service that originates on the UO campus as well as the ridership on Cascades.

The University of Oregon supports efforts to ensure reliable and frequent service along the designated high-speed rail corridor, even if the approach is incremental, with an ultimate goal of achieving high-speed service. The continued sharing of rail lines by freight and passenger rail leads to unpredictable delays that prove costly to riders and discourage passenger rail use. The preferred alternative will result in faster times, the construction of sidings, and plans to ease freight and passenger rail line competition. The improved passenger rail will provide an efficient, safe, equitable, and affordable travel alternative for UO affiliates and the greater Oregon community. It will support the efforts of research universities throughout the corridor to spur economic activity through our innovation and outreach efforts.

Office of the President

1226 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1226
541-346-3036 uoregon.edu



Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important development. Please let me know if I can provide any additional information that will be of help. We look forward to working with you as ODOT's passenger rail project moves forward.

Sincerely,



Michael H. Schill
President and Professor of Law

Office of the President

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