

REVENUE: No Revenue Impact
FISCAL: Has minimal fiscal impact
SUBSEQUENT REFERRAL TO:

Action:

Vote:

Yeas:

Nays:

Exc.:

Prepared By: James LaBar, Administrator

Meeting Dates: 5/13

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Directs Department of Transportation to study options for improving the on-time performance of passenger trains and to study options for optimizing ridership on passenger trains. Directs Department to develop passenger rail plan to increase ridership and ticket revenue. Requires Department to submit quarterly reports to interim legislative committees on transportation and a final report to the Legislative Assembly by November 30, 2015. Sunsets January 2, 2016. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No amendment.

BACKGROUND: Oregon is currently served with passenger train service by the daily Amtrak Coast Starlight, which runs between Seattle and Los Angeles, and by Amtrak's daily Empire Builder between Portland and Chicago. The states of Oregon and Washington also cooperate to sponsor a regional passenger train service between Eugene and Vancouver, British Columbia, known as Amtrak Cascades, which provides four daily round trips between Portland and Seattle, two daily round trips between Seattle and Vancouver, and two daily round trips between Portland and Eugene. TriMet also operates a commuter rail service with several daily round trips between Beaverton and Wilsonville, known as the Westside Express Service (WES).

House Bill 3401-A directs the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to study and make recommendations regarding on-time performance of passenger rail service in Oregon. The study is to include: examining modern dispatch systems and protocols; identification of infrastructure and technology that could contribute to improving performance; and identifying potential federal and state funding sources for passenger rail. A second study on how to optimize ridership on passenger rail is to include review of federal and state laws, rules and regulations, and to include a proposed schedule for trains and buses used by passenger rail carriers. ODOT is directed to report the results of the studies no later than November 30, 2015.

The vote count in the Transportation and Economic Development Committee was 6-0-1, and the House vote count was 49-9-2.