

# Recommendations for State of Oregon 2025 Transportation Bill Climate Rail Alliance

## Introduction

Climate Rail Alliance (CRA) submits recommendations for the State of Oregon 2025 Transportation Bill that is updated every eight years. Recommendations pertain to making passenger rail and transit service, as well as freight rail service, competitive with operation of cars and trucks on the highways, as well as with short distance aviation.

Section I. *Reduce Travel Time* lists factors that influence travel time including first-last mile service that provides equitable access, more frequent service, and greatly improved reliability, all of which will also increase ridership and revenue.

Section II. *Co-beneficial Passenger and Freight Service* addresses freight revenue generated by passenger rail and transit service, and innovative ways for freight rail service to benefit from passenger-service-compatible rail infrastructure.

Our overall goal is for rail and transit to be safe, reliable, affordable, convenient, available 24/7, reach 100% of urban, suburban, and rural communities, and serve both travel and shipping demand.

Our general strategy is to provide effective rail and transit improvements which may involve planning, capital, and startup costs that are significantly lower than for mega projects.

Significant new volumes of travel, shipping, and resulting revenue must be quickly developed by innovative and practical use of rail and transit. By making existing assets more effective, we will achieve positive near term results as compared with mega projects.

Section III. *Additional Transportation Recommendations* presents opportunities and concerns regarding rail, transit, marine, air, and highway.

Section IV. *Impacts* lists the intended results of improvements to existing rail, transit, marine, air, and highway modes.

We conclude with the importance of recruiting the support of the grassroots electorate, stakeholders, and the Oregon Legislature with practical rail and transit solutions that encourage utilization, reduce costs, and reduce emissions, while raising revenue and maintaining service that is competitive with highway and air modes.

## Terminology

Transit Service as used in this document means public transportation, rail or road, including long distance passenger rail (e.g., Amtrak *Coast Starlight*), Intercity passenger rail (e.g., Amtrak *Cascades*), commuter rail (e.g., Westside Express Service, WES), light rail (e.g., MAX), streetcar, intercity bus (e.g., Flix Bus, Greyhound), coordinated bus (e.g., Amtrak Thruway bus), transit bus (e.g., TriMet), and paratransit (e.g., LIFT).

Fixed Route Transit (FRT) is a transit service that operates on a dedicated route with scheduled service.

On Demand Transit (ODT) is a service operated by a public agency, often using shuttle or transit-style buses, used by passengers through a reservation system on a phone or tablet app, a web browser on a computer, or telephone. ODT exists in the space between FRT and First-Last-Mile service, typically areas in which population density and/or ridership are not economical for FRT.

First-Last Mile transit (FLM) is a microtransit, on-demand service operated by a transit agency, coordinated with FRT. Vehicles operate in a fixed-zone associated and coordinated with one or more FRT services.

Ride Share Service (RSS) is on-demand ride service provided by private persons or companies (e.g., Uber, Lyft).

As appropriate, names of specific modes of transit will be used.

## SECTION I. Reduce Travel Time

Recommendation: Achieving significant reductions in travel time of all transit service, which will induce ridership and thus reduce vehicle miles traveled and emissions, while increasing revenue.

The travel time for a transit passenger includes the time getting to or from the FRT service, the travel time of the vehicles, the frequency and reliability, as well as investing in capital projects that support the development of equitable access, frequency, reliability, and travel time reduction.

### A. Capital Projects for Reduced Travel Time

Infrastructure configuration is important to travel time reduction. Projects can range from traffic signal preemption and/or dedicated lanes for buses to additional tracks and alignment changes for rail transit.

Recommendation: Determine and implement capital projects for each transit mode that will reduce travel time.

### B. Provide First-Last Mile and On Demand Transit Service

FLM connects customers with transit stops. It only serves origins and destinations in the immediate vicinity of a rail or transit stop. It boosts ridership because not everyone can (or it will take excessive time to) walk, bike, scoot, or skate to Transit Service.<sup>1</sup>

RSS successfully proves the popularity of the on-demand model. For example, see how Brightline and SMART include first-last mile service in fare products to leverage ridership.<sup>2 3</sup>

However, because Ride Share Services such as Uber and Lyft are abusive of customers, drivers, and the public, and lack appropriate safety standards, they must be regulated.<sup>4</sup> Their business model is based on single-occupant or single-party rides, contributing to congestion and environmental problems.<sup>5</sup> These businesses are not appropriate for publicly-funded transit service.

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<sup>1</sup> The First/Last Mile in Transit Planning: Definitions and Origins [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=birS9\\_Onx58](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=birS9_Onx58)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gobrightline.com/mobility>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sonomamarintrain.org/connect>

<sup>4</sup> “Here’s What Happened When We Put 7 Uber Drivers In the Same Room”  
[https://substack.perfectunion.us/p/heres-what-happened-when-we-put-7?utm\\_source=post-email-title&publication\\_id=1581149&post\\_id=149168942&utm\\_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=eke7&triedRedirect=true&utm\\_medium=email](https://substack.perfectunion.us/p/heres-what-happened-when-we-put-7?utm_source=post-email-title&publication_id=1581149&post_id=149168942&utm_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=eke7&triedRedirect=true&utm_medium=email)

<sup>5</sup> “Study finds ride-sharing intensifies urban road congestion: SMART research finds US road congestion increased by almost 1 percent while the duration of congestion rose by 4.5 percent.”  
<https://news.mit.edu/2021/ride-sharing-intensifies-urban-road-congestion-0423>

### Recommendation:

1. Establish a FLM demonstration service for a zone that includes coordination with bus, streetcar, light rail, and Amtrak *Cascades* and *Coast Starlight* service
2. Record data and learn from these first-last mile demonstration services. Develop permanent FLM service in additional areas until the service is comprehensive
3. Develop ODT service for low-density routes and unserved areas, beginning with a demonstration project and continually expanding the scope.

### **C. Increase frequency**

Most transit trips take too long to complete, if they can be completed at all. To boost ridership, rail and transit service needs to be fast, reliable, and frequent. This can be accomplished with a combination of First Last Mile service, increasing frequency of trains or buses on Fixed Route Transit schedules, and/or developing On Demand Transit service.

### Recommendations for local transit:

1. Concentrate more transit frequencies on routes with ridership sufficient for FRT service.
  2. Reduce trunk route transit time using dedicated lanes and traffic signal preemption.
  3. Utilize ODT and FLM to minimize trunk stops and reduce trunk route transit time.
  4. Develop coordinated through service with neighboring transit networks
- Recommendations for intercity rail passenger improvements:
1. The Oregon DOT needs to work with the Washington DOT to plan and implement a 2.5-hour Portland-Seattle travel time, and in other ways be consistent with the Climate Rail Alliance plan for Amtrak *Cascades* service.<sup>6</sup> The value of substantial improvement of Amtrak *Cascades* in Oregon would be limited by Washington State making only minimal changes.
  2. The Oregon Legislature must:
    - a. Fund the Oregon DOT 2021 plan for improved Amtrak *Cascades* service<sup>7</sup>
    - b. Begin replacing Amtrak *Cascades* buses with trains.<sup>8</sup>
    - c. Redesign Amtrak *Cascades* FLM service to provide guaranteed local connections between rail stations:
      - i. Amtrak *Cascades* FLM serves local origins/destinations where the train does not stop.
      - ii. When/if a station lies within the service area of ODT, ODT may substitute for FLM service.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HwB3QqqX8G8jISiMCgwLNFPGc7g2y\\_eg/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HwB3QqqX8G8jISiMCgwLNFPGc7g2y_eg/view)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/odot/RPTD/RPTD%20Document%20Library/OPR-CIP-Tier-1-FEIS-and-Record-of-Decision.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> e.g., bus 5541, see <https://www.amtrakcascades.com/sites/default/files/amtrak-cascades-schedule-12-6-23.pdf>

## Recommendations for long distance rail passenger improvements:

1. Coordinate with the US DOT and other states and allocate funds for the Oregon DOT to implement the *Federal Railroad Administration, Amtrak Daily Long-Distance Service Study*, final report recommendations directly serving Oregon, which includes restoration of the long distance Amtrak *Pioneer* between Portland and Salt Lake City.<sup>9</sup>
2. The State of Oregon must support adding second daily Amtrak *Coast Starlight* and Amtrak *Empire Builder* trains, joining with other states along their routes, forming interstate compacts to communicate the desire and need to the Federal Railroad Administration and Congress.<sup>10</sup>
3. Support a change in Amtrak *Coast Starlight* service to discharge passengers only when northbound from Eugene to Seattle, and receive passengers only when southbound from Seattle to Eugene. This expedites the movement of long-distance Amtrak *Coast Starlight* customers, employees, and equipment to their final destination, and increases the reliability of both Amtrak *Coast Starlight*, and Amtrak *Cascades* regional service.<sup>11</sup> The change to southbound service should occur only after there is an Amtrak *Cascades* train preceding the Amtrak *Coast Starlight* for close connection at Portland and Eugene.

### **D. Reliability**

Recommendations: Achieve on-time performance of 90 percent for all transit service.<sup>12</sup> The reliability of TriMet, Amtrak *Cascades*, and Amtrak *Coast Starlight* services is currently unacceptable. The State of Oregon, TriMet and other responsible agencies must investigate, determine causes, and implement corrections to ensure a minimum of 90 percent reliability for all transit service.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://fralongdistancerailstudy.org>, go to Meeting Materials, scroll to June 2024 download, scroll to the final map on page 41, see the Proposed Network of Preferred Routes

<sup>10</sup> RailPAC joins partner advocacy organizations in Oregon and Washington in submitting public comment letter for West Coast Tri-State meeting of Transportation Commissions  
<https://www.railpac.org/2023/09/08/railpac-joins-partner-advocacy-organizations-in-oregon-and-washington-in-submitting-public-comment-letter-for-west-coast-tri-state-meeting-of-transportation-commissions/>

<sup>11</sup> This is practiced on the Northeast Corridor between Washington, DC, and New York City e.g., see the receive only and discharge only restrictions for the Southern Crescent, page 58 of the timetable,  
[https://juckins.net/amtrak\\_timetables/archive/timetables\\_National\\_20180601.pdf](https://juckins.net/amtrak_timetables/archive/timetables_National_20180601.pdf)

<sup>12</sup>  
[https://media.licdn.com/dms/image/v2/C4E12AQF1dEhB2bqIO/article-inline\\_image-shrink\\_1500\\_2232/article-inline\\_image-shrink\\_1500\\_2232/0/1550870052467?e=1733356800&v=beta&t=rM0-xy7\\_AdxvZaOxZ3F581MOIWcE\\_DXto8NStS4G7CA](https://media.licdn.com/dms/image/v2/C4E12AQF1dEhB2bqIO/article-inline_image-shrink_1500_2232/article-inline_image-shrink_1500_2232/0/1550870052467?e=1733356800&v=beta&t=rM0-xy7_AdxvZaOxZ3F581MOIWcE_DXto8NStS4G7CA)

## **E. Equity**

Recommendations: All of the above factors must be included as components of equitable transportation policy. The combined effect of recommended FRT, ODT and FLM services provides universal access to rail and transit. New, improved rail and transit services create highway competitive services that are lower cost than automobile and truck. Volume, revenue, and expense forecasts will determine the amount of cost to the public.

## **SECTION II. Co-beneficial Passenger and Freight Service**

Freight and passenger are not necessarily mutually exclusive forms of transportation. Service and infrastructure improvements can be co-beneficial. Revenue from appropriate freight can supplement rail passenger service.

Before Amtrak took responsibility for passenger rail service, passenger trains received a substantial part of their revenue by carrying US mail, Railway Express, and other high-priority, time-sensitive freight. The US Postal Service canceled the contracts with railroads in 1967, converting to a highway-oriented model. Railway Express Agency service ended in 1975, a victim of the reduction in the nature and amount of rail passenger service that came with Amtrak.

Amtrak attempted extensive mail and package freight service in the late 1980s. It failed, generally due to the nature of the implementation. Passenger trains became unreasonably long and were extensively delayed by the attempt to handle the growing business on the one train per day that Amtrak had on almost every route. The growing business consisted of shipments that the Class I railroads didn't want, or couldn't deliver, but they objected to Amtrak handling it.

Recommendations:

### **A. Transit Service Freight Capability**

1. Urban and regional rail transit service, MAX, WES, and Portland Streetcar can be supplemented with package freight service. Package delivery services are a substantial part of street and road traffic. A neighborhood will typically have a US Postal Service truck and trucks of three or more commercial delivery services on the streets simultaneously. In business districts, freight volume may require multiple trucks of one or more services to be operating within a small area.
  - a. A substantial fleet of delivery trucks travels between distribution points and distant delivery routes, contributing to trunk highway congestion.
  - b. Light rail vehicles designed or modified for freight service can be used to move mail and air freight between Portland International Airport and

locations in the Portland metropolitan area. This would require construction of tracks at the airport and at locations in the metropolitan area where vehicles could be staged as mobile distribution/collection centers.

2. Connect the MAX and WES tracks at the Beaverton Transit Center. Use FRA-qualified light rail compatible vehicles such as Stadler FLIRT (Fast Light Intercity and Regional Train) vehicles to operate interurban service between Eugene and Portland International Airport. The Stadler FLIRT AKKU model is a battery-catenary hybrid that has a tested 134 mile range on battery power.<sup>13</sup> The battery can be charged while operating on catenary power.
  - a. This arrangement would create an interurban railroad that connects Portland International Airport to the Willamette Valley for passenger and package/express freight service.
  - b. The route of the proposed interurban service is close to Eugene Airport, an easy FLM connection.
  - c. The proximity to the Union Pacific route of the Amtrak Cascades service makes the interurban a supplementary/complementary service for the communities not served by the Amtrak *Cascades* stops and reduces the needed extent for ODT service in those areas.
3. Institute parcel/express service on Amtrak *Cascades* trains, Amtrak Thruway buses, and Point<sup>14</sup> buses.

## **B. Rail Network infrastructure**

A railroad is a system on the macro (network) level (main lines, branch lines, connecting lines) and the micro level (single main track, multiple main tracks, crossovers, sidings, and yards).

Infrastructure configuration affects all service on a rail line, both passenger and freight. Rail infrastructure projects should be designed to co-benefit passenger and freight service to the extent possible rather than merely maintaining the freight service level of utility, which is generally insufficient for the freight service needed for public benefit.

## **C. Public Agency Freight Service**

Recommendation: Establish public agencies to handle freight transportation needs like the public agencies for passenger transportation.

The Class 1 railroads discourage freight they don't want, through poor service, and/or high rates. The traffic the industry does not want includes that which falls below a set volume (e.g., single car, or occasional shipments), are time-sensitive, and/or ship less than about 700 miles. This traffic, a substantial percentage of truck traffic, is effectively given to trucking by the railroads.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://stadlerrail.com/en/flirt-akku/details/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.oregon-point.com/>

Public agencies provide service that the railroad industry doesn't want: Long distance, regional, and commuter passenger service. There is ample opportunity to pursue freight service in the public interest using the same model. The state Department of Transportation would establish, for example, the desire for specific freight service for the public benefit, such as rolling road service between Portland and Nampa ID, similar to what is operated in Switzerland <sup>15</sup> and India. <sup>16</sup>

If the Union Pacific Railroad does not want to operate the service, a public agency modeled after Metrolink in the Los Angeles area, Caltrain in the San Francisco area, or the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority in Northern California would be established. The new public agency freight service would negotiate for rights in the manner of passenger service agencies.

An example of public agency freight service involves the Mid-Willamette Valley Intermodal Center in Millersburg. The facility was constructed with public funds but sits unused for its original purpose. <sup>17</sup> <sup>18</sup> Shipments continue to use I-5 between Portland and Eugene.

Freight to and from the Willamette Valley should be loaded/unloaded in the Millersburg facility. A state-supported intermodal service should operate between Portland and Millersburg, perhaps between Portland and Eugene, too, depending upon the arrangement with Union Pacific Railroad. The shuttle service would move loaded intermodal cars arriving at/leaving from Portland to/from the east and north. If the Union Pacific Railroad declines to stop through trains at Millersburg, the intermodal shuttle service would move them between Eugene and Millersburg.

Similarly, the State of Oregon should develop a regional intermodal facility for the same purpose at, or near Hinkle, a major Union Pacific Railroad terminal, to intercept the large volume of local, Tri-cities Washington, and Yakima Valley intermodal containers and trailers currently using I-84 east of Portland, amounting to hundreds of truck round trips of up to 200 miles each way daily. If the Union Pacific Railroad and the BNSF Railway decline to operate the shuttle service, an intermodal shuttle like that proposed for Millersburg could move containers between Hinkle, Pendleton, the Tri-Cities area and the Yakima Valley would be employed, using a public agency for the purpose and an interstate agreement between Oregon and Washington.

Innovative freight service as described is essential. Suggestions of such service will likely be rejected by the railroads. The next section describes the long-term way to address the situation. However, the railroads' refusal to use facilities and/or refusal to allow state-supported short haul freight service should be brought to the Surface Transportation Board as a violation of Common Carrier requirements.

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<sup>15</sup> [ralpin.com/en/company/ralpin/swissalps](https://ralpin.com/en/company/ralpin/swissalps)

<sup>16</sup> <https://trucksuvidha.com/TrucksOnTrain.aspx>

<sup>17</sup> <https://oregoncapitalechronicle.com/2024/01/16/behind-schedule-over-budget-state-backed-rail-projects-costing-70-million-sit-idle>

<sup>18</sup> Except the Union Pacific Railroad uses it for car and equipment staging.



## **D. Support Change of National Transportation Policy**

Recommendation: US and state transportation policy must support and encourage modeshift to rail rather than generally only promoting highway and air transportation.

Transportation policy decisions and actions of 1971 and 1980 have divided rail transportation into two distinct categories, freight and passenger. Freight service is provided by common carrier railroads that consider passenger service to be an intrusion. Passenger service is provided by Amtrak and other public agencies that are allowed to provide a generally minimal level of service.

The ‘Freight Railroads’ do not want to carry passengers or a wide variety of freight that they do not consider profitable enough. However, they object to passenger trains carrying the freight that they don’t want or cannot effectively carry. Former Surface Transportation Board Chairman Chairman Martin J. Oberman details how ‘Freight Railroad’ service and pricing shifts significant volumes of freight off railroads and onto highways.<sup>19</sup> Ryan McWilliams, PE, explains in lay terms that the physical infrastructure of railroads is complementary to both passenger and freight. What is needed, and proposed in these recommendations by Climate Rail Alliance, is a new business scenario and public-private partnership.<sup>20</sup>

If the Union Pacific Railroad and BNSF Railway are unwilling to accept recommendations provided here by Climate Rail Alliance, then the Governor of Oregon and members of the Legislature should actively encourage the state’s Congressional Delegation to regulate rail transportation at the federal level. This can be done and grow the industry, too. It may be accomplished by requiring separate ownership and management of rail infrastructure and requiring a system of non-discriminatory open access on a reservation basis.

The operation of the network would be like that of highway transportation or aviation. The users of the highway system do not own the infrastructure, they merely pay for operating rights. Air carriers do not own airports, they pay for operating rights. Most highways and airports are owned by the public, but some are private. Regardless, use is governed by a uniform set of business and operating rules. The railroad network should work in that way, too.

While this is the domain of the federal government, states should actively participate in encouraging Congress to make the needed policy changes.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.stb.gov/wp-content/uploads/NARS-Speech-9-8-21.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <http://railsolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/RE-Higher-Speed-Rail-Searching-for-Shared-Use-Consensus-Oct-ober-2014-RailwayAge.pdf>

## SECTION III. Additional Transportation Recommendations

Recommendations for additional transportation include the following:

### 1. **Marine**

- a. Repair the **Willamette Falls Locks** to better use the Willamette River for travel and shipping:<sup>21</sup>
  - i. Generate needed revenue from locks users to repay the repair cost and pay for ongoing locks maintenance with new river traffic given access to the full river:
    1. Freight barges divert bulk and non-time sensitive freight from the highway mode, (e.g., bulk product like gravel, or containerized agricultural products)
    2. Tourism services, (e.g., wine country cruise)
    3. Recreational boating
- b. Fund **Frog Ferry** services to diversify travel choices downstream from, and later upstream from the Willamette Falls Locks, evaluate opportunities for Frog Ferry to generate freight revenue.<sup>22</sup>

### 2. **Highway**

- a. **Common Sense Alternative**
  - i. The Oregon State Legislature should support the Common Sense Alternative for the I-5 Columbia River crossing.<sup>23 24 25 26</sup>
- b. **Tolls**
  - i. Generally, the necessity for tolls is the shortfall in maintenance money from existing sources. The mode shift from highway to rail suggested in these recommendations could, properly implemented, reduce congestion, reduce heavy truck traffic that has the greatest effect on road pavement and bridge conditions, reduce automobile traffic, and limit or eliminate the need for tolls.
  - ii. However, tolls to support the Common Sense Alternative for the I-5 crossing, or the new I-5 Interstate Bridge Replacement Columbia River crossing, (whichever plan prevails), and the existing I-205 Columbia River crossing would be appropriate:
    1. In the case of either the Common Sense Alternative or the Interstate Bridge Replacement plans, the toll is a user fee to support the capital

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<sup>21</sup><http://orsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/WFL-Economic-Benefits-Final-Report-2018-0404.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://frogferry.com>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=gv0W5ApNiSo>

<sup>24</sup> <https://justcrossing.org/2022/06/01/the-common-sense-alternative>

<sup>25</sup><https://oregoncapitalechronicle.com/2024/09/20/replacing-i-5-bridge-will-aid-drivers-displace-some-homeowners-in-w-a-and-oregon>

<sup>26</sup> [www.interstatebridge.org](http://www.interstatebridge.org)

cost and maintenance of the new facilities.

2. In the case of the I-205 Glenn Jackson Bridge, the toll eliminates traffic diversion from I-5 to I-205 to avoid the toll.
3. I-5 and I-205 Columbia River crossing tolls should fund all Columbia River Crossings, rail, transit, and highway alike.
- iii. Tolls to support highway modernization (e.g., auxiliary lanes) and new highway infrastructure (e.g., additional lanes on existing highways, or a new route) are not appropriate unless and until the rail and transit recommendations outlined here by Climate Rail Alliance are implemented and proven successful, or unsuccessful.

### 3. **Bus Transport**

#### a. **Portland bus station:**

- i. Open the Portland bus station as a public facility for Greyhound, Point, MAX, TriMet, all other bus services for travel and shipping.<sup>27 28</sup>
- ii. Make the transfer between Portland Union Station and the Portland bus station seamless, so passengers do not need to go outside into the weather, and freight and baggage is efficiently transferred.

### 4. **Air**

- a. Support the plan for hourly Amtrak *Cascades* service between Portland and Seattle with a 2 hour 30 minute travel time, competitive with short distance air travel.
- b. This travel time limits or eliminates some of the need for expansion of the Portland International Airport, Seattle–Tacoma International Airport, and Eugene Airport.
- c. Package and express carried on Amtrak *Cascades* trains will improve their financial performance and service quality, further reducing the need for airport expansion.
- d. Develop seamless, reliable, safe FRT and ODT services to connect Amtrak *Cascades* to the Portland International Airport, Seattle–Tacoma International Airport, and Eugene Airports, for both travel, baggage, and freight.
- e. As an example, see Stop OAK Expansion, reason number 8: “We have alternatives. Invest in Rail”<sup>29</sup>

### 5. **Fees, Zoning & Administrative Streamlining**

#### a. **Truck size and weight fees**

- i. Consider financing innovative rail alternatives with truck size and weight fees similar to the concept of congestion pricing of roads.

#### b. **Just-In-Time**

- i. Consider financing innovative travel and freight services with fees on single-vehicle services when rail freight and transit alternatives are available.

#### c. **Transit oriented development**

- i. Establish/encourage transit oriented development in the air rights above

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<sup>27</sup> <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2024/09/24/new-crisis-for-inter-city-customers-as-megabus-goes-bust>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.axios.com/2023/11/18/greyhound-alden-bus-stations-close>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.stopoakexpansion.org>

transit center, park and ride, other transit-served facilities, and private property (e.g., shopping malls) with large parking lots.

d. **Consolidate many transit agencies into one**

- i. Transit agencies can often become a narrow-focus organization concentrating on their own budget and area of responsibility without consideration of other areas or transit services.
- ii. Effects may be seen in discontinuous service, projects and service that is beneficial to the agency but not necessarily in the greater transportation scheme.
- iii. Multiple agencies with overlapping responsibility often have redundant and administrative personnel that could be better used to improve transit for the greater transportation scheme.
- iv. See recommendations by RailPAC and Seamless Bay Area in Southern and Northern California, respectively.<sup>30 31</sup>

6. **Rail**

a. **Oregon State Rail Plan** (to be revised in 2025)

- i. Include the Preferred Alternative of the Oregon Passenger Rail, Eugene-Portland, Tier 1 Combined Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision,<sup>32</sup> service development plan (SDP) in the Oregon State Rail Plan.<sup>33</sup>
- ii. Provide maximum possible funding to Oregon State Rail Plan rail projects that can be effective in initiating mode shift from highway to rail as described in the recommendations here by Climate Rail Alliance.

b. **Amtrak Cascades prioritized over Ultra High Speed Rail**

Full development of the Amtrak *Cascades* service must be prioritized over development of any super high speed (ultra high speed) rail project.<sup>34</sup> Such projects will provide no benefits for decades. See the Independent Review on Cascadia UHSGT prepared for the WA Joint Transportation Committee in June, 2023.<sup>35</sup>

c. **Extraordinarily expensive rail and transit infrastructure projects**

- i. Transit project planning must include ways to increase service with short-term solutions that are components of larger programs in preference to mega projects that do not provide any benefit for decades.
  1. For example, create highway competitive service with the Climate

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<sup>30</sup><https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Institutional-Structure-for-Southern-California-Rail-letter-2024-01.18.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.seamlessbayarea.org>

<sup>32</sup><https://www.oregon.gov/odot/RPTD/RPTD%20Document%20Library/OPR-CIP-Tier-1-FEIS-and-Record-of-Decision.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/odot/rptd/pages/oregon-state-rail-plan-implementation.aspx>

<sup>34</sup> <https://cascadiahighspeedrail.net>

<sup>35</sup> <https://leg.wa.gov/JTC/Documents/Studies/2022%20studies/UHSGTReviewReportFINAL.pdf>

Rail Alliance recommendation for interurban service between Portland International Airport and Eugene to replace many of the benefits of the Southwest Corridor MAX extension, and provide additional benefits at a significantly lower total cost, see bullet A2, page 6, above.

2. The proposed interurban's coordination with other FRT, ODT, and FLM service in the Southwest Corridor between Tigard and Portland Central City may replace many of the benefits of the MAX extension to Tualatin.
    - ii. Highways, roads, and streets are generally the greatest beneficiary of grade separation projects. The majority of any grade separation project should come from highway funds, not rail funds.
- d. **Electrification of railroads**
- i. Rail electrification is beneficial, but not of utmost significance for overall emissions reduction. Nationwide, highways are responsible for 82 percent of transportation greenhouse emissions while rail is responsible for two percent.<sup>36</sup>
  - ii. Prioritization of railroad line electrification concentrates funding for a long term result that is more urgently needed for the shorter-term effort to decarbonize via mode shift. Were it possible, a complete shift of transportation from highway to rail would result in a transportation greenhouse gas reduction of more than 50 percent without electrification of railroads. All short-term funding of rail projects should be directed to those that would facilitate mode shift to rail.
  - iii. Rail electrification requires a long lead time in planning, engineering, implementation, permitting, and construction. The process of rail electrification planning should begin now, with the implementation goal to be one decade, or less in future.
  - iv. Residential communities in close proximity to railroad yards and industrial switching facilities should receive zero emission priority through the use of fully or partially publicly funded battery or other zero emission locomotives.

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/fast-facts-transportation-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

## SECTION IV. Impacts

Recommendations that address societal impacts of safety, climate, fair and equitable funding, accountability, and economic goals:

### 1. Safety

- a. Rail travel is significantly safer than highway travel:
  - i. Crash deaths, injuries, and property damage<sup>37</sup>
  - ii. Medical problems caused by pollution<sup>38</sup>
- b. Vision Zero has not been a success in Portland: “...an increase in egregious travel behaviors among people using the streets,” is a problem, however, the lack of quality rail transit to significantly reduce the number of people who need to drive contributes to the problem.<sup>39</sup>

### 2. Climate:

- a. The direct and indirect effects of climate change dictate that mode shift from highway to rail be encouraged and facilitated through innovative uses of rail and transit transportation recommended here by the Climate Rail Alliance.
- b. The rail mode comprises about 2% of all transportation emissions in the United States<sup>40</sup> while the highway mode comprises about 80% of all transportation emissions.
- c. Rail and transit, successfully implemented, will significantly reduce greenhouse gas better than all other modes on a per passenger mile basis.

### 3. Fair and sustainable funding:

- a. The rail and transit recommendations integrate revenue from both travel and shipping, a sustainable base upon which operations must rely.
- b. Diversion of travel and shipping away from highways onto rail and transit will reduce pressure on the legislature and governor to raise taxes, tolls, and fees to maintain and rebuild highway pavement and bridges.

### 4. Accountability:

- a. The private, regional railroad monopolies across the nation, which in our region are the Union Pacific Railroad and BNSF Railway, must be held accountable for their common carrier responsibility to customers, employees, and the public.
  - i. This includes that they either provide service the public needs, or allow the public to use their infrastructure to provide the service.

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<sup>37</sup> <https://rosap.ntl.bts.gov/view/dot/72943> Transportation Statistics Annual Report 2023

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.lung.org/blog/highway-air-pollution-and-your-health>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.opb.org/article/2024/04/18/portland-traffic-crashes-fatalities-report/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/fast-facts-transportation-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

## 5. Leverage the Economy

- a. Create new jobs in construction/production, operation, and maintenance of new rail and transit services
- b. Lower shipping costs below prevailing truck and rail rates to leverage business opportunity:
  - i. Transportation successfully operated is a low margin, high volume business
  - ii. The pricing recommended for new highway competitive services in sections II and III is relatively lower cost than automobile and truck, and the volume created is high
- c. Connect people to jobs, shopping, housing, community at lower cost than automobile
- d. Leverage urban, suburban, and rural land values, lower poverty rates, and increase the middle income population, when housing and jobs are better connected by rail and transit
- e. Leverage business with larger market areas, a greater number of prospect employees, and lower shipping costs.

## Conclusion

Expanding freight rail and transit with practical and innovative service improvements will demonstrate financial viability and create beneficial near term results for transportation in Oregon. When proven successful, our recommendations can lower cost and increase effectiveness of these essential services.

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