

HB 2691 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Joint Committee On Transportation

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/21

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Authorizes Department of Transportation to enter into agreements with other jurisdictions related to mutual planning for ultra-high-speed ground transportation within the Cascadia Rail Corridor, provided that the agreement include providing service to the City of Eugene. Limits Department to spending the less of 50 percent of moneys available, or \$1 million, per biennium, on ultra-high-speed ground transportation. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

NOTE - measure has subsequent referral to Committee on Ways and Means

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The Pacific Northwest is served by passenger rail service by the daily *Amtrak Cascades*, which provides regional service between Vancouver, British Columbia, and Eugene, as well as the *Coast Starlight*, which provides daily service between Seattle and Los Angeles. Both services are operated under Amtrak. This north-south service is augmented by bus service, as well as the Amtrak *Empire Builder* which runs between Portland and Chicago.

The Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor is one of a number of high-speed rail initiatives throughout the United States under varying levels of development. During the past several years, the State of Washington conducted a series of feasibility studies for "ultra-high-speed ground transportation" that could potentially operate in excess of 200 miles per hour, linking Vancouver, B.C., Seattle and Portland. One recent study estimated the cost of such a system at between \$24 billion and \$42 billion.

House Bill 2691 authorizes the Oregon Department of Transportation to enter into agreements with other jurisdictions to develop ultra-high-speed ground transportation, provided that the agreements include providing service to Eugene.