



March 1, 2023

The Baker County Board of Commissioners would like to express our support for Senate Bill 16.

Eastern Oregon is under served by long-distance passenger rail options and Amtrak's current service map fails to recognize this shortcoming. Vulnerable populations such as the elderly, veterans, and youth require specialized medical care year-round. These services are typically only available in larger metro areas. Hazardous weather frequently inhibits travel with Interstate 84 being closed for extended periods. No better alternative highway route across Eastern Oregon exists. Greyhound currently operates only one remaining intercity bus daily. Only one community in the 450 miles between Portland and Boise has scheduled air service.

The Union Pacific route through Eastern Oregon traverses a scenic and varied landscape where a passenger train would provide quality access to landmarks and historic destinations of Oregon such as Hell's Canyon, the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, the Blue Mountains, the Columbia River Gorge, and Multnomah Falls. The restoration of passenger rail service would increase tourism and the economy of communities in Eastern Oregon.

Finally, the population of the Boise, Idaho metro area has increased by over 60% and the Portland, Oregon metro area has increased by over 30% since the discontinuation of Amtrak services between the two cities in 1997. Reinstatement of these services would provide a climate conscious and equitable solution to travel between these two cities.

Sincerely,

Baker County Board of Commissioners:

Shane M. Alderson, Commission Chair

Christina Witham, Commissioner

Bruce Nichols, Commissioner