

This testimony is in regard to HB 4109-4 SECTION 5. (1) The Department of Transportation shall pursue cooperative efforts with the State of Idaho to obtain assistance from the Federal Railroad Administration to restore service on the Amtrak Pioneer Line.

When I moved to Halfway in 1983, Amtrak provided passenger service from Seattle to Baker City and beyond. With my parents and siblings all living in Western Washington, I travelled there to visit about twice a year. I would get a ride to Baker or leave my car there, ride the train to Portland, change trains and then travel on to the King Street Station in Seattle. From there I walked or took a bus to the Seattle Ferry terminal and rode the Seattle-Bremerton ferry to Bremerton where my family would pick me up. It was a 13-hour scenic, non-stressful ride, compared with a 10 hour, exhausting drive. Between times, my parents and friends came to visit me by train from Portland and Seattle or Tacoma, and I would pick them up and deliver them to the Baker station ... until the 1990s when the train no longer stopped in Baker City. And then in 1997 it stopped running through Eastern Oregon altogether.

The possibility of re-opening the old Pioneer corridor, (the least well-served area in the country), is exciting and important. Besides the obvious need to reduce our carbon emissions and congestion of our highways, there is an aging population in Eastern Oregon needing access to medical facilities in Boise and Portland. Winter weather conditions all too frequently close the I-84 freeway while freight trains continue through. There are the economic benefits of bringing tourists to this part of the state, as well as to the west side from Eastern Oregon and beyond. As in the past, passenger rail service would provide a safe and efficient means to visit our families and friends and bring them to us. It would once again create for all ages access to the rest of the country, its arts, festivals, universities, medical facilities and more.

If the passenger service between Portland and Boise were reinstated, I would ride the train 2 to 4 times a year to be with my family, and that many or more times to visit friends and them to visit me. I would use the train to get to Boise year round for supplies, medical services and to the airport, and also to travel to other places in the U.S. and Canada.