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## Testimony on SB 1202

April 8, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **SB 1202** creating a new agency to govern rail and transit in Oregon.. I am Luis Moscoso, Government Affairs Director for All Aboard Washington and a former Vice Chair of the Washington State House Transportation Committee. I am speaking on behalf of All Aboard Washington, a nonprofit organization that for over 40 years has promoted passenger rail as an integral part of Washington state's transportation system connecting our urban and rural communities.

It is very gratifying to hear testimony from across the country in support of a Rail and Transit Agency in Oregon. It's obvious now that American travelers, along with Federal and State Governments, are finally paying attention to the need, not just a desire, for a 21st Century rail network across the United States.

The Oregon Department of Transportation Passenger Rail Dept, a subdivision of Public Transportation, has done a commendable job addressing passenger rail transportation in conjunction with the Washington DOT.. Working with Amtrak, they have managed increased growth and public reliance on the Amtrak Cascades for decades now. But more is needed.

Public demand for passenger rail across Oregon and the Northwest requires us to think boldly of what a dedicated Rail Department can do to further expand and improve Amtrak Cascades service, to satisfy a growing need for intermodal connections, and ultimately, provide the foundation for Cascadia High Speed Rail.

The reality is, we need to think of passenger rail as a State-run service, not just a DOT subdepartment contractor co-managing a passenger rail program. Our shared vision for the Amtrak Cascades in Oregon and Washington requires a Rail Department that is robust and separate from highway culture to fully realize the potential of the Cascades Corridor and beyond. Expanding a statewide approach to a regional approach to passenger rail requirements requires a focused and dedicated department that is empowered to promote, as well as execute, rail plans needed now and in the future. The benefits of that department will ultimately depend on how well our conventional passenger rail system is supported and funded by the Legislature.

A dedicated Rail and Transit Department can drill down and concentrate on the broader needs of state and regional passenger rail infrastructure improvements to specifically address the travel needs of all Oregonians within and beyond the state. It can include staff members who have experience in railroad operations and who can interact with railroads knowledgeably. We are at a crossroads for deciding how to enable passenger rail development in Oregon to proceed. A new and even better way of addressing passenger rail is on the table. It's time to enable and empower Rail and Transit planners and engineers to take us into the future of passenger rail that our country desperately needs. It's time to recognize the urgency of developing a passenger rail system available to everyone who needs mobility and a safer, cleaner way to travel throughout Oregon and the Northwest.

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