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Trains Save Washingtonians Money

Public transportation projects are often dismissed on the grounds of expense, but Amtrak *Cascades* and similar intercity passenger rail services deserve a second look for what they deliver for Washington taxpayers. These costs and benefits aren't time savings that have no value in cold hard cash. These are costs that Amtrak *Cascades* helps the state and individuals avoid, as well as visitor spending that communities would have missed without the presence of the train.

In 2019, for just \$23.7m (once income from fares is accounted for), Washingtonians received about \$89.8m in benefits:

- \$54.3m in reduced road maintenance expenditures
- \$1.6m in reduced vehicle fatalities
- \$900k worth of reduced carbon output
- \$19.3m in airfare saved
- \$13.6m in additional visitor spending

Based on *Cascades* ridership between 2013 and 2019, that's over \$500m in benefits that have accrued, in terms of overall lower private and state expenditures, all for a total taxpayer cost of only \$188m.

Using *Cascades* to Reduce VMT

As we examine our budget, it is paramount for us to prioritize investments that give the biggest returns to Washington taxpayers and advance our state's long-term goals. In the 2006 Washington State Long-Range Plan for Amtrak *Cascades*, WSDOT laid out some astounding service goals to be implemented by 2023:

- 13 daily Seattle - Portland departures with travel times of 2:30
- 4 daily Seattle - Vancouver, B.C. departures with travel times of 2:37
- Top speeds of 110 MPH in several sections of the corridor
- Projected annual ridership of 2,995,300

In 2008, RCW 47.01.440 codified Washington's intent to reduce **vehicle-miles traveled** (VMT) by **18% for 2020**, and by **50% for 2050**. While we will face immense budgetary challenges over the coming months, it is not too late for our leaders to take steps in the right direction. Amtrak *Cascades* can save taxpayer money and help us achieve our VMT reduction goals if we give it the commitment it deserves.

The Numbers Say It All

2019 Operating Costs and Benefits of Amtrak Cascades

- Net Operating Cost to State: \$23,672,000
- **Benefits to State: \$89,800,000**

Net operating costs from WSDOT 2019 Amtrak Cascades Performance Data Report, pg. 15

State Benefits in detail

- \$54,300,000 in Road Maintenance (from the 47% of diverted **car trips**)
- \$1,600,000 in reduced vehicle fatalities (from the 47% of diverted **car trips**)
- \$900,000 in pollution saved (from the 47% of diverted **car trips**)
- \$19,300,000 in airfare saved (from the 32% of diverted **air trips**)
- \$13,600,000 in visitor spending (from the 11% percent of **induced travel**)

Highway Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Costs in detail

- Wear & Tear: \$2.00/VMT
- Accidents & Death: 12¢/VMT
- **Assumed Costs: \$2.12/VMT**

Based on roadway maintenance and expansion cost figures from the American Association of Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Bottom Line report, pg. 2; and Victoria Transportation Policy Institute's (VTPI) Transportation Cost and Benefit Analysis II

Carbon Dioxide Emissions per passenger km

- **Passenger trains: 14g**
- Carpooling: 55g
- Single-occupant car: 104g
- Single-occupant SUV: 158g
- Plane flight: 258g

Passenger Train Emissions Intensities

- 25.45% as much as carpooling
- **13.46% as much as SOV cars**
- 8.86% as much as SOV SUVs
- **5.43% as much as flying**

European Environment Agency (cited in 2019 WSDOT Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation Business Case Analysis, figure 11, pg. 61)

Traveling Costs per mile

- **Amtrak Cascades: 26¢**
- Flying: 47¢

BTS 2018 Air Carrier Profile; and WSDOT 2019 Amtrak Cascades Performance Data Report average Cascades fare (\$40.10)/Average trip length (155.37 miles)

Visitor Spending

- \$84 per day-trip visitor
- \$366 per overnight visitor

Email with Mike Moe, Director of Strategic Partnerships and Tourism Development at Experience Washington, June 29th 2020

Passengers Without Trains Don't Just Take the Bus

Source: Amtrak Washington State Economic Impact Brochure

