



All Aboard Washington
(360) 529-5552
(509) 213-0070
PO Box 70381
Seattle, WA 98127-0381
www.aawa.us

All Aboard Washington's 2023 Legislative Priorities

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Now is the time for **next steps** toward considering East-West passenger rail service via Burlington Northern Santa Fe tracks (Stampede Pass). This is an essential statewide corridor providing access to and from the national network for underserved, burgeoning and diverse population centers in Kittitas County, Yakima County, the Yakama Nation, Benton County, and Franklin County.

Conduct a Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA)

A BCA:

- Is a tool used to support funding decisions for long-term infrastructure investments.
- Is required for U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT) discretionary grant programs.
- Assesses and quantifies the net benefit of a project to society by measuring factors such as improved safety (reduced fatalities, injuries, property damage), emission reductions, reduced vehicle miles traveled, value of improved service, reliability, and quality.

Conduct an Economic Impact Analysis (EIA)

An EIA measures economic impacts that are not part of a BCA. Common metrics used for measuring economic impacts include:

- Retail spending
- Business activity
- Local tax revenues
- Jobs & wage income

An EIA is another tool that decision-makers can use to evaluate the merits of long-term investment in the project.

Submit an “expression of interest” letter to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

FRA is requesting “expression of interest” letters in establishing new intercity passenger rail routes [Federal Register Notice dated 5/13/2022: “Establishment of the Corridor Identification and Development program”].

FRA intends for the Corridor ID program to become the primary means for directing Federal financial support and technical assistance toward development of new or improved passenger rail services throughout the United States. The US DOT Secretary is required to give funding priority to routes that are selected for the Corridor ID program.

The letter should express Washington State interest for including the Seattle - Stampede Pass - Spokane route in the Corridor ID program for purposes of supporting:

- Long-distance service from Chicago to Seattle via Stampede Pass (restoration of discontinued *Amtrak North Coast Hiawatha*).
- Washington State sponsored service between Seattle and Spokane over the same route.

Establish a multi-state working group to evaluate the benefits of an Interstate Rail Compact for the Northwest

Title 49 U.S.C. Section 22306 establishes an Interstate Rail Compact Grant Program for rail systems planning, including studying the impacts on freight rail operations and ridership, promotion of intercity passenger rail operation, preparation of applications for competitive federal grant programs, and operations coordination.

To explore the concept of an Interstate Rail Compact, The Council of State Governments, [National Center for Interstate Compacts](#) suggests that a working group consisting of stakeholders in both public and private sectors at the federal, state, and local level (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana) be formed.

The purpose of the working group would be to consider the advantages and/or disadvantages of establishing a compact, and make recommendations as appropriate regarding the powers, duties, and membership of a compact prior to any proposed legislation.

The primary purposes of the compact would be to:

- Advocate for funding and authorization necessary to make passenger rail improvements a reality for the region.
- Seek development of a long-term, interstate plan for high-speed passenger rail service.
- Identify and seek to develop ways that states can form partnerships, including with rail operators and labor, to implement improved passenger rail in the region.
- Cooperate with other agencies, regions, and entities to ensure that the region is adequately represented and integrated into national plans for passenger rail development.
- Educate state officials, federal agencies, and members of Congress to ensure funding and authorization necessary to develop a long-term interstate plan for passenger rail service including high-speed passenger rail service implementation.

A competitive Federal grant program for interstate rail compacts is available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to cover costs of administration, systems planning, and operations coordination. Local matching funds are required.