

Amtrak Cascades Operations at Vancouver, BC

Since 1995, the *Amtrak Cascades*, with operational funding provided by the States of Oregon and Washington, has been providing intercity passenger rail service to Vancouver, BC. The international service currently operates with two daily roundtrips to connect Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver, BC with eleven other intermediate cities. Traveling by train to and from Vancouver, BC is among the most in demand trips in Amtrak's National Network, with ridership peaking in September 2023 with nearly 25,000 passenger trips arriving or departing at Pacific Central Station. In addition to the comfort and productivity offered by train travel, each of those passenger trips by train instead of by car resulted in a reduction of CO2 emissions by approximately 50% and passenger fatalities by 95% per mile. The demand for trips in the corridor remains strong despite struggling with customer on time performance and travel speeds that are regularly lower than the corridor between Seattle and Portland. Some improvements are on the way; however, further modest investments can be made to better meet customer expectations and to allow additional daytime service frequencies.

In Progress Service Improvements

Customs Pre-clearance

Funded by Amtrak and a small portion of ticket revenue, Amtrak is currently working to implement North America's first passenger rail customs pre-clearance facility at Pacific Central Station, which will further elevate the comparative convenience of traveling by train by eliminating the need for customs stops at the international border. The facility is expected to be operational by late summer 2024.

New Airo Trainsets

With funding provided by United States Congress in the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*, Amtrak has purchased new trainsets, with the first eight produced to be operated on the *Amtrak Cascades*. Scheduled to begin operations in Spring 2026, the new trainsets will provide a more modern customer experience with improved travel amenities.

Potential Improvements in Vancouver, BC

Needed Pacific Central Station Access Improvements

The *Amtrak Cascades* currently functions at Pacific Central Station by manually operating several rail switches and with access to only one track and half of passenger platform at the station, with the existing passenger platform failing to meet modern standards for accessibility. Upgrading the existing facilities is a cost-effective opportunity to improve the customer experience and allowing *Amtrak* access to a second track at the station is necessary to provide more frequent daytime service. Amtrak has funded the initial conceptual designs for an improved platform that allows the service access to a second track but needs to identify funding for formal design and construction documents. Should stakeholders wish to see those improvements implemented to provide additional passenger train service between Seattle and Vancouver in time for those two cities to host World Cup games in 2026, funding to advance to 30% needs to be identified imminently. Amtrak estimates 30% design can be achieved with approximately US\$250,000 and the full project could be constructed with US\$12-15 million. Those estimates are preliminary and greater confidence will be gained with completion of further engineering and design.