

## Oregon's new trains

For the first time, Oregon has purchased its own trains to provide regular passenger service: two 13-car trainsets.

And another first: these are Talgo series 8. Oregon is the first to put this new model into service. Our trainsets include a bistro car and a dining car, bicycle storage, Wi-Fi, a business class, and are accessible for people with disabilities and who use wheelchairs. Each set can carry 286 passengers. The state used over \$40 million of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds to purchase the trains, with spare parts. ARRA funds also paid for adding Wi-Fi and testing. After a thorough testing period, the state will request the required federal certification to put the trains into service, anticipated for August.

*So what led to this purchase?*

We purchased the trains to preserve passenger rail service in the Willamette Valley,

As the pressures grow to increase service in Washington state, we – in the southern part of the corridor – were in a tenuous position for keeping enough trains to serve *our* growing needs. The state of Washington has a much larger population, and Seattle and Portland are much larger population centers. That's stiff competition for resources – and trains. Washington owns three trains, and Amtrak owns two. The existing five train sets were stretched to their limit, and planned expansion in Washington to add round-trips between Portland and Seattle would have disrupted, or possibly eliminated, service from Portland to Eugene.

To ensure equipment is available for Portland-Eugene service, Oregon opted to purchase trains that can be used cooperatively with the current fleet everywhere in the corridor. Oregon riders – and potential riders – want more options, as well as faster trains. By purchasing our own trains, we now have leverage, and influence over our destiny that we never would have had before.

More, better faster: We know from meeting with Oregonians over the course of a year – and I know from hearing from you – that people want more choices, and faster trains, and we're working on both.

**Speed:** This year work begins to replace the Harrisburg bridge. When complete, trains will no longer have to slow way down to 30 MPH to cross the antiquated structure. Passenger trains will be able to continue at normal speed, up to 79 MPH. Adding computer switching in Albany will speed things up a little bit too. This bridge replacement is a partnership between the state and Union Pacific, using ConnectOregon money matched with UP investment.

**Choices:** The Cascade Corridor has been operating with five train sets, and no flexibility or spares. Using our new agreement with Washington, the corridor will now jointly manage *seven* trainsets. This brings an opportunity for us to try a new schedule, answering a repeated request: people want an option to travel north by train in the afternoon, not only the morning. Same for traveling south from Portland, there has been only an evening choice, now there will be one in the morning. The basic schedule has not changed for 14

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years. Now we'll add a northbound train from Eugene at about 4 PM, and southbound from Portland in the early morning. One of the morning trains will be traded for a bus, another bus run will be added, too, to increase options. (These are the modern, comfortable buses with accessible restrooms and Wi-Fi.) And we'll have three trains that go all the way to Seattle, without a transfer to a bus.

**The Cascade Corridor:** the 466-mile passenger train corridor from Eugene to Vancouver, British Columbia, was recognized by the federal government in 1992 as one of the country's high speed rail routes. Ridership has grown continually since 1994. For the Oregon portion alone, it's grown from 60,000 a year to over 237,000. That's nearly a quarter million rides in the Eugene-Portland corridor.

**Rail improvements and Bi-state collaboration:** As the federal government has awarded grants to states for improving rail service, Oregon has been largely unprepared to make substantive requests – we had no plans ready to go. In the last round, the Northwest rail corridor received nearly \$600 million; Oregon received \$8 M. Less than one and a half percent of the share. That's going to change. First, plans to improve and add track. Oregon's Passenger Rail Leadership Council has been overseeing an effort to identify inter-city rail improvements for the Willamette Valley. We should have plans ready when federal investment is available. And, collaboration: I passed a bill that puts in statute Oregon's commitment to planning and overseeing the Cascade corridor together with Washington, including schedules, pricing, and improvements. This puts us in a much better position to compete for federal dollars.

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### ***Background information from ODOT***

- Note: We have had 'excursion trains' in the past paid for by the state, but these two are the first time the state has owned trains.
- Per Buy America requirements, the majority of the work on these trains was performed in the U.S. Manufactured by Talgo, the body shells and wheel assembly of the trainsets were built in Spain, with the remainder of the manufacturing and assembly performed at Talgo's plant in Wisconsin.
- Oregon's new trainsets are Talgo Series 8 trains, built to meet or exceed Federal Railroad Administration safety standards, and able to travel on the railroad tracks of the Pacific Northwest. Each trainset:
  - Seats 286 passengers
  - Offers business class seating
  - Has a cab car, a bistro car and a dining car
  - Offers bicycle storage
  - Is equipped with Wi-Fi
  - Is accessible for people with disabilities and who use wheelchairs
- The new schedule is allowing us to improve service in the Amtrak Cascades corridor, south of Portland, which has largely been **unchanged for 14 years**:

1. Train service will be spread throughout the day. Previously, Eugene area riders wanting to head north on the train could only do so in the morning (5:30 a.m., 9 a.m., 12:36 p.m.); after 12:36 p.m., the only options going north were buses. Now, train service will be spread throughout the day, with the 9 a.m. train replaced by two new bus schedules and a new train option heading north at 4:00 p.m.

A similar situation existed with Portland area riders wanting to head south on the train. They only had afternoon options (2:25 p.m., 6:15 p.m., 9:10 p.m.). Now, train service will be spread throughout the day, with the 6 a.m. bus becoming a train and the 9:10 p.m. train becoming bus service.

Two of our current train routes in the Amtrak Cascades corridor between Eugene and Portland will be converted to bus routes. While that change may disappoint some of our train riders, we do offer state-of-the-art buses, with Wi-Fi, accessible restrooms and comfortable seating.

2. Now, there will be three trains that go all the way to Seattle. Riders heading north from Eugene wanting to go north of Portland often had to exit a train and wait for another train or catch a bus. Now, riders will have three options for trains that have through-service to Seattle, trains 500 at 5:40 a.m., 14 at 12:36 p.m. and 508 at 4:00 p.m.