

Number of state-supported passenger rail and bus riders in the Willamette Valley

Our strategy

ODOT's Public Transportation Division (PTD) and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) co-fund and contract with Amtrak to provide passenger rail service (Amtrak Cascades) in the Pacific Northwest from Eugene, OR to Vancouver, B.C. This coordination supports passenger rail as a part of the statewide multimodal transportation network in Oregon and provides connections for regional travel on passenger rail.

PTD also funds an intercity bus route along the north I-5 corridor as part of its POINT service. This POINT route is operated by a private transit company under contract with

ODOT. Both Amtrak Cascades and POINT are an integral part of the statewide transit network and supplement the national passenger rail network.

ODOT's goal is to provide transportation options along this corridor that are reliable and safe. One indicator is the number of passenger rail and bus rides provided.

The Amtrak Cascades service was accepted into the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development (CID) Program. The CID Program is a comprehensive planning and development program that will help guide passenger rail development throughout the country and

create a pipeline for passenger rail projects ready for implementation. Entry into the CID Program enables ODOT to be competitive for federal funds for infrastructure improvements.

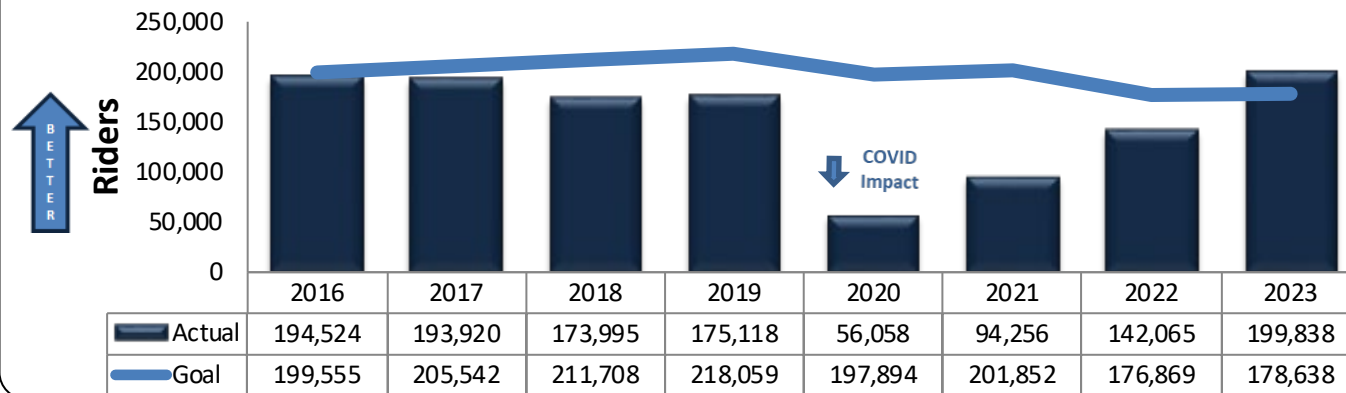
About the target

The 2021 legislatively adopted budget revised the goal downward to set a more realistic goal as a result of pandemic ridership losses. Starting in 2022 the new target is based on 2019 actual ridership with an expected annual increase of one percent. Increasing ridership and the passenger experience is an ODOT priority.

How we are doing

Recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, Amtrak Cascades ridership growth

Number of riders - Passenger rail and Cascades POINT



Fact

The pre-pandemic baseline for comparison purposes is 2019. Oregon Cascades train ridership went from 13 percent below 2019 ridership in 2022 to 21 percent above 2019 ridership in 2023.

Passenger Rail Ridership, cont.

continued in 2023 as ridership in Oregon exceeded the goal. Host railroad track work during the first three months of 2023 caused lower ridership due to the substitution of buses for 92 trains. Ridership for April through September 2023 had the highest ridership since 2012 and 2013. Ridership records were set in the last three months of 2023 and in February 2024. Weather-related issues affected ridership in January of 2024; however, ridership was the highest since 2013. Passenger rail and Cascade POINT ridership was 41 percent higher in 2023 compared to 2022.

Factors affecting results and what needs to be done

ODOT evaluates ridership on every Amtrak Cascades train to determine which trains attract the most passengers. ODOT and WSDOT then coordinate to adjust train schedules to achieve maximum ridership. The POINT schedule connects with the Amtrak Cascades trains and provides service along I-5 during high travel demand times.

The pandemic and the resulting decreases in demand led to service reductions to one round trip per day between Seattle and Eugene. All service levels were restored by the end of 2023.

New fifth and sixth round trips between Portland and Seattle began on December 11, 2023, and existing train schedules were adjusted to accommodate this new service. The morning train out of Eugene was moved from 5:30 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. Early morning service between Eugene and Portland is now provided by the POINT bus. This new departure is popular and has helped meet passenger demand. Ridership on this train continues to grow.

Since service in Oregon resumed, Amtrak and ODOT initiated marketing and communication to increase awareness of the service. ODOT promoted the Amtrak Cascades at the Rose Festival in 2023. The AmtrakOregon.com website is updated regularly, and Facebook posts are made daily.

ODOT participates in the Commercial Performance Working Group which allows state-supported services to collaborate and share ideas. This group worked with Amtrak to change the child discount policy, allowing all children to receive a 50 percent discount regardless of the number of adults traveling.

Lower fares for travel between Eugene and Portland were introduced in January 2023 and the 14-day advance purchase requirement was eliminated in 2024.

ODOT is working with Union Pacific to identify and prioritize infrastructure investments that will make train schedules more reliable.

ODOT will apply for federal grants to fund infrastructure projects to improve on-time performance, support increased service frequency, and improve the passenger's travel experience.

PTD continues analyzing ridership and performance of the train and bus schedules to best meet the needs of the traveling public of the services.

About the data

PTD analyzes monthly ridership and on-time performance data provided by Amtrak and by MTR Western for Cascades POINT ridership.

Contact information

Ian Clancy
ODOT Public Transportation Division
503-302-0626

Data sources

Amtrak
MTRWestern