



Cascadia High-Speed Rail Project

June 2025 Status Update

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Title VI Notice to Public

It is the Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) policy to assure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise discriminated against under any of its programs and activities. Any person who believes his/her Title VI protection has been violated may file a complaint with WSDOT's Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR). For additional information regarding Title VI complaint procedures and/or information regarding our non-discrimination obligations, please contact OECR's Title VI Coordinator at (360) 705-7090.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Information

This material can be made available in an alternate format by emailing the Office of Equity and Civil Rights at wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov or by calling toll-free 855-362-4ADA(4232). Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may make a request by calling the Washington State Relay at 711

Project Summary

Introduction

In March 2022, the Washington legislature directed and provided funding for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to continue exploring a new ultra-high-speed ground transportation corridor, consistent with the November 2021 memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by the governors of Washington and Oregon and the Premier of British Columbia (2023 ESHB 1125, Section 223 (2)(a-c), see Appendix A). Working in partnership with Oregon and British Columbia, including the British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Transit^[1] (BC MOTT), Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), and Oregon Metro, WSDOT has made progress in advancing the Cascadia High-Speed Rail Project (Cascadia HSR^[2]) within the Cascadia High-Speed Rail and I-5 Program under Urban Mobility, Access, and Megaprograms leadership.

As required by 2023 ESHB 1125, Section 223 (2)(c), this report provides a status update to the Governor and transportation committees of the legislature on work conducted by the policy committee and recommendations for establishing a coordinating entity, including an assessment of current activities and results related to engagement, planning, and federal funding.



Figure 1. Cascadia High-Speed Rail Potential Corridor Area

¹ Renamed in November 2024, the British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MOTT) was previously known as the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI).

² The Project was previously known as "Cascadia Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation" or "Cascadia UHSGT". To align with recognized and defined rail system terms used by the Federal Railroad Administration funding programs, the Project has been renamed to "Cascadia High-Speed Rail" or "Cascadia HSR".

Program Status Update

Program Structure

Consistent with legislative direction to coordinate planning work across modes (2023 ESHB 1125, Section 2019 (10)), WSDOT integrated the I-5 Master Plan and Cascadia HSR into one program titled the Cascadia High-Speed Rail and I-5 Program (Cascadia Program) and continues to coordinate with air mobility, Amtrak Cascades, and other related modes and regional planning efforts. The integrated approach to multimodal system planning will foster long-term success, the strategic use of resources, and a comprehensive understanding of area communities, their needs, and regional opportunities.

Corridor Identification and Development Program^[3] - Selection and Progress

In December 2023, Cascadia HSR was accepted into the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Figure 2 below, from FRA, outlines the three steps of the Corridor ID Program, including the scope that is eligible for federal funding and the non-federal match required for each step.

Figure 2. Corridor Identification and Development Program Steps 1,2,3

Grant	Step 1: Scoping	Step 2: Service Development Plan	Step 3: Preliminary Engineering / NEPA
Funding	\$500k / 0% match	\$X / 10% match (<i>\$X determined during Step 1</i>)	\$X / 20% match (<i>\$X determined during Step 2</i>)
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using SDP SOW framework, sponsor develops scope, schedule, and budget for Corridor SDP, accounting for work ongoing and/or undertaken to date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsor develops a service development plan in accordance with Corridor SOW and in coordination with FRA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In coordination with FRA, sponsor completes preliminary engineering for capital projects Sponsor completes environmental review in coordination with FRA for capital projects
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After kick-off meeting, FRA will review work undertaken to date Step 1 grant deliverable is SDP SOW to include corridor-specific scope, schedule, and budget for service development planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final service development plan includes a Capital Project Inventory as part of the Phased Implementation Plan If readiness criteria are met, capital projects identified in SDP may be advanced into Step 3 Project Development, at FRA's discretion and subject to funding availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital projects that complete Step 3 will move to Project Pipeline and may be prioritized for funding under Fed-State Partnership Program

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation – Federal Railroad Administration

³ <https://railroads.dot.gov/corridor-ID-program>

Corridor ID Program Step 1 Grant Award

On December 8, 2023, WSDOT was awarded up to \$500,000 for the completion of Corridor ID Program Step 1 deliverables, including the statement of work (SOW), schedule, and budget for the Service Development Plan (SDP), which will be delivered in Step 2.

The previously developed Cascadia HSR Federal-State Partnership grant application was used as the initial basis for the Step 1 deliverables as it aligned with the Corridor ID Program Step 2 SOW and reflected the previous work developed with and endorsed by the jurisdictional partners in Oregon and British Columbia.

The FRA formally approved the Corridor ID Program Step 1 deliverables on November 18, 2024.

Corridor ID Program Step 2 Grant Award

On November 27, 2024, FRA awarded and obligated \$49.7 million in federal funding for Corridor ID Program Step 2 to the Project. This federal funding obligation required a minimum 10% state match, or \$5.527 million.

These state and federal funds will be used to deliver the SDP scope of work through 2028 as agreed upon by WSDOT and FRA.

Cascadia HSR Service Development Plan (SDP)

Cascadia High-Speed Rail work for the next four years will be guided by the prescriptive requirements of the FRA's SDP, which are centered on the following outcomes, pending FRA concurrence at each step of the process:

- A range of potential route and service options and high-level tradeoffs for consideration
- Early engineering and high-level cost estimate ranges
- Governance and investment options
- Proposed phased implementation plan

This analysis will be supported by transportation planning, conceptual engineering, consideration of environmental factors, coordination with public entities, communities throughout the corridor, and the private sector.

Service Development Plan Activities in 2025

On April 15, FRA accepted the Project Management Plan for the SDP, which identifies the schedule and FRA approvals needed for the 47 SDP deliverables.

For the remainder of 2025, SDP work will focus on three tasks required by FRA: coordination plans, market analysis, and a preliminary draft Purpose and Need statement. These tasks must be completed and accepted by FRA before WSDOT can begin engagement, route, or service options planning.

Table 1. Cascadia HSR Service Development Plan 2025 Deliverables

Task	Description
Project Management Plan <i>Accepted by FRA on April 15, 2025</i>	Describes how the project team will structure work throughout the four-year SDP process. Identifies the schedule and FRA approvals needed to move through each required deliverable.
Coordination Plans	Describes how Cascadia HSR will engage with different interested parties throughout the development of the SDP. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency and Tribal Coordination Plan: Federal, state, regional, and local agencies, federally recognized Tribes, and First Nations. • Public Coordination Plan: Public, civic, and business groups, public officials, interested parties, non-federally recognized Tribes and First Nations, and potential riders. • Railroad Stakeholder Plan: Host railroads, operating railroads, and commuter and intercity operators.
Market Analysis	Considers existing and projected characteristics of the transportation market. Informs the development of the preliminary Draft Purpose and Need Statement in 2025 and the route and service options analysis starting in 2026.
Preliminary Draft Purpose and Need Statement	Provides a foundation for SDP analysis of potential route and service options. Informed by past studies and existing plans and will continue to be refined through the SDP process and future NEPA environmental review.

In 2026, assuming FRA acceptance of 2025 tasks, WSDOT will begin examining existing conditions of the corridor to inform potential route and service options, like speed and travel times. This will also be when the program begins engagement.

The SDP deliverables will accomplish the following key outcomes:

- A range of potential route and service options and high-level tradeoffs for consideration
- Early engineering and high-level cost estimate ranges
- Governance and investment options
- Proposed phased implementation plan

Current Coordinating Entity Structure

In May 2024, following discussion with the Technical Committee and concurrence from the Policy Committee, Cascadia HSR governance transitioned from the Policy Committee and Technical Committee structure to the first phase of the coordinating entity, which includes the Cascadia HSR Executive Committee and Project Leadership Committee.

This first phase of the coordinating entity structure supports decision-making in alignment with the Project's needs during Corridor ID Program scope development and start-up activities.

Previous Policy and Technical Committee members remain important partners for involvement in this phase of the Project, and many of the same members continue to participate on the Project Leadership Committee and Executive Committee, as described below.

Project Leadership Committee

This committee has met regularly since May 2024 as the Cascadia Program worked with the FRA to finalize the scope, schedule, and budget for Step 2 of the Corridor ID Program.

WSDOT leads this committee and includes staff-level representatives from MOTT, ODOT, Oregon Metro, PSRC, and the Cascadia Innovation Corridor. The Project Leadership Committee will continue to meet monthly throughout 2025 to review and coordinate the delivery of the SDP.

Executive Committee

This committee convenes at key concurrence points and as needed to support Project decision-making. Working closely with the Project Leadership Committee, the Executive Committee includes WSDOT Secretary Julie Meredith and executives from the above organizations. The Executive Committee will ensure that partners are aligned on key deliverables before submission to FRA.

Legislative Engagement and Future Updates

The legislature is a key partner in continuing to advance Cascadia HSR. The Cascadia Program anticipates additional legislative involvement and engagement opportunities to be developed in consultation and partnership with legislative leadership throughout 2025.

Continued support from the legislature and state match funding will be necessary for WSDOT to meet the requirements under the Corridor ID Program.

As required by 2025 ESSB 5161, future reports to the legislature will be provided no less frequently than semiannually and will include written status updates in advance of meetings or presentations. In addition, WSDOT will not move forward with a programmatic environmental review or any other activities related to the Corridor ID Program unless authorized to do so by the legislature.

The Program will provide an annual report, as required, on efforts under the Corridor ID Program due to the legislature on December 1, 2025.

The Program will continue to engage legislative staff to share timely information and updates when appropriate.

Coordinating Entity Next Steps

As part of the Cascadia High-Speed Rail SDP, WSDOT will work with partners in Oregon and British Columbia to revise the committee structure, subject to FRA concurrence. This will include consideration of future phases of the Coordinating Entity.

WSDOT will complete the Agency Coordination Plan, which will include a revised committee structure, in the second half of 2025, with FRA review in late 2025. This coordination structure will guide work for the remainder of the Service Development Plan.

FRA requires the governance structure for future Project development, construction, and operations phases to be developed as part of the SDP. This work is expected to begin in mid-2026, with FRA review in late 2028.

Next Steps in Advancing Cascadia High-Speed Rail

In 2025, the Cascadia Program will continue to advance the coordination plans, market analysis, and preliminary draft Purpose and Need statement, consistent with Corridor ID Program requirements. These products provide a foundation for further analysis beginning in 2026, including potential route and service options.

During plan development, the Cascadia Program will continue to provide updates, as appropriate for the early planning phase, to existing convenings and organizations, including metropolitan planning organizations, Tribes, economic development-focused organizations, and partner agencies, for awareness about the Project.

Appendix A: 2023 ESHB 1125, Section 223

(2)(a-c)

(2)(a) \$2,500,000 of the multimodal transportation account—state appropriation, funds are provided solely for the continued coordination, engagement, and planning for a new ultra high-speed ground transportation corridor with participation from Washington state, Oregon state, and British Columbia, and is a reappropriation of funds appropriated in the 2021–2023 fiscal biennium. For purposes of this subsection, “ultra high-speed” means a maximum testing speed of at least 250 miles per hour. These efforts are to support and advance activities and must abide by the memorandum of understanding signed by the governors of Washington and Oregon states, and the premier of the province of British Columbia in November 2021. The department shall establish a policy committee with participation from Washington state, Oregon state, and British Columbia, including representation from the two largest caucuses of each chamber of the Washington state legislature, and coordinate the activities of the policy committee to include:

- (i). Developing an organizational framework that facilitates input in decision-making from all parties;
- (ii). Developing a public engagement approach with a focus on equity, inclusion, and meaningful engagement with communities, businesses, federal, state, provincial, and local governments, including indigenous communities;
- (iii). Developing and leading a collaborative approach to prepare and apply for potential future federal, state, and provincial funding opportunities, including the development of strategies for incorporating private sector participation and private sector contributions to funding, including through the possible use of public-private partnerships;
- (iv). Beginning work on scenario analysis addressing advanced transportation technologies, land use, and growth assumptions, and an agreed to and defined corridor vision statement; and
- (v). Developing a recommendation on the structure and membership of a formal coordinating entity that will be responsible for advancing the project through the project initiation stage to project development and recommended next steps for establishment of the coordinating entity. Project development processes must include consideration of negative and positive impacts on communities of color, low-income households, indigenous peoples, and other disadvantaged communities.

(b) By June 30, 2024, the department shall provide to the governor and the transportation committees of the legislature a high-level status update that includes, but is not limited to, the status of the items included in (a)(i) through (v) of this subsection.

(c) By June 30, 2025, the department shall provide to the governor and the transportation committees of the legislature a report detailing the work conducted by the policy committee and recommendations for establishing a coordinating entity. The report must also include an

assessment of current activities and results relating to stakeholder engagement, planning, and any federal funding application. As applicable, the assessment should also be sent to the executive and legislative branches of government in Oregon state and appropriate government bodies in the province of British Columbia.