

Cascadia High-Speed Rail

Corridor Identification and Development Program Status Update

December 2025



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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Background	2
Cascadia HSR coordination with other modes	2
Corridor ID Program and funding	2
Program status update.....	4
Cascadia HSR Service Development Plan.....	4
SDP activities in 2025	4
SDP activities from 2026 to 2028.....	5
Coordination structure	6
Current structure	6
Project Leadership Committee	7
Executive Committee.....	7
Regional planning coordination	8
Legislative engagement	8
Next steps.....	9

Table of Tables

Table 1. Corridor ID Program grant awards for Cascadia HSR.....	3
Table 2. SDP 2025 deliverables	4
Table 3: MPOs, RTPOs, and British Columbia regional planning organizations	8

Table of Figures

Figure 1. Cascadia HSR potential corridor area.....	1
Figure 2. SDP – options analysis timeline.....	5
Figure 3. Cascadia HSR proposed coordination structure	7
Figure 4. SDP task schedule	9

Table of Appendices

Appendix A: 2025 ESSB 5161, Section 310 (4)(a-b)	
Appendix B: Additional HSR Reports submitted to the Legislature in 2025	

List of Abbreviations

Term	Definition
Cascadia Program	Cascadia High Speed Rail and I-5 Program
Corridor ID	Corridor Identification and Development
ESSB	Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration
HB	House Bill
HSR	High-speed rail
I-5	Interstate 5
MOTT	Ministry of Transportation and Transit
MPOs	Metropolitan Planning Organizations
ODOT	Oregon Department of Transportation
PSRC	Puget Sound Regional Council
RTPOs	Regional Transportation Planning Organizations
SDP	Service Development Plan
WSDOT	Washington State Department of Transportation

Introduction

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), in partnership with transportation agencies in Oregon and British Columbia, is studying how high-speed rail (HSR) could address projected regional growth and serve as a catalyst for a stronger, better-connected Cascadia Megaregion — which includes the metropolitan areas of Vancouver, British Columbia, Seattle, Washington, and Portland, Oregon ([Figure 1](#)).

The Cascadia Megaregion is on track for significant growth over the next several decades, with an estimated additional 3.4 million people by 2050.^[1] Within Washington state, the population is projected to increase by 28 percent between 2020 and 2050.^[2]

HSR services, like the proposed Cascadia High-Speed Rail (Cascadia HSR), can reach speeds of at least 160 miles per hour, and would complement existing Amtrak Cascades passenger rail service. While a specific route has not been identified for Cascadia HSR, the project would connect the three metropolitan areas in the megaregion.

The Cascadia HSR Project^[3] is part of the WSDOT Cascadia High Speed Rail and I-5 Program (Cascadia Program), a transformative megaprogram established to plan and deliver investments for an integrated, multimodal transportation system for the megaregion.

As required by 2025 Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5161, Section 310 (4)(b), this report provides a status update to the transportation committees of the Legislature and the Office of Financial Management on ongoing HSR Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program efforts.



Figure 1. Cascadia HSR potential corridor area

¹ [BC Stats \(2025\)](#), [Oregon Blue Book \(2024\)](#), [Washington State Office of Financial Management \(2025\)](#), [Portland State University \(2025\)](#)

² [State population forecast | Office of Financial Management](#)

³ 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”.

Background

Cascadia HSR coordination with other modes

The Legislature directed WSDOT to coordinate several concurrent transportation planning efforts related to the future transportation system in western Washington (2023 ESHB 1125, Section 2019 (10)). In 2023, WSDOT integrated the I-5 Master Plan and Cascadia HSR planning efforts into one program, the Cascadia Program, and continues to coordinate with air mobility, Amtrak Cascades, and other related modes and regional planning efforts. The integrated Cascadia Program provides the opportunity for WSDOT to look holistically at highway, rail and other travel modes to address the future transportation needs of western Washington communities.

As required by ESSB 5161, Section 219 (7), WSDOT submitted a report detailing the approach to coordinated planning across these modes on November 1, 2025. Coordination across the WSDOT Cascadia Program; Rail, Freight and Ports Division; and the Aviation Division will continue as the teams collaborate on deliverables, develop and review alternatives, and approach key milestones.

The Cascadia Program will lead WSDOT's coordination between these modes and with other WSDOT divisions and regions to share data and resources, align methodologies where possible, and coordinate outreach to regional and local governments. This will provide the Legislature with the information needed to make future investment decisions.

WSDOT's integrated approach to multimodal system planning will foster the strategic use of resources and a comprehensive understanding of the range of solutions to meet anticipated growth, one of which could be HSR.

Corridor ID Program and funding

In December 2023, Cascadia HSR was accepted into the Corridor ID Program by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).^[4] The Corridor ID Program is a grant pipeline, which means WSDOT does not need to compete for funding in subsequent phases as long as requirements to advance to the next step are met.

As part of the Corridor ID Program, Cascadia HSR has received two grant awards, summarized in [Table 1](#). WSDOT also received a Corridor ID Program award for Amtrak Cascades. Cascadia HSR is coordinating closely with the Rail, Freight and Ports Division, leading that effort.

⁴ WSDOT is concurrently developing an [Amtrak Cascades Service Development Plan](#), which is currently in Step 1 of FRA's Corridor ID Program.

Table 1. Corridor ID Program grant awards for Cascadia HSR

Date	Title and description of Grant	Federal Funding	State Match Requirement
December 2023	FRA Step 1 grant award In December 2023, FRA awarded WSDOT a grant to complete the Corridor ID Program Step 1 deliverables, including the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of work. • Schedule and budget for the Service Development Plan (SDP). FRA formally accepted the Corridor ID Program Step 1 deliverables in November 2024.	\$500K	N/A
November 2024	FRA Step 2 grant award In November 2024, FRA awarded and obligated federal funding for the Corridor ID Program Step 2. During the 2025 Washington legislative session, the Legislature appropriated the required state funding match for the 2025-2027 biennium. These state and federal funds will be used to deliver the SDP scope of work through 2028 (outlined below) as agreed upon by WSDOT and FRA.	\$49.7M	\$5.5M

Program status update

Cascadia HSR Service Development Plan

The project is in the preliminary stages of delivering the SDP, which is on track for completion by the end of 2028. This phase of work will evaluate key factors like environmental and geographic constraints, ridership potential, and operating requirements to inform travel times and route options. One of the key outcomes is a range of potential route options for further analysis. A more specific route alignment and station locations will be identified in a future stage of project development after 2028.

The SDP will be supported by transportation planning, high-level conceptual engineering, consideration of environmental factors, and coordination throughout the corridor with Tribes and First Nations, rail partners, regional and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), communities, and the private sector.

SDP activities in 2025

In 2025, the project team completed work on the deliverables shown in [Table 2](#). As part of the requirements of the Corridor ID Program, FRA must review and accept these deliverables before the project can begin the tasks to advance route and service options analysis.

Table 2. SDP 2025 deliverables

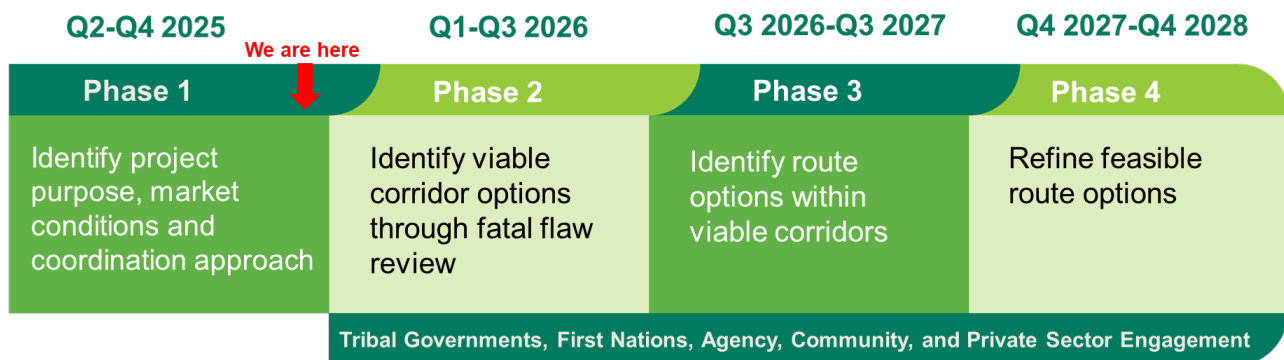
Deliverable	Description	Status
Project Management Plan	Describes how the project team will structure work throughout the four-year SDP process. Identifies the schedule and FRA approvals needed to move through each required deliverable.	Accepted by FRA on April 15, 2025
Coordination Plans	<p>Describes how Cascadia HSR will engage with different interested parties throughout the development of the SDP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Railroad Stakeholder Engagement Plan: Host railroads, operating railroads, commuter and intercity rail operators, and other potential industry partners.• Tribal Governments, First Nations, and Agencies Coordination Plan: Federally recognized Tribes, First Nations, and federal, state, regional, and local agencies.• Public Coordination Plan: Public, civic, and business groups, public officials, interested parties, non-federally recognized Tribes, and potential riders.	Submitted to FRA on November 3, 2025

Deliverable	Description	Status
Preliminary Market Analysis	Considers existing and projected characteristics of the transportation market, including constraints and the reliability of existing modes that support travel between the metropolitan areas. Informs the development of the preliminary draft Purpose and Need Statement in 2025 and the route and service options analysis starting in 2026.	Submitted to FRA on November 3, 2025
Preliminary Draft Purpose and Need Statement	Provides a foundation for potential routes and service options. Informed by past studies and existing plans, it will continue to be refined through the SDP process and future NEPA environmental review.	Submitted to FRA on November 3, 2025
Methodology Work Products	Describes the integrated methodology for conducting the options analysis in 2026 that includes technical, operational, and environmental considerations.	Submitted to FRA on November 3, 2025

SDP activities from 2026 to 2028

In 2026, the project will begin the options analysis to identify preliminary route and service options that consider existing conditions, operational requirements, and environmental constraints. The options analysis will be completed in four phases, as shown in [Figure 2](#).

Figure 2. SDP – options analysis timeline



The primary focus of SDP activities in 2026 is an options analysis to identify potential corridors that address the preliminary draft Purpose and Need Statement, respond to the market analysis, and are technically feasible. The project team will consider environmental planning, governance, and financial analysis as iterative elements along the way to identify options for how the project could be administered and financed throughout the project lifecycle.

Coordination structure

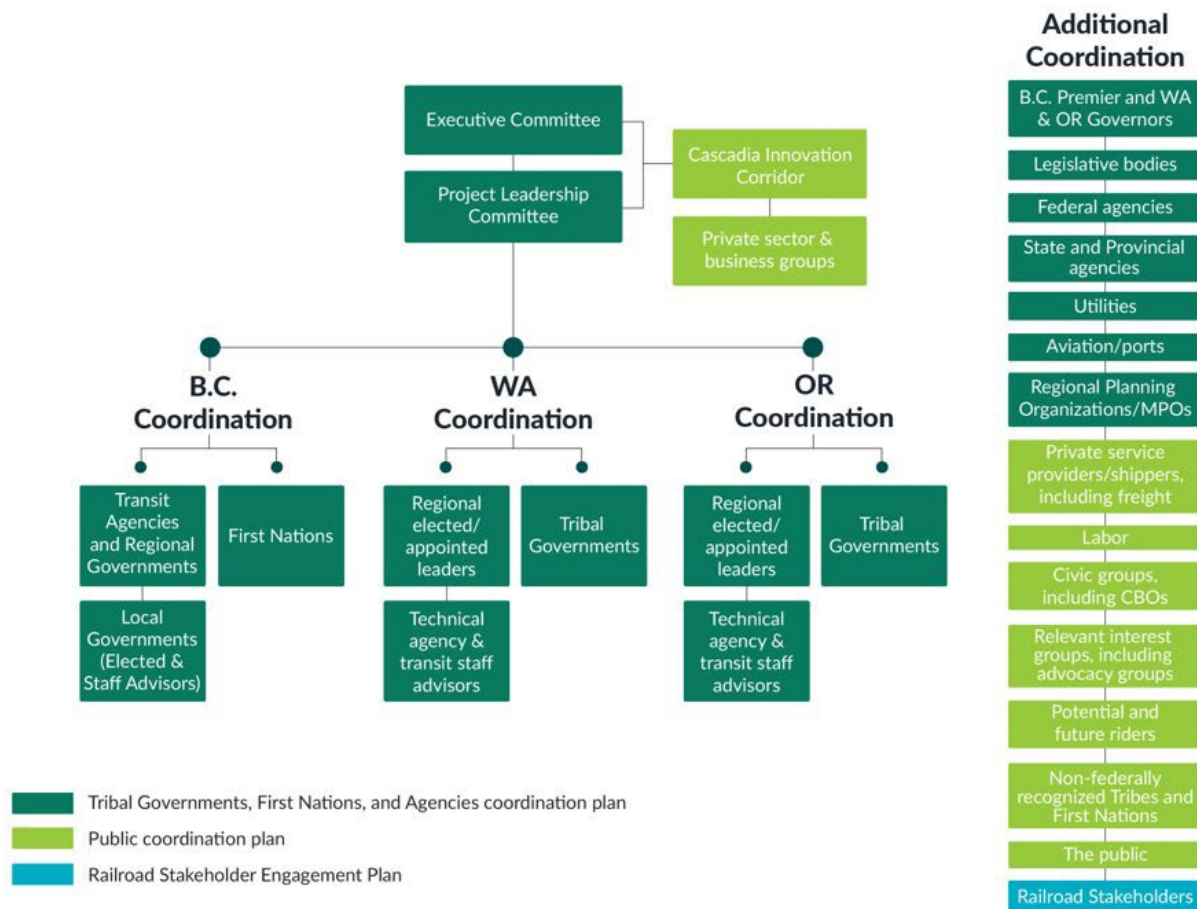
Current structure

In May 2024, following discussion with the Technical Committee and concurrence from the Policy Committee, Cascadia HSR 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. The first phase of the coordinating entity structure supported decision-making in alignment with the project's needs during Corridor ID Program scope development and start-up activities.

In the last year, Executive and Project Leadership Committee meetings have focused on preparing coordination plans across the three jurisdictions, sharing data, and partner review and feedback for the preliminary draft Purpose and Need and market analysis. 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.

In the coordination plans required by the FRA for Corridor ID Step 2, WSDOT confirmed that the Executive Committee and Project Leadership Committee will be the primary groups for coordination on FRA deliverables and plans for continuing SDP development in 2026 and beyond. In addition, the project team is planning coordination with regional transit agencies and governments, technical staff, Tribal Governments in Washington and Oregon, and First Nations within British Columbia, as shown in [Figure 3](#).

Figure 3. Cascadia HSR proposed coordination structure



*Note: Draft pending FRA approval

Project Leadership Committee

The Project Leadership Committee is comprised of senior staff from the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MOTT), WSDOT, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), Oregon Metro, Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), and Cascadia Innovation Corridor. The role of the Project Leadership Committee is to advise the project team, provide strategy insight, and support project planning activities and project execution. The Project Leadership Committee will continue to meet regularly throughout 2026 to inform the options analysis.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is comprised of executive-level leaders from HSR project partner agencies: MOTT, WSDOT, ODOT and Oregon Metro. The role of the Executive Committee is to reinforce the vision and principles for Cascadia HSR throughout the development of the SDP and provide oversight of the Project Leadership Committee. Executive Committee members champion the vision of HSR within their jurisdiction and help navigate barriers to planning. Executive Committee members convene at key concurrence points to provide strategic guidance on planning and engagement approaches, support project decision-making, and endorse deliverables before submission to the FRA for the SDP.

Regional planning coordination

The project will continue to coordinate with MPOs, Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs), and British Columbia regional planning organizations in the project corridor (shown in [Table 3](#)) to update them on the project, support data collection, and coordinate briefings.

Table 3: MPOs, RTPOs, and British Columbia regional planning organizations

Boxes shaded in light blue and with [*] below denote RTPOs who are on the Project Leadership and/or Executive Committees.

Organization	County/region
British Columbia	
Metro Vancouver	Lower Mainland
TransLink	Lower Mainland
Washington	
Whatcom Council of Governments	Whatcom
Skagit Council of Governments	Skagit
*Puget Sound Regional Council	King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish
Thurston Regional Planning Council	Thurston
Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization	Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific, and Wahkiakum
SW Washington Regional Transportation Council	Clark
Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments	Cowlitz and Wahkiakum
Oregon	
*Oregon Metro	Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington

Legislative engagement

The Legislature is a key partner in continuing to advance Cascadia HSR. 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.

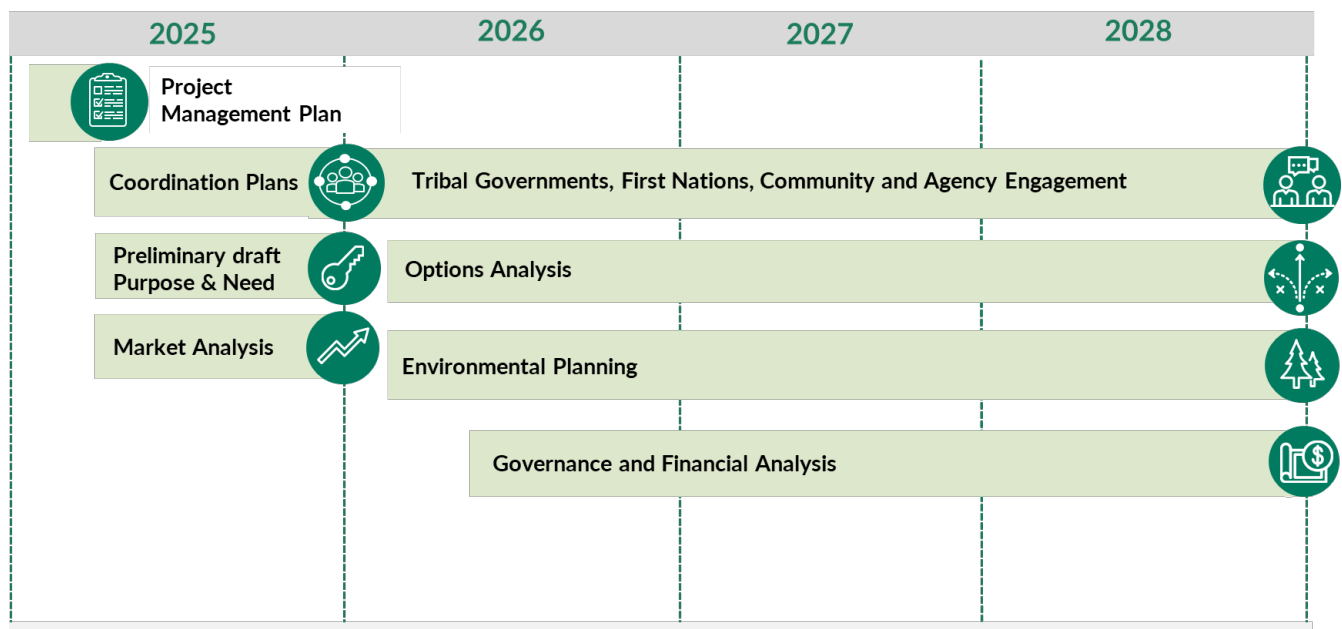
In addition, WSDOT will not move forward with a programmatic environmental review or any other activities related to the Corridor ID Program unless authorized to do so by the Legislature.

Next steps

In November 2025, the project team submitted six deliverables to FRA: three coordination plans, the preliminary draft Purpose and Need Statement, Market Analysis, and Methodology Work Product describing the approach to the work in 2026. When the FRA review is completed in December 2025, the project team will finalize these materials, and final FRA approval is expected before the end of the year. Starting in 2026 and concluding by the end of 2028 (Figure 4), the Cascadia Program will:

- Document the existing conditions in the megaregion to identify viable HSR corridors, representing potential route areas.
- Begin to identify potential route and service options.
- Begin engagement of Tribes, First Nations, RTPOs, MPOs, and British Columbia regional planning organizations, agencies, and private partners to inform refinements to the preliminary draft Purpose and Need Statement and solicit input on the options analysis.

Figure 4. SDP task schedule



Appendix A:
2025 ESSB 5161, Section 310 (4)(a-b)

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(4)(a) \$7,500,000 of the carbon emissions reduction account—state appropriation and \$25,076,000 of the multimodal transportation account—federal appropriation are provided solely to support the department's continued work on a service development plan for a new ultra high-speed ground transportation corridor under the federal corridor identification and development program (L2021074). The department may not move forward with programmatic environmental review unless authorized to do so by the legislature.

(b) The department must coordinate with the chairs and ranking members of the transportation committees of the legislature to provide periodic updates and check-in points on progress made over the course of the biennium, with updates available no less frequently than semiannually, and must include written status updates to be provided with sufficient time for review prior to any update meetings held. An annual report on ultra high-speed ground transportation corridor identification and development program efforts must be provided to the transportation committees of the legislature and the office of financial management by December 1, 2025 and December 1, 2026.

Appendix B:
Additional HSR Reports submitted to the
Legislature in 2025

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[Coordinated Transportation System Planning for Western Washington](#), November 2025

[Cascadia High-Speed Rail Project Status Update](#), June 2025