

# Oregon Passenger Rail Project



*ODOT is studying options for improved passenger rail service between the Portland urban area and the Eugene-Springfield urban area – a 125 mile segment that is part of the federally designated Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor.*

The Oregon Department of Transportation is conducting the Oregon Passenger Rail project as the next step in improving passenger rail service in the Oregon segment of the federally designated Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor.

The project will include completing a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The Federal Railroad Administration requires this study to be eligible to apply for future federal funding for design and construction of improvements.

ODOT is studying ways to improve intercity passenger rail service between the Eugene-Springfield area and the Portland-Vancouver, Wash., area. The study will help decide on a general passenger rail route and evaluate options for station locations, train frequency, trip time and improving on-time performance.

## **Project Decision Structure**

Governor Kitzhaber established the Oregon Passenger Rail Leadership Council to guide the project and develop consensus-based recommendations that will be submitted to FRA for final approval. The Leadership Council is a core advisory group of mostly elected officials from the Willamette Valley.

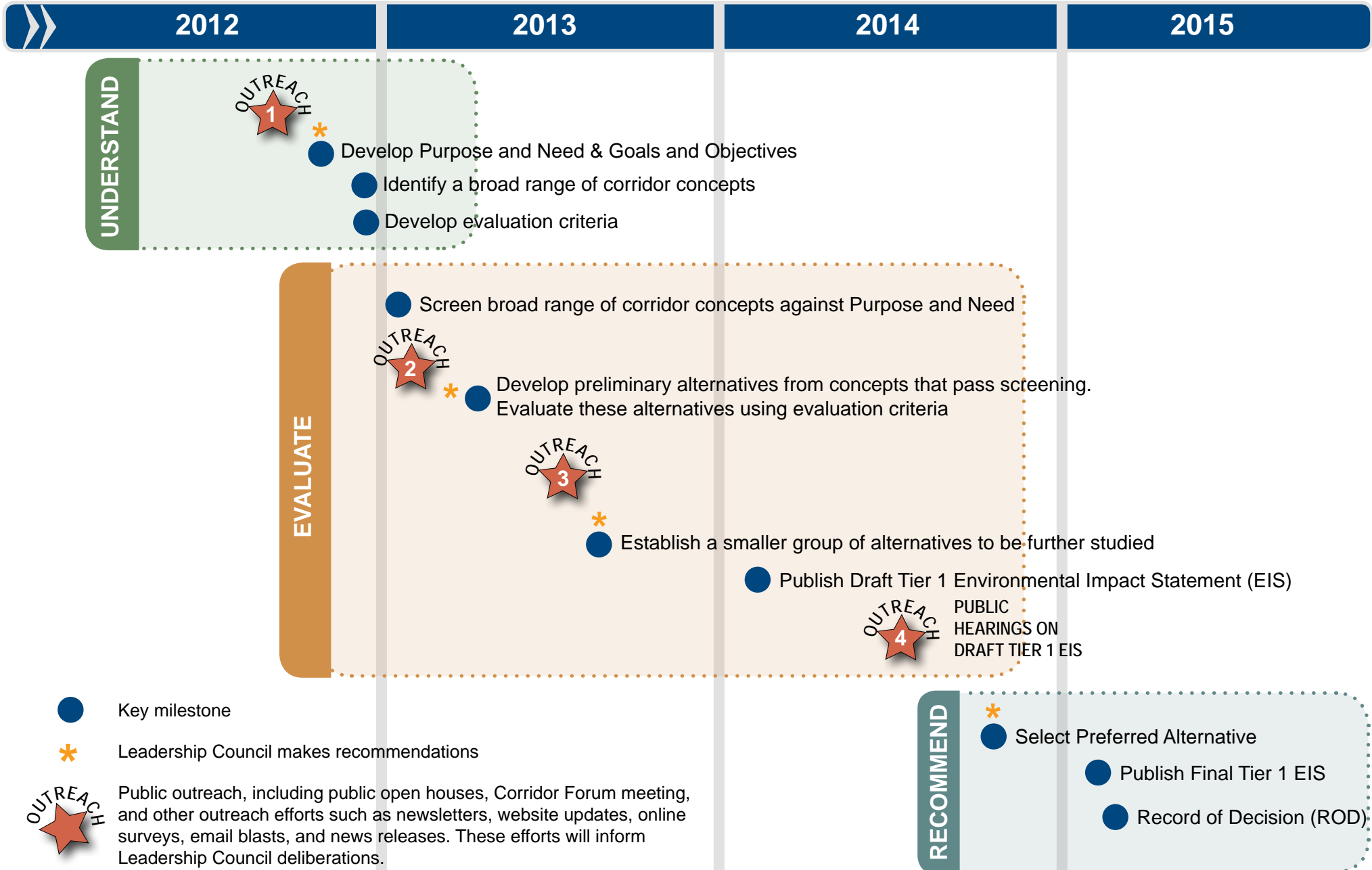
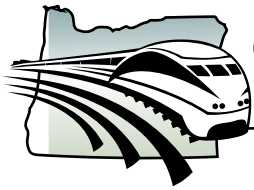
In addition to the Leadership Council, ODOT will establish other groups. The Corridor Forum includes directors and elected representatives from cities and counties and key agencies and stakeholders in the study area. This forum focuses on broad-level issues, and its input will be provided to the Leadership Council. Community advisory groups will be established along the corridor to consider local issues and provide input to the Corridor Forum and Leadership Council. These groups will provide local stakeholders with an opportunity to help shape alignment options in their specific geographic area. In addition, an industry forum for railroad owners and operators and a technical advisory team will also be established.

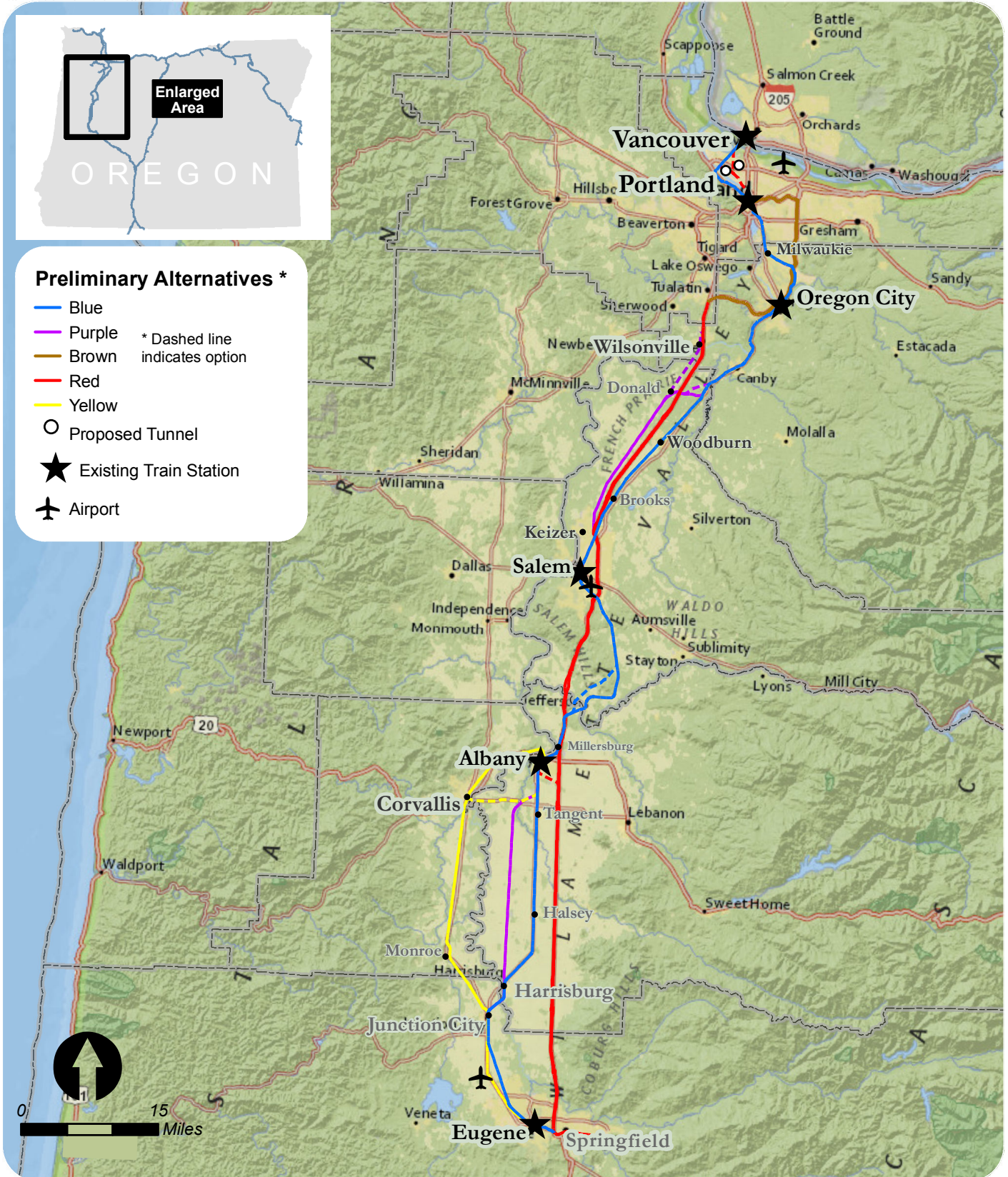
For more detailed information, go to: <http://www.oregonpassengerrail.org/>

➤ For more information about the Oregon Passenger Rail project, contact:

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April 24, 2013

Preliminary Alternatives



## Preliminary Alternatives

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April 23, 2013

The following preliminary alternatives are based on the corridor concepts developed using public input received during the fall of 2012, and have been refined after screening, public outreach in January 2013, additional engineering development, and initial screening based on the project Purpose and Need.

### Main Concepts

Several corridors and sections have been identified for travel between Eugene-Springfield and Portland-Vancouver.

**Blue:** The blue corridor generally follows the existing Amtrak Cascades route, potentially within or near the Union Pacific rail line between Eugene-Springfield, Junction City, Albany, Salem, Keizer, Woodburn, Oregon City, Milwaukie, and Portland. It crosses the Willamette River in Portland near Union Station before continuing northward either on or near existing BNSF tracks to Vancouver, WA.

**Red:** The red corridor runs along Interstate 5, either within or near the current highway footprint. It follows the highway between Eugene-Springfield, Albany, Salem, Keizer, and Wilsonville. The red corridor would be all new track devoted to intercity passenger rail service.

- South of Salem, the red corridor would require a tunnel to get through the hilly topography.
- Near Interstate 205, the red corridor concept would separate from I-5 and follow I-205 and I-84 into central Portland.
- North of central Portland, the red corridor could continue on its own corridor, or connect with the blue corridor.

**Purple:** The purple corridor generally follows the existing Oregon Electric rail line, with several options. Some of the concepts for the purple alignment were eliminated during the screening process due to environmental, engineering, or social constraints.

- It travels westward through Eugene before turning north near the Eugene Airport, and then travels through Junction City and Harrisburg before connecting with the blue or red corridor in Albany.
- North of Salem, the purple corridor could travel north through Donald to Wilsonville to connect to the red corridor or would travel east toward Canby to connect with the blue corridor.

**Yellow:** The yellow corridor concept starts in the Eugene-Springfield area, and continues west of the purple corridor to travel through Monroe and Corvallis, and then either travels east to connect with the red or blue line in Albany.



## Goals and Objectives

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These goals and objectives identify the primary issues the project is intended to address, and will help shape evaluation measures that will be used to assess the preliminary route alternatives.

The following goals and objectives reflect comments heard from the six open houses held in January, feedback received from agency representatives and the public through January 22<sup>nd</sup> and at the Corridor Forum meeting January 25<sup>th</sup>, and input from the Leadership Council at its January 31<sup>st</sup> meeting. These goals and objectives were approved by the Leadership Council on January 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Goal 1: Improve passenger rail mobility and accessibility to communities in the Willamette Valley.**

Objectives:

- 1A – Provide a viable alternative to auto, air, and bus travel between Eugene and Vancouver, WA.
- 1B – Provide reliable and frequent passenger rail service.
- 1C – Support multimodal integration at each passenger rail station.
- 1D – Allow for future passenger rail improvements, including higher speeds.

### **Goal 2: Protect freight-rail capacity and investments in the corridor, and maintain safety.**

Objectives:

- 2A – Does not increase conflicts between passenger rail or freight rail and vehicles.
- 2B – Protect freight-rail carrying capability.

### **Goal 3: Plan, design, implement, maintain, and operate a cost-effective project.**

Objectives:

- 3A – Develop a strategy that can be reasonably funded and leveraged with range of investment tools for construction and operation.
- 3B – Serve the maximum number of people with every dollar invested.

### **Goal 4: Provide an affordable and equitable travel alternative.**

Objectives:

- 4A – Provide a viable and affordable alternative for travelers.
- 4B – Provide equitable investments and service, with consideration to race/ethnicity and income.

**Goal 5: Be compatible with passenger rail investments planned in Washington State.**

Objective:

- 5A – Provide passenger rail service to meet the existing and future passenger rail demand for an interconnected system in the Pacific Northwest High Speed Rail corridor.

**Goal 6: Promote community health and quality of life for communities along the corridor.**

Objectives:

- 6A – Benefit communities within the corridor.
- 6B – Minimize negative impacts to communities along the corridor.

**Goal 7: Protect and preserve the natural and built environment.**

Objectives:

- 7A – Support Oregon’s commitment to the preservation of resource lands and local land use and transportation planning.
- 7B – Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in support of national and state policies to slow climate change.
- 7C – Avoid and minimize impacts to the natural environment and cultural resources.



## **Purpose and Need Statement** *(January 9, 2013)*

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Oregon Passenger Rail Project is to improve the frequency, convenience, speed and reliability of passenger rail service along the Oregon segment of the federally-designated Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor (PNWRC) in a manner that will:

- Provide riders with an efficient, safe, equitable and affordable alternative to highway, bus, and air travel;
- Be a cost-effective investment;
- Protect freight-rail carrying capability<sup>1</sup>;
- Support the ongoing implementation of regional high speed inter-city passenger rail in the PNWRC between the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area and Vancouver, British Columbia;
- Be compatible with the Washington State portion of the PNWRC;
- Promote economic development;
- Avoid or minimize community and environmental impacts; and
- Integrate with existing and planned multi-modal transportation networks.

### **Need**

Multiple transportation, land use, socio-economic, and environmental considerations drive the need for this project, including:

- **Increasing Intercity and Regional Travel Demands**

Eight of the ten largest cities in Oregon are along the corridor, including the state's three largest metropolitan areas of Portland, Salem-Keizer, and Eugene-Springfield. Willamette Valley population growth has increased intercity and regional travel demands, resulting in decreased highway mobility and increased demand for alternative travel modes including rail for business, personal, and tourist travel. Passenger rail ridership on the existing state-sponsored Cascade service between Portland and Eugene (that also serves stations in Oregon City, Salem, and Albany) has increased 22 percent since 2009 and by 238 percent

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<sup>1</sup> Cargo load that can be transported by freight-rail.

since 1995, and is forecast to continue to increase with Willamette Valley population growth. Over the next 25 years, the population of the Willamette Valley is forecast to grow by approximately 35 percent, with an overall population reaching approximately 3.6 million by the year 2035. During this same period, freight volume (carried by both trains and trucks) in Oregon is expected to grow by approximately 60 percent. The increase in both freight and passenger rail demand creates a need for rail infrastructure investment.

- **Limited Rail System Capacity and Competing Service Needs**

Freight and passenger rail between Eugene and Portland have competing service needs in a corridor with limited rail system capacity. Forecast growth places added burden on the existing rail network to move both people and freight. Currently, passenger trains between Union Station in Portland and Eugene have operating rights on Union Pacific Railroad owned tracks. BNSF Railway owns the railroad tracks in the congested corridor between Union Station in Portland and Washington State.

Scheduled end-to-end passenger rail travel time between the Eugene Depot and Portland's Union Station averaged 2 hours and 40 minutes (not including delay) in 2012, approximately 40 minutes longer than the time it takes to travel the same distance in a passenger vehicle. From 2006 through 2011, passenger trains in the corridor were on time an average of approximately 65 percent of the time. Current train delay ratios in this corridor are similar to the conditions for much larger and denser rail systems. Existing freight rail capacity must be preserved or enhanced to be consistent with statewide and regional freight goals and forecasts. New capital investments will help alleviate existing capacity issues and create opportunities for improved freight and passenger rail operations.

- **Declining State and Local Roadway Funding**

Declining state and local roadway funding will limit the ability to fund roadway capacity projects to improve mobility. Oregon's funding outlook for financing roadway improvements is severely constrained due to lower gas tax revenue (primarily from the trend of more fuel efficient vehicles and lower vehicles miles traveled), and Oregon's repayment of bonds from recent critical transportation infrastructure improvements which reduces the funding available for future projects. Communities within the state are looking beyond roadway projects towards other types of transportation projects to leverage available funding sources for non-roadway projects to improve mobility and to provide an interconnected multimodal system that serves both regional and local networks.

- **Increase Economic Vitality of the Corridor**

Increasingly congested highways and rail corridors have negative effects on the economy of communities in the Willamette Valley. Transportation investments are needed to reduce travel delay and improve economic market access and competitiveness. With declining state and local roadway funding, rail infrastructure investments can reduce congestion's effect on the economic vitality of the corridor. Rail infrastructure investments with improved passenger rail operations and improved infrastructure for freight operations will improve market access within the corridor for individuals and goods, and will improve the economic competitiveness of the communities within the Willamette Valley and Oregon as a whole.

- **Promoting Transportation System Safety and Security**

Stability and security of both rail passengers and the surface transportation system within the corridor can be bolstered by providing viable alternatives to highway travel. Per passenger mile traveled, rail has historically had lower fatality rates than highway travel. If there is a major accident or prolonged disruption to travel on Interstate 5, travelers will need options to move through the project corridor. Improved passenger rail service would increase the resiliency of the transportation system in the corridor. Finally, there is a need to address the long-term rail safety for freight and passenger rail on existing shared railroad right-of-way.

- **Changing Transportation Demand resulting from Demographic Changes**

Transportation demand within the State of Oregon has been changing over the past decade, consistent with a national trend toward reduced driving within and between urban areas. Between 2000 and 2010, Oregon's population became older with fewer households having access to an automobile. In urbanized areas, a growing number of people of legal driving age are also choosing a car-free lifestyle. These demographic trends are contributing to an increasing local and regional demand for non-automobile travel options, including intercity passenger rail service.