

Chapter 47.79

HIGH-SPEED GROUND TRANSPORTATION

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47.79.010 Legislative declaration. The legislature recognizes that major intercity transportation corridors in this state are becoming increasingly congested. In these corridors, population is expected to grow by nearly forty percent over the next twenty years, while employment will grow by nearly fifty percent. The estimated seventy-five percent increase in intercity travel demand must be accommodated to ensure state economic vitality and protect the state's quality of life.

The legislature finds that high-speed ground transportation offers a safer, more efficient, and environmentally responsible alternative to increasing highway capacity. High-speed ground transportation can complement and enhance existing air transportation systems. High-speed ground transportation can be compatible with growth management plans in counties and cities served by such a system. Further, high-speed ground transportation offers a reliable, all-weather service capable of significant energy savings over other intercity modes. [1993 c 381 § 1.]

47.79.020 Program established—Goals. The legislature finds that there is substantial public benefit to establishing a high-speed ground transportation program in this state. The program shall implement the recommendations of the high-speed ground transportation steering committee report dated October 15, 1992. The program shall be administered by the department of transportation in close cooperation with the utilities and transportation commission and affected cities and counties.

The high-speed ground transportation program shall have the following goals:

(1) Implement high-speed ground transportation service offering top speeds over 150 m.p.h. between Everett and Portland, Oregon by 2020. This would be accomplished by meeting the intermediate objectives of a maximum travel time between downtown Portland and downtown Seattle of two hours and thirty minutes by the year 2000 and maximum travel time of two hours by the year 2010;

(2) Implement high-speed ground transportation service offering top speeds over 150 m.p.h. between Everett and Vancouver, B.C. by 2025;

(3) Implement high-speed ground transportation service offering top speeds over 150 m.p.h. between Seattle and Spokane by 2030.

The department of transportation shall, subject to legislative appropriation, implement such projects as necessary to achieve these goals in accordance with the implementation plans identified in RCW 47.79.030 and 47.79.040. [1993 c 381 § 2.]

47.79.030 Project priority—Funding sources. The legislature finds it important to develop public support and awareness of the benefits of high-speed ground transportation by developing high-quality intercity passenger rail service as a first step. This high-quality intercity passenger rail service shall be developed through incremental upgrading of the existing service. The department of transportation shall, subject to legislative appropriation, develop a prioritized list of projects to improve existing passenger rail service and begin new passenger rail service, to include but not be limited to:

- (1) Improvement of depots;
- (2) Improved grade crossing protection or grade crossing elimination;
- (3) Enhanced train signals to improve rail corridor capacity and increase train speeds;
- (4) Revised track geometry or additional trackage to improve ride quality and increase train speeds; and
- (5) Contract for new or improved service in accordance with federal requirements to improve service frequency.

Service enhancements and station improvements must be based on the extent to which local comprehensive plans contribute to the viability of intercity passenger rail service, including providing efficient connections with other transportation modes such as transit, intercity bus, and roadway networks. Before spending state moneys on these projects, the department of transportation shall seek federal, local, and private funding participation to the greatest extent possible. Funding priorities for station improvements must also be based on the level of local and private in-kind and cash contributions. [1993 c 381 § 3.]

47.79.040 Rail passenger plan. The legislature recognizes the need to plan for the high-speed ground transportation service and the high-quality intercity rail passenger service set forth in RCW 47.79.020 and 47.79.030. The department of transportation shall, subject to legislative appropriation, develop a rail passenger plan through the conduct of studies addressing, but not limited to, the following areas:

- (1) Refined ridership estimates;
- (2) Preliminary location and environmental analysis on new corridors;
- (3) Detailed station location assessments in concert with affected local jurisdictions;
- (4) Coordination with the air transportation commission on state-wide air transportation policy and its effects on high-speed ground transportation service; and
- (5) Coordination with the governments of Oregon and British Columbia, when appropriate, on alignment, station location, and environmental analysis. [1993 c 381 § 4.]

47.79.900 Effective date—1993 c 381. This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect July 1, 1993. [1993 c 381 § 5.]

