



Research Notes

RSN 11-01

August 2010

High-Speed Rail Survey Results

The Oregon Department of Transportation Rail Division recently conducted a survey on high-speed rail. The objective of the survey was to provide the public with an opportunity to give feedback and offer suggestions to proposed DRAFT goals for improving Oregon's passenger rail service between Eugene and Portland. These goals include improving on-time performance from 68 percent to 95 percent, increasing daily roundtrips from two to six, and reducing travel time from two hours and thirty-five minutes to two hours.

The survey was conducted from April 2010 to June 2010 using both a print and a web version with identical questions. The print version of the survey was distributed at open house meetings on high-speed rail held in Eugene, Junction City, Albany, Salem, Woodburn, Wilsonville, Tualatin, Lake Oswego, Oregon City, Milwaukie and Portland. The web version was posted to the Rail Division's web site with a link to the online survey. The survey was developed as a tool to engage the public in a discussion about high-speed rail. It is important to recognize that the survey results do not represent a random sample and are not scientific in nature. Instead the results represent the viewpoints of people interested in the topic and not necessarily the sentiments of the general population.

A total of 2,161 surveys were completed; 450 via the print version and 1,711 by web. The survey consisted of 22 questions with nine of the questions having an open-ended format. Data from each survey method were compiled, cleaned and coded. For each open-ended question, a random sample of 100 responses was used to generate general response categories. Each of the responses were then read and placed in a category and when a response touched on multiple categories, the response was coded for each category.

Survey respondents were from 146 different cities, and while the majority of respondents reported living in Oregon, surveys came in from other national and international locations. The largest numbers of respondents reported living in Portland (446), Corvallis (384), Eugene (350), Salem (172), Lake Oswego (109), Albany (85), Tualatin (71), Beaverton (27), Monroe (25) and Springfield (25).

The majority of people (65.9%) responded that they did not currently use passenger rail service. A common reason given was that the train did not stop at their desired location or the person did not travel frequently. While rail users were the minority of survey respondents, 72.8 percent of all respondents indicated that expanding rail was important to them. The most common explanation for why rail was important to them was to reduce reliance on the automobile/support a more environmentally friendly mode (35.5%), and to reduce congestion (20.2%).

In response to the DRAFT goals, respondents most frequently stated that they agreed with all of the goals. The most agreement over a single goal was to increase on-time performance. A total of 10.7 percent of respondents did not think a 30 minute reduction in travel time was great enough and/or felt that the train should operate at higher speeds.

Respondents were also asked to rank the performance options (which correspond with the goals) as most important, second most important and third most important, nearly 40% of respondents ranked both trains arriving and departing on time (39.5%) and increasing daily round trips (40.2%) as most important, while 24.2 % ranked reducing travel time as most important.

When asked to share their concerns about expanding passenger rail between Eugene and Portland, respondents most often stated that they had no concerns (22.4%). The second most common response was that the plan was not ambitious enough (10.1%), and the third was that it would involve high costs or taxes (9.0%).

In describing how the service could be designed to work better, the most common response was to increase the frequency of the trains (17.8%). Respondents also suggested including additional stops (16.3%), reducing travel times (13.9%), improving on-time performance (12.6%), and improving connections with other transportation

modes (10.3%) among many other suggestions. Additionally, when discussing multimodal connectivity people frequently mentioned their desire to easily bring their bicycles on the train.

Overall ODOT's high-speed rail survey was met with a large response, demonstrating the sizable amount of public interest in the future of high-speed rail. Findings from this survey will be considered while developing the next Oregon Rail Plan and future improvements in the Amtrak *Cascades* service, sponsored by the states of Oregon and Washington.



Northbound Amtrak *Cascades* at the Salem station



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Additional information on Oregon's passenger rail program is also available at:
http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/RAIL/Passenger_Rail.shtml