Summary of Public Outreach and Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement
March 2019

Prepared for
Oregon Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

Prepared by
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Overview

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) released the Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Oregon Passenger Rail Project (Project) in October 2018. The EPA published a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register on October 19, 2018 (83 FR 53053). Stakeholders were encouraged to provide comments on the Tier 1 DEIS through various opportunities from October 18 through December 19, 2018.

During the public comment period, ODOT and FRA received a total of 212 comments from members of the public and agency/organization representatives at five (5) public events, through the Project website, and by email and letter.

Project stakeholders and the general public were provided with a detailed description of the Preferred Alternative for the Project and the findings included in the Tier 1 DEIS. During the public comment period, there were several opportunities for Project stakeholders and the general public to ask questions and provide formal comment on the Tier 1 DEIS findings.

This report includes a summary of the outreach and public comments received through the following forums and events:

- In-person open houses and public hearing events in five locations along the Project corridor in November and December 2018.
- Online open house from November 28 to December 18, 2018.
- Comments received through the website comment form and emails during the outreach period.
- Informational tables set up at Eugene Saturday Market, Salem Station 100 Year Anniversary event, and Union Station in Portland in November 2018.
- Letters and emails received by the Project team between October 18 and December 19, 2018.

Open House/Public Hearings

ODOT and FRA held a series of five open houses/public hearings in November and December 2018 in the following locations:

- **Portland – November 28, 2018**
  ODOT Region 1 – 123 Flanders St., Portland
- **Oregon City – November 29, 2018**
  Pioneer Community Center – 615 5th St., Oregon City
- **Albany – December 4, 2018**
Purpose and Format
The purpose of these events was to provide the public information presented in the Tier 1 DEIS in a drop-in style format involving display boards, a presentation by members of the Project team and an opportunity for interested persons to give verbal or written testimony.

Attendees received informational handouts about the Tier 1 DEIS findings as well as a public comment card. Participants were encouraged to review the information presented at the open house and discuss the findings with the several Project team members (i.e., ODOT and FRA staff and consultants) who attended the events. At each event, a presentation highlighted the results of the Tier 1 DEIS.

A Spanish-language interpreter was available at each meeting to interpret the informational displays, presentation, and attendee questions or comments.

At each event, there was an opportunity for attendees to give verbal testimony to a representative from FRA or ODOT, documented by a court reporter, or one-on-one with the court reporter.

FRA and ODOT will respond to substantive comments received during the public comment period in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The FEIS will also include a summary of the public comments received.

Participation
Of the 176 people who attended the open house and public hearing events, 51 provided input using the comment forms and nine (9) gave verbal testimony. Attendance at each event was as follows:

- **Portland**: 30 participants
- **Oregon City**: 26 participants
- **Salem**: 31 participants
- **Albany**: 16 participants
- **Eugene**: 73 participants

Online Open House
There was an online open house hosted on ODOT's Project website available from November 28 to December 18, 2018. The purpose of the online event was to:

- Present the Preferred Alternative for the Project.
- Present the findings from the Tier 1 DEIS.
- Provide the opportunity for public comment on the Tier 1 DEIS prior to the selection of the Final Preferred Alternative by FRA.

A total of 345 people visited the online open house. Of those, 59 provided comments using the online open house comment form.

**Online Open House Format**

The same information and materials that were presented or displayed during the in-person open house and public hearing events were available during the online open house. The online open house had four virtual stations:

1) **Project Overview** – This station included a brief video featuring Oregon State Representative Nancy Nathanson, who gave an overview of Project considerations and how the public has been informed and has contributed to the Project to date. Additionally, participants could view a map of the Project area and read a summary of the NEPA process.

2) **Purpose, Need, Goals and Objectives** – Information about the Project’s Purpose, Need, Goals and Objectives was available for review.

3) **Alternatives in the Tier 1 DEIS** – This station summarized the findings included in the Tier 1 DEIS for Alternative 1, Alternative 2 and the “no-build” Alternative. This information highlighted station locations, trip time, accommodation for higher speed, capital costs, ridership, the tradeoffs of benefits and negative impacts and a summary of land impacts for each of the Alternatives.

4) **Next Steps and Feedback** – Participants could provide comments in an online open-ended comment form about the alternatives presented in the Tier 1 DEIS. Commenters could choose to provide their name and demographic information with their submission.

**Tier 1 DEIS Viewing Locations**

During the public comment period, Project stakeholders and the general public were able to review hard copies of the Tier 1 DEIS at multiple locations throughout the Project corridor. Copies of the Tier 1 DEIS were available at the following locations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oregon Department of Transportation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ODOT Region 1 Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123 NW Flanders St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland, OR 97209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Oregon Department of Transportation**
Transportation Building
355 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

**Eugene Public Library**
Downtown Library
100 W. 10th Ave.
Eugene, OR 97401

**Albany Public Library**
2450 14th Avenue SE
Albany, Oregon 97322

**Albany City Hall**
333 Broadalbin Street, SW
Albany, OR 97321

**Salem Public Library**
585 Liberty Street SE
Salem OR 97301

**Oregon City Public Library**
606 John Adams St.
Oregon City, OR 97045

**Multnomah County Central Library**
801 SW 10th Avenue
Portland, OR 97205

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**Informational Table Events**

The Project team hosted informational tables at Union Station in Portland, at the Salem Station 100 Year Anniversary Event, and at the Saturday Market in Eugene in September and October 2018. The purpose of these events was to promote the public comment period, the five (5) open houses/public hearings and the online open house, and to outline the findings included in the Tier 1 DEIS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Talked to Project Team</th>
<th>Left Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salem 100 Year Anniversary Event</strong></td>
<td>September 25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eugene Saturday Market</strong></td>
<td>October 20</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Portland Union Station</strong></td>
<td>October 23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notification

The Project team used the following forms of notification to invite people to participate in the public events:

- **Newsletter** – mailed and emailed to 5,360 contacts in the Project’s stakeholder database on October 19, 2018.
- **Website announcement** – posted on October 19, 2018 with ways to comment, event dates and locations.
- **Media release** – distributed on October 19 and November 19, 2018 with ways to comment, including event dates and locations.
- **Community events** – tables at the Salem Station 100 Year Anniversary Event on September 25, 2018, in Eugene at the Saturday Market on October 20, 2018, and in Portland at Union Station on October 23, 2018.
- **Newspaper ads** – there were ads in local newspapers and on a Spanish-language radio channel one week in advance of each meeting. Additionally, the Project team contacted community newsletters at the time of the first media release. Newspapers and newsletters included The Oregonian, Clackamas/Oregon City News, Statesman Journal (Salem region), Albany Democrat-Herald, Lebanon Express, Corvallis Gazette-Times (Lee Enterprises) and The Register-Guard (Eugene region). La Pantera radio channel played Spanish ads a total of 40 times during the dates of the public events.
- **Social media** – the Project team posted about the five (5) open house/public hearing events and the online open house on ODOT's and Amtrak's Facebook and Twitter accounts between October 19 and December 18, 2018.
- **Posters** – displayed posters in train stations along the corridor.
- **Reddit** – submitted two posts to the Salem and Eugene subreddits prior to the open houses and public hearing events.
Public Comment Summary Overview

Overview
Public outreach focused on the findings from the Tier 1 DEIS and the recommended Preferred Alternative. Stakeholders and interested members of the public could provide feedback through public comment forms at the open house events, online through the website, by email, or by mail. During the formal comment period, the Project team received a total of 212 comments from members of the public and agency/organization representatives: 60 via the website comment form, 59 through the online open house, 58 at the open house/public hearing events (51 via comment form and nine via public testimony), 30 by email and three by mail. These comments are summarized below in two sections: key comment topics and other themes.

Key Comment Topics

Support for Alternative 1 as the Preferred Alternative.
A total of 86 comment submissions indicated support for Alternative 1, the recommended Preferred Alternative.

Supporting Key Themes:

- Alternative 1 has a reduced cost to taxpayers as opposed to Alternative 2.
  - Participants also noted:
    - The need for a reliable funding source.
    - The savings may provide potential funding for additional improvements to passenger rail and other transportation modes.
    - The reduced trip time for Alternative 2 does not justify the cost.
- The station locations in Alternative 1 best serve the population and needs of the region.
  - Participants also noted:
    - The existing stations are historic and have undergone renovations.
    - Relocating stations in Alternative 2 would be wasteful and potentially detrimental to the historic value of these structures.
- Alternative 1 has fewer impacts to the environment, including agricultural lands, wetlands, and waterways, than Alternative 2.
- Strategic track, signal, and infrastructure improvements will help Alternative 1 serve the region’s passenger rail needs, as well as address safety issues and conflicts with freight rail.
  - Many participants suggested creating a double track along the entire route in the future to fully alleviate conflicts between passenger rail and freight rail.
- Increased frequency of service and number of trains, as well as adjustments to the passenger rail schedule and capacity, will help improve ridership.
- Alternative 1 offers more opportunities to scale, phase, and implement track and service improvements incrementally, including potentially creating high-speed rail in the future.
- Improving multimodal transportation connections with passenger rail will improve the effectiveness of Alternative 1.
Some comments suggested offering bike storage on trains and at stations and coordinating with local transit providers to develop new transit lines, shuttles, and stops to connect to stations.

- Alternative 1 seems like it can be completed sooner, thereby increasing the benefit to the region.
- The current route with the upgrades included in Alternative 1 with the identified upgrades along the existing track will support economic development and local businesses.
- Ticket prices are already cost-prohibitive for many potential riders. Alternative 2 may increase these prices.
- The ridership projections in Alternative 1 will help make passenger rail a viable long-term transportation option.

**Frequency, schedule, reliability**
A total of 63 comment submissions contained input related to improving the frequency, schedule and reliability of passenger rail service.

**Supporting Key Themes:**

- Address conflicts between passenger rail and freight rail to ensure reliable service, which in turn will encourage ridership.
- Develop schedules around rush hours and the needs of the region’s population that rely on public transportation to commute to their jobs, and offer more early morning and late afternoon/evening options to increase ridership.
- Increase the frequency of passenger rail to provide more options and better service to the region.
- Delays and disruptions in service discourage riders from relying on passenger rail as their form of transportation between Portland and Eugene.
- Coordinate with local transit agencies to develop public transit buses, trains, and shuttles that are timed with passenger rail arrivals and departures to develop a reliable and cohesive system.

**Technology, innovation, implementation and “phase-ability”**
A total of 50 comment submissions contained input related to passenger rail technology, innovation, implementation, and “phase-ability” (the ability to fund and implement the proposed passenger rail investments in phases).

**Supporting Key Themes:**

- Passenger rail service will improve greatly with significant infrastructure, track and signal improvements.
- Improvements to passenger rail need to take into consideration equipment and maintenance requirements and upgrades to support future innovation and regional needs.
Participants also suggested working with Union Pacific to upgrade the existing tracks to Class 5 or 6 to increase speed and performance.

- Be progressive when considering how the route can be improved through innovation and technology.
  - Suggestions for potential innovation included:
    - Intercity commuter rail.
    - Electric trains powered by solar panels installed along the route.
    - Siemens jet-powered single level passenger trains.
    - Collaboration with notable innovators and inventors to develop an enduring system.
    - Bullet trains.
    - Tunnels rather than roadway crossings (included with Alternative 2).
    - Double tracks along the entire route (included with Alternative 1).

- The reduced cost and faster implementation of Alternative 1 provides increased opportunity for funding and time to support technological and innovative improvements in the future, including moving to higher speed rail.

- Ensure the chosen alternative has the ability to be scaled and implemented incrementally.

- Make investments that will not become obsolete within a short amount of time.

Funding and cost
A total of 48 comment submissions contained input related to funding and cost.

Supporting Key Themes:

- Improvements to passenger rail are needed, but funding is a significant issue. Therefore, Alternative 1 is the best option.
- The current ticket prices are cost-prohibitive and need to be changed to encourage ridership.
  - Participants also suggested exploring how to make tickets more affordable by creating family packages, day/week/month/year passes and low income fare/passes.
- Consider combining the alternatives to reduce the cost of funding a project as large as Alternative 2, while still gaining some of the technological benefits.
  - Participants suggested using the segment between south Salem and Millersburg from Alternative 2 combined with the route in Alternative 1.
- Establish a funding plan for incremental improvements.
- The cost of Alternative 2 is not justified by the projected benefits.

Station locations and expanding service
A total of 44 comment submissions suggested expanding service or identified new or existing station locations that should be added or maintained.
Supporting Key Themes:

- Ensure the station locations serve the population centers and have access to goods and services, i.e. food, hotels, grocery stores, etc.
- Maintain service to the existing stations, specifically Eugene and Salem.
- Include Corvallis in the planned service, either by creating a station or providing reliable and strategically timed shuttles between Corvallis and the nearest station.
- Retain the station in Albany regardless of which alternative is chosen.
- Maintain service to Oregon City and increase ridership through improved schedules, reliability and frequency.
- Include considerations for broader passenger rail expansion in this process to provide service to eastern and central Oregon in the future.
- Wilsonville lacks public transportation options and would benefit greatly from the addition of a station.
- Create a station in Springfield, or if not, improve the public transit connections to the Eugene station to increase access to/from Springfield.
- Other station locations mentioned in the comment submissions include:
  - Woodburn
  - Oakridge
  - Tualatin
  - Keizer
  - Junction City
  - Canby
  - Tigard
  - Lake Oswego
  - Tangent
  - Hillsboro
  - McMinnville
  - Astoria
  - Lebanon
  - Mill City
  - Harrisburg
  - La Grande
  - Brooks

High speed and speed
A total of 43 comment submissions contained input related to high speed rail or the speed of passenger rail in general.

Supporting Key Themes:

- The alternatives in the Tier 1 DEIS are not ambitious enough and need to include plans for high speed rail.
- Alternative 2 offers more opportunities to increase the speed rating of passenger rail.
- Alternative 1 needs to increase speed by a more significant amount.
- Work with Union Pacific to upgrade their existing tracks to allow for higher speeds.
- Develop Alternative 1 so that it can be phased into high-speed rail in the future.
- Decrease the trip time between Eugene and Portland so passenger rail can compete with air and motor vehicle transportation, and effectively increase ridership.
- The 120 mph speed for Alternative 2 seems slow considering the technology that exists and is in use elsewhere.
Ridership and capacity
A total of 42 comment submissions provided input related to increasing ridership and capacity of passenger rail.

Supporting Key Themes:

- Provide transit and multimodal connections between stations and points of interest such as airports and schools, to increase ridership.
- Provide safe bike storage at stations and on trains to encourage ridership.
- The existing ticket prices are cost prohibitive to some potential riders.
- Improve the safety, maintenance, and cleanliness of stations and trains to encourage ridership.
- Develop schedules around a typical workday, with increased morning and afternoon/evening service to increase ridership.

Support for Alternative 2
A total of 40 comments provided input related to Alternative 2.

Supporting Key Themes:

- Alternative 2 would eliminate conflicts with freight trains (Union Pacific).
- The station locations in Alternative 2 best serve population centers in Willamette Valley.
  - Interest in having stations in or near Corvallis and Wilsonville because they have few transit options.
- Alternative 2 is the fastest option.
  - This option would reduce congestion on Interstate 5, because users would be more likely to take the faster option.
  - Participants also suggested that this would reduce single occupant trips and reduce carbon emissions.
- The 120 mph speed for Alternative 2 seems slow considering the technology that exists and is in use elsewhere.
- Make investments that will not become obsolete within a short amount of time.
- Station locations for Alternative 2 should connect to public transit and other transportation options.
- Alternative 2 is the option that works best for the long-term future and innovation of the region.

Additional Comment Themes
A series of additional comment themes arose from the comment submissions. Fewer comments were received on these themes than the key themes described above, but there was sufficient
public interest in the topics to summarize them in this document. All comments received by the Project team, regardless of theme, will be published in the FEIS. These themes include:

- General concerns about impacts to the environment, such as agricultural lands, wetlands, waterways, habitats, etc., related to all alternatives (28 comments).
- General support for improved passenger rail regardless of alternative (27 comments).
- Comments regarding how passenger rail can be used as a tool to address climate concerns and community health issues (23 comments).
- Suggestions for including bicycle and pedestrian improvements in the passenger rail plan (17 comments).
- Comments regarding how passenger rail can be used as a tool for economic development (17 comments).
- Appreciation or comments regarding the Project process, outreach, materials, or public involvement (16 comments).
- Support for the “No-Build” option (5 comments).
- Concerns about noise issues (4 comments).
- Concerns regarding environmental justice (3 comments).

Agency and Organization Feedback
Agencies, organizations and local governments submitted a total of 14 comments. Of these submissions, 11 provided feedback directly related to the alternatives presented in the Tier 1 DEIS. The commenters included the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), the Oregon Department of State Lands (ODSL), Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Rail Freight and Ports Division, the City of Eugene, the Tangent City Council, the University of Oregon Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA), Oregon Environmental Council and Travel Oregon.

The Project team also received three (3) submissions from the Central Lane Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Federal Transit Administration, and TriMet that were process-related questions. A summary of the relevant agency comments is presented below. *(Note: Full comments are available in the Appendix and available in the FEIS.)*

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**
EPA provided support for Alternative 1 due to maximized use of existing infrastructure and stations and avoidance of greenfield development. Additional comments include:

- Recommendation to identify all potential impacts to waterbodies.
- Concern about the acreage of wetlands potentially impacted by Alternative 2.
- Recommendation to build full-span bridge stream crossings to avoid impact to biological resources within wildlife connections.
- Recommendation to retrofit existing infrastructure to provide hydrological and ecological connectivity.
- Recommendation to include climate change considerations in the Final EIS and notable environmental impacts should be examined as a part of the NEPA process.
U.S. Department of the Interior
DOI did not explicitly provide support for either alternative. However, the submission expressed concern about potential impacts to a variety of endangered species and noted that the US Fish and Wildlife Service must be consulted to ensure the Project does not jeopardize these species. Additionally, the submission explained that if the Project impacts parks that are funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund, it will require approval by the Secretary of the Interior, delegated to the National Parks Service.

Oregon Department of State Lands
ODSL did not explicitly provide support for either alternative; however, the submission noted the following:

- Delineate and evaluate wetlands and waterways prior to construction.
- Avoid or minimize impacts to water, especially rare and highly valued water resources.
- Mitigate impacts when they cannot be avoided.

AORTA
AORTA submitted two comments, both of which provided support for Alternative 1 as the recommended Preferred Alternative. Reasons for their support include the following:

- The existing route is well established, serves station stops that are known to the public, and serves a wide portion of Willamette Valley with the opportunity for expansion in the future to southern and eastern Oregon.
- Higher-speed rail is more feasible at this time than high-speed rail.
- Alternative 1 offers the opportunity to phase into high-speed rail in the future.
- Updates to the existing route with help relieve conflicts with freight.
- The existing route better serves the community and will increase ridership.

Oregon Environmental Council
Oregon Environmental Council expressed support for Alternative 1, noting that it maintains the existing alignment and therefore reduces impacts to the environment, preserves the existing stations within city centers and provides the opportunity to incrementally phase in new technology and equipment.

WSDOT Rail, Freight and Ports Division
WSDOT did not explicitly provide support for either alternative but did recommend including a discussion of a potential passenger rail maintenance facility in Eugene, which would help provide flexibility in developing train schedules, better on-time performance and job opportunities.

Travel Oregon
Travel Oregon provided general support for the Project and noted that they deferred to ODOT and the local communities to determine the Preferred Alternative. Additionally, the submission emphasized that tourists expect reliable on-time train service if they are going to choose passenger rail over another form of transportation.
**City of Eugene**
The City of Eugene provided support for Alternative 1 as the Preferred Alternative based on its ability to be phased incrementally over time, affordability, and likelihood of completion. The submission noted that the City supports providing frequent, more reliable, and higher-speed passenger rail in the Willamette Valley as a tool for reducing the amount of intercity driving. Additionally, the City expressed that it is prepared to help implement Alternative 1 by providing upgrades to the existing Eugene station and rail sidings, and the construction of a separated passenger-rail track.

**The University of Oregon**
The University of Oregon provided support for Alternative 1 as the recommended Preferred Alternative based on its ability to support its student and staff needs for transportation between Portland and Eugene, and because it has the potential to greatly improve the region’s economic development.

**Tangent City Council**
The Tangent City Council expressed support for either Alternative 2 or the “no-build” option. The submission suggested abandoning the Project and instead adding a lane to I-5 to ease congestion, but noted that if the Project is to be constructed, it supports Alternative 2. Additional concerns include:

- Project funding.
- How the Project will address congestion on I-5.
- Implementation of new technology and innovation in the future.
- How the Project will increase ridership.
Participant Demographic Information

Participants had the option to provide their demographic information through the online open house or at the open house and public hearing events. Some of the demographic questions varied between the two collection methods. However, race, language and age were asked on both forms. A total of 83 participants provided demographic information: 25 people at the public events and 58 people through the online open house. The section summarizes the information received.

Race/Ethnicity

A total of 75 participants responded to this question. Respondents could select all that apply. A total of 71 indicated that they are white/Caucasian, three were Hispanic/Latino, two were Asian, one was Native American and one did not wish to specify.

Languages Spoken at Home

A total of 75 participants responded to this question. The majority (71) indicated that they speak English at home, one indicated that they speak Spanish, one spoke Russian, one spoke Swahili, one spoke Polish and one spoke German.

Age

A total of 75 participants responded to this question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 to 35</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 to 55</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 to 75</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 75</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sex/Gender

This question only appeared for those who participated in the online open house. A total of 50 online open house participants responded to this question.
Notification Method

This question only appeared for those that participated in the online open house. A total of 60 people responded to this question. Respondents could select all that apply.

How did you hear about this online open house?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email from the project team</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community newsletter</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project mailer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My employer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of those who indicated another method of notification, common responses included Facebook posts, ads in local newspapers, the Oregon Environmental Council and the ODOT website.