

Q1-2024 Report to Legislature

Summary

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) co-funds the Amtrak Cascades intercity passenger rail service with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). Ridership during the first quarter of 2024 was resilient, ending with an impressive March, which posted the highest ridership of any month since the 1994 inception of the Amtrak Cascades in Oregon with 14,263 riders.

Key Q1 ridership and OTP drivers:

- Ridership increases were caused by two additional round trips between Portland and Seattle added on December 11, 2023, spring break travel, high gas prices and successful marketing campaigns.
- OTP challenges include delayed and canceled trains due to landslides and severe weather on the BNSF Railway north of Vancouver, Washington.

Status

Ridership for January thru March 2024

- Although remarkable, first quarter ridership dipped 10 percent below the previous quarter (Q4-2023) due to multiple landslide interruptions; nevertheless 2024 first quarter ridership finished 64 percent higher than the same period of 2023.
- Ridership continues to trend upward with the first quarter of 2024 showing strong ridership for a time of year when ridership is traditionally at its lowest.

On-Time Performance for January-March 2024

- OTP for northbound passengers from Eugene averaged 69 percent and southbound passengers from Portland averaged 55 percent.
- OTP decreased 14 percent from the fourth quarter of 2023 to the first quarter of 2024, but improved 8 percent over the first quarter of 2023.
- The longest delays this quarter were caused by:
 - freight and passenger train interference; and
 - slow order delays (speed reduction) due to weather and landslides.
- Delays this quarter were caused by:
 - 63 percent - Host railroad
 - 26 percent Amtrak
 - 11 percent - Unassignable (i.e., trespasser strikes, weather-related delays, and drawbridge operation).

Current Progress and Next Quarter Look Ahead

Additional Service between Seattle and Portland

The two additional round trips between Seattle and Portland began on December 11. Train schedules were adjusted to accommodate the new service trips. In Oregon, the morning train departure from Eugene was moved from 5:30 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. Since this change in the schedule, ridership on the morning train out of Eugene has increased by 43 percent. ODOT and WSDOT continue to work on

schedule adjustments to maximize ridership and improve transfers between trains and connecting bus service.

FRA Amtrak Long-Distance Service Study

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is conducting an Amtrak Daily Long-Distance Service Study to evaluate the restoration of daily intercity passenger rail service and new Amtrak long-distance routes. FRA expects to complete this work in the second half of 2024. ODOT, along with other western states, are participating in a series of four regional workshops with the FRA, including examining the restoration of the *Pioneer* route that served eastern Oregon until 1997. Three workshops have been held and as a result 15 routes made the short list of prospects for long-distance trains. The purpose was to determine routes that might provide enough connectivity to enhance Amtrak's existing system. The fourth and final workshop will be on June 6, 2024 in Missoula, Montana. The FRA will issue a report to Congress with a list of prioritized long-distance routes and associated costs and funding opportunities.

Cascadia High-Speed Rail (HSR) Study

WSDOT continues to work with its jurisdictional partners, ODOT and the British Columbia Ministry of Transportation to advance the HSR work.

2024 Oregon State Rail Plan (OSRP)

The FRA requires an update to all state rail plans every four years. The OSRP was last revised in 2020; therefore, ODOT has started the process for an update in 2024. The information included in the newly adopted Oregon State Rail Plan-Implementation Plan will be considered when updating the OSRP in 2024. Work will begin mid-2024.

FRA Funding and Grants

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Public Transportation Division (PTD) intends to apply for \$1,500,000 of Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) funds from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for a passenger rail planning grant. The purpose of the CRISI Program is to invest in a wide range of projects to improve railroad safety, efficiency, and reliability; mitigate congestion at both intercity passenger rail and freight rail chokepoints to support more efficient travel and goods movement; enhance multi-modal connections; and lead to new or substantially improved Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation corridors. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) was released on March 29, 2024, and applications are due no later than May 28, 2024. The award date has not been announced but is expected to be this fall. A total of \$2.4 billion in awards is available under this NOFO. ODOT has identified an excellent candidate that aligns with program criteria.

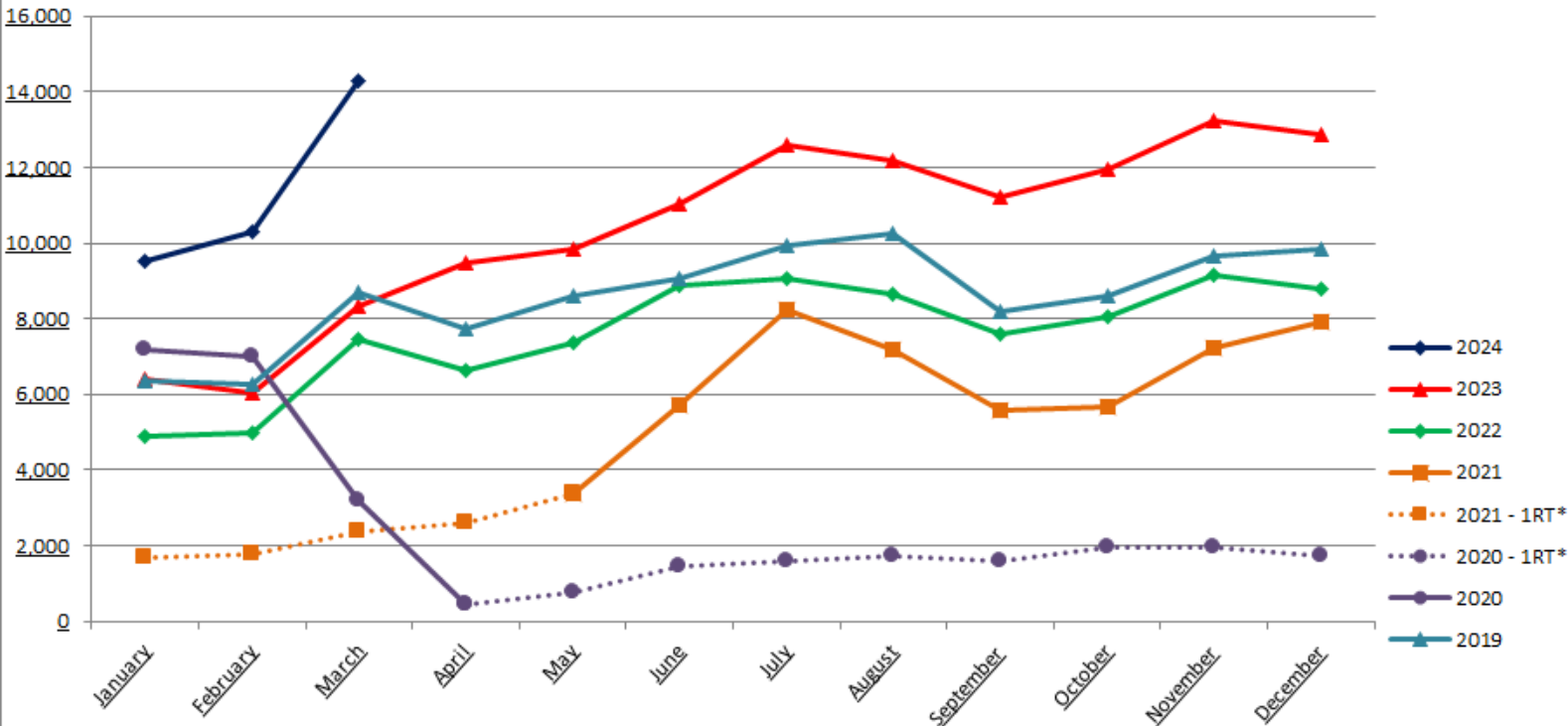
Funding from this grant program would support ODOT's passenger rail planning work with additional scoping and design of infrastructure improvements from the Oregon Rail Advisory Committee inventory development and assist with the Oregon State Rail Plan update, crossing safety, and planning efforts now only supported with internal rail funds. RAC inventory projects must be advanced to 30 percent design stage before ODOT can pursue infrastructure funding. This important work will also assist in scoping capital improvement projects and advancing them to readiness from the ODOT Service Development Plan (SDP)

and associated planning work. This will ensure all is in alignment within the FRA Corridor Identification and Development (CID) Program, for which the Amtrak Cascades corridor was admitted in 2024.

CID is a new program under the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, developed by the FRA to accelerate federal investment in state-supported passenger rail services. Due to CID Program requirements, additional work must be done before specific infrastructure projects for Amtrak Cascades would qualify for funding through CID, and this grant would support much of those efforts.

Receipt of this grant is crucial to passenger rail in Oregon and will help extend ODOT's rail budget. Infrastructure improvements advanced through planning and 30 percent design will enhance on-time performance, add capacity necessary to the rail system and handle more train traffic efficiently and safely. These improvements align with the state's goal of promoting intercity passenger rail service as an alternative to motor vehicle travel to reduce both roadway congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. If CRISI grant awards are not yet announced or are not awarded to this project, ODOT will likely apply for the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail grant this fall.

Amtrak Cascades Ridership in the Eugene – Portland Corridor Trains Operated Under Contract for the Oregon Department of Transportation

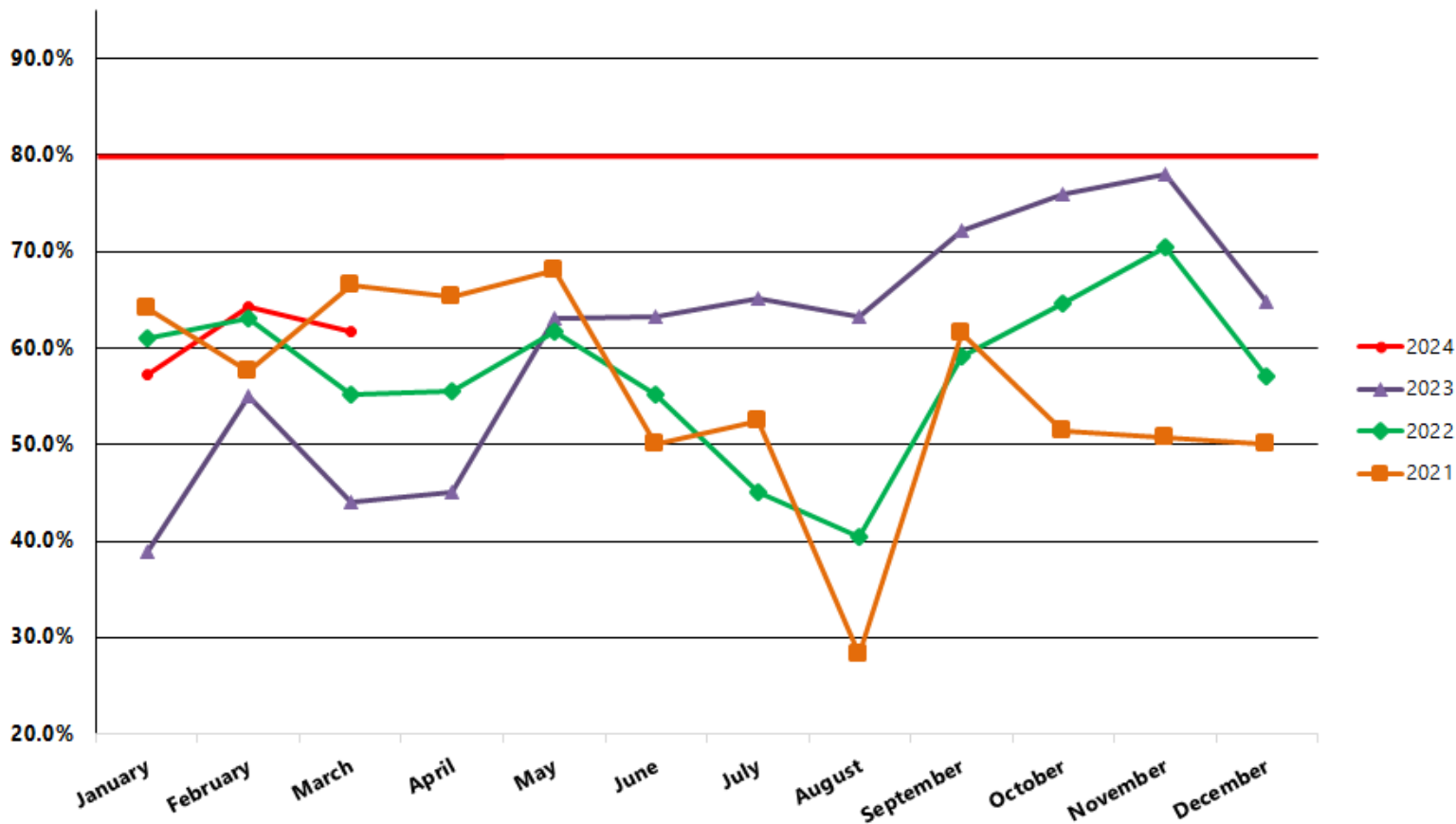


The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting decreases in demand led to the decision to reduce service to one roundtrip per day between Seattle and Eugene. Service was resumed to two daily round trips on May 24, 2021. The dotted lines above depict the timeframe when the service was reduced to one roundtrip daily.

*RT = Roundtrip PDX-EUG

Amtrak Cascades Customer On-Time Performance Eugene-Portland Corridor

Trains Operated Under Contract for the Oregon Department of Transportation



The data presented is based on the new federal standards for OTP. This new standard measures the timeliness of each individual passenger rather than the train and represents the percentage of customers who reached their stations in Oregon no later than 15 minutes after their published scheduled arrival time.