



Governor Jay Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee,

RE: "Expression of interest" to Federal Railroad Administration

The Kittitas County Board of Commissioners has designated the Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce as their designated choice as Associate Development Organization (ADO).

On behalf of ADO/Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to request your help in laying the groundwork for improving our transportation network, and specifically, restoring passenger rail service to Central and Eastern Washington via the Stampede Pass corridor.

We appreciate your support and leadership prioritizing the 2021-2023 transportation budget supporting WSDOT's plan to meet the requirements of the federal injunction. Continuing work on high-speed rail will create jobs, increase affordable housing options, reduce pollution, improve safety, and reduce traffic. Offering rail including the development for equity-based transportation opportunities.

Rail helps improve air quality, provide a cleaner environment, and reverse climate change. Passenger rail is 3 times more efficient than a car on a passenger mile basis at current occupancy levels. Freight rail is 11 times more efficient than trucks on a to-mile basis. Transportation accounts for 29% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Investment in rail and other public transportation is a key part of making transportation cleaner. The quickest way to reduce greenhouse gasses from transportation is to travel by train, and move goods by rail, instead of by roads or air. In addition to these environmental benefits, improved passenger rail will provide economic benefits, and underserved communities will reap improved equity as well.

Since 1981, when the South-Central region lost passenger rail service, the Kittitas and Yakima Valleys have seen a steady decline in passenger-based transportation services while we continue to see an increase in freight movement. Our region believes that the BNSF/Stampede Pass Rail line should be considered as a long-term asset in the overall railroad network that not only could provide renewed passenger rail service to over 300,000 area residents but provide needed capacity relief to other rail lines within Washington State, the Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountain regions.



The funding opportunities for passenger rail infrastructure provided by the BIL open the door to projects that may have previously seemed prohibitively expensive such as restoration of service via Stampede Pass. We should take advantage of BIL funding by submitting “an expression of interest” to FRA now, and begin planning to submit a proposal for the route to be included in the Corridor ID program later this year. Additionally, the state should initiate actions to develop the data necessary to address the 14 corridor selection criteria described in the May 13, 2022 FRA notice. These criteria will be used by the U.S. DOT Secretary to evaluate eligibility for projects under the Corridor ID program.

Respectfully,

Chief Executive Officer