

1 AN ACT Relating to fostering economic resilience and development  
2 and improving the passenger and freight transportation system in  
3 Washington state by supporting the rail industry and the use of  
4 railroads for passengers and freight; adding a new section to chapter  
5 47.04 RCW; and creating a new section.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature recognizes the  
8 important role of the rail industry in creating and sustaining  
9 economic opportunities in Washington state. The economic vitality of  
10 Washington state requires a strong rail system capable of providing  
11 its businesses, ports, and farms with competitive access to North  
12 American and international markets. In looking to the state's future,  
13 the legislature finds that supporting the rail industry is critical  
14 to building and sustaining a diverse and resilient economy in  
15 Washington state.

16 (2) The Pacific Northwest rail corridor is one of eleven  
17 federally designated passenger rail corridors, spanning three hundred  
18 miles in Washington state. Amtrak Cascades train service has been  
19 providing passenger rail service since 1994 in this corridor,  
20 operating over four thousand trains annually with stops in eighteen  
21 cities.

1 (3) The rail industry and railroad transportation is  
2 interconnected with public infrastructure, including roads,  
3 multimodal hubs, ports, energy facilities, and water-sewer  
4 facilities. The legislature finds that maintaining and improving  
5 these connections with public facilities is beneficial to the public  
6 and will strengthen the economic position of Washington state.

7 (4) To that end, the legislature intends to engage in a  
8 collaborative process with state agencies, local governments,  
9 railroads, passenger rail associations, and other rail stakeholders  
10 to evaluate whether changes in state and local policies are necessary  
11 to foster resilience and growth in the use of rail for passenger and  
12 freight transportation. Through the establishment of the legislative  
13 task force for rail transportation, the legislature intends to take  
14 action to support and sustain the efficient movement of people and  
15 commodities to market.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 47.04  
17 RCW to read as follows:

18 (1)(a) A legislative task force for rail transportation in  
19 Washington state is established, with members as provided in this  
20 subsection.

21 (i) The speaker of the house of representatives must appoint two  
22 members from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of  
23 representatives.

24 (ii) The president of the senate must appoint two members from  
25 each of the two largest caucuses of the senate.

26 (iii) The governor must appoint one member to represent the  
27 department of commerce and one member to represent the department of  
28 transportation.

29 (b) The legislative members of the task force must select  
30 cochairs from among the membership, one from the house of  
31 representatives and one from the senate but each from a different  
32 caucus from the two largest caucuses in the house of representatives  
33 and the senate.

34 (2)(a) The task force must develop recommendations that achieve  
35 the following objectives:

36 (i) Identify opportunities for improving existing state programs  
37 that invest in rail infrastructure and operations;

38 (ii) Identify key rail investments that will bring the most cost-  
39 effective improvements to the rail system;

- 1 (iii) Identify the barriers to maintaining and expanding shipping  
2 by rail;
- 3 (iv) Identify the barriers to maintaining and expanding passenger  
4 rail;
- 5 (v) Promote regulatory consistency and certainty in the areas of  
6 transportation planning, land use permitting, and business  
7 development in a manner that supports the rail industry;
- 8 (vi) Encourage cooperation and partnerships between local, state,  
9 federal, and private sectors to foster increased use of the rail  
10 system and economic growth; and
- 11 (vii) Identify aspects of state policy that have an impact on the  
12 rail industry.
- 13 (b) The recommendations of the task force must include a short  
14 and long-term action plan for the legislature to support and sustain  
15 the rail industry and passenger rail. The recommendations of the task  
16 force may also include specific legislative approaches, such as  
17 changes to state law, and nonlegislative approaches, such as action  
18 plans for state agencies and local governments.
- 19 (3)(a) The task force must consult with local governments,  
20 industry representatives, and state agencies, which must include, but  
21 are not limited to: The department of commerce, the department of  
22 transportation, the office of regulatory assistance, and the  
23 utilities and transportation commission.
- 24 (b) The legislative cochairs must appoint an advisory committee  
25 consisting of members that represent, but are not limited to, the  
26 following areas: Short line, class II, and class I railroad  
27 companies; manufacturing and agriculture; shippers; local industrial  
28 councils; passenger rail; and chambers of commerce.
- 29 (4) The task force must submit to the governor and the  
30 appropriate committees of the legislature a work plan by December 1,  
31 2016, and an annual report each December 1st thereafter with the task  
32 force's findings and recommendations.
- 33 (5) Staff support for the task force must be provided by the  
34 joint transportation committee.
- 35 (6) Legislative members of the task force must be reimbursed for  
36 travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120. Nonlegislative  
37 members are not entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses if they  
38 are elected officials or are participating on behalf of an employer,  
39 governmental entity, or other organization. Any reimbursement for  
40 other nonlegislative members is subject to chapter 43.03 RCW.

1           (7) The expenses of the task force must be paid jointly by the  
2 senate and the house of representatives. Task force expenditures are  
3 subject to approval by the senate facilities and operations committee  
4 and the house of representatives executive rules committee, or their  
5 successor committees.

--- END ---