

Rail, Freight and Ports Division

Joint Transportation Committee Tour of Eastern Region

Jason Biggs, Director

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October 7, 2025

Julie Meredith, Secretary of Transportation

Mike Gribner, Deputy Secretary of Transportation

Steve Nevey, Deputy Secretary of Transportation – WA State Ferries

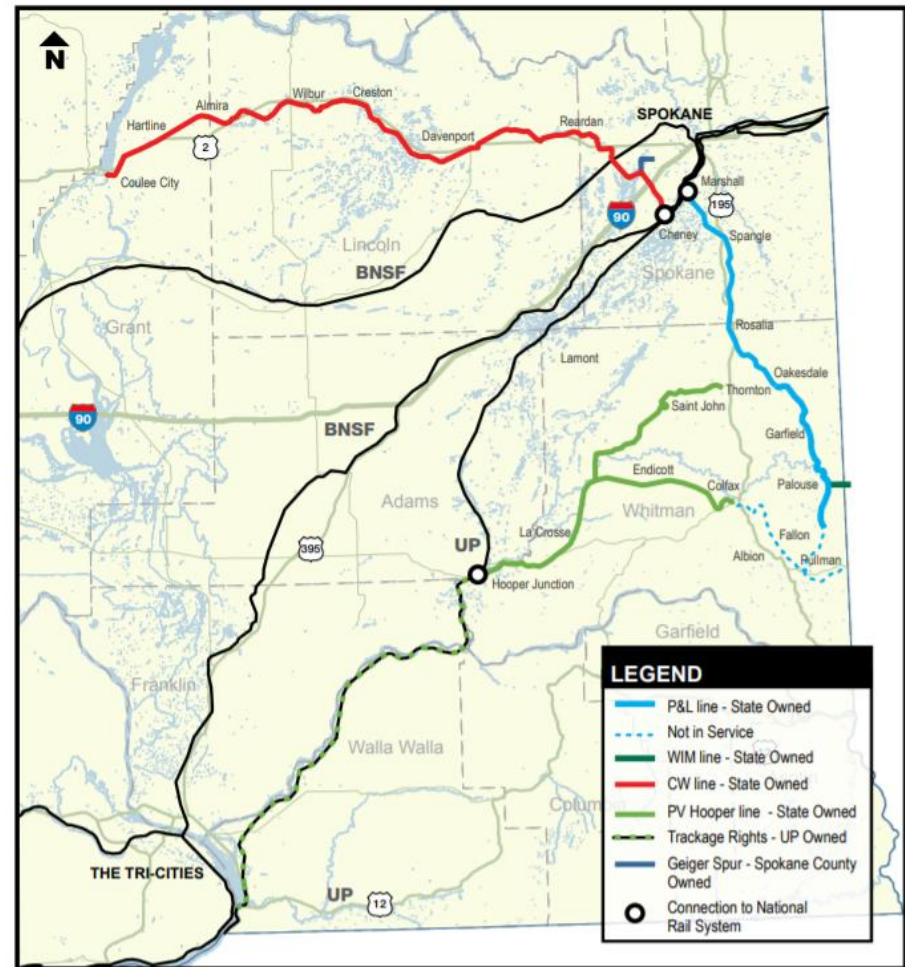
Rail network in Washington



- Two Class I railroads, owned by BNSF and Union Pacific carry freight and passenger trains.
- 27 Class III short-line railroads carry freight to and from outlying locations, often connecting to the Class 1 railroads or trucks to move goods longer distances.
- 1,900 miles of Class I railroads and 1,300 miles of short-line railroads.

Overview of PCC short-line railroad

- Serves Grant, Lincoln, Spokane, Adams, and Whitman counties.
- Purchased by WSDOT in 2004 and 2007.
- Leased to private railroad Operators which provide freight services.
- Operators contractually obligated for all system maintenance.
- PCC Rail Authority — intergovernmental entity formed by counties — oversees business and economic development.
- WSDOT funds capital improvements to build resiliency, increase efficiency and improve supply chain.



Operation of PCC short-line railroad



PCC key to grain delivery

- A key component in Washington's wheat delivery supply chain.
- Grain usually travels to ports for export, primarily to Asia.
- About 20-25% of Washington's wheat historically shipped on the PCC system.
- Shippers use rail because grain can be moved from one of the PCC's Grain Terminals to a Port in 24 to 48 hours at competitive shipping rates.



PCC strategic goals

Bringing the system into a state of good repair through:

- **Resiliency** – Providing infrastructure that can absorb, adapt to, and recover from disruptions, challenges, and adverse events.
- **Accommodating modern rail equipment** - upgrading track and bridge infrastructure to handle modern rail equipment weight of 286,000-pound rail cars.
 - Majority of the system is limited to 268,000-pound rail cars used primarily in scoot service
- **Increasing operational speeds** – infrastructure improvements to raise track standards to allow 25 mph speeds.



PCC 2025-29 project delivery plan

- WSDOT utilized \$60 million in state (Move Ahead Flexible account) to leveraged \$110 million in federal funds.
- Funded infrastructure projects are scheduled for completion over the next five years, with annual release of construction contracts.
- Projects prioritized on existing infrastructure condition, traffic volumes, and operational impacts.
- Improvements include replacement of light weight worn rail; replacement of rotten railroad ties; rebuilding dilapidated roadway crossings; surfacing of tracks.
- Upon completion, a significant portion of the PCC system will be in a state of good repair.

Funded Phase II and Phase III Projects

	Project Location	State Funding Used for Match	Secured Federal Funding	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Phase II	Cheney to Davenport	\$17 million	\$31 million					
	Marshall to Garfield	\$10 million	\$17 million					
	Hooper to St. John	\$13 million	\$24 million					
Phase III	Davenport to Wilbur	\$20 million	\$38 million					
TOTAL								

PCC 2029-35 project delivery plan

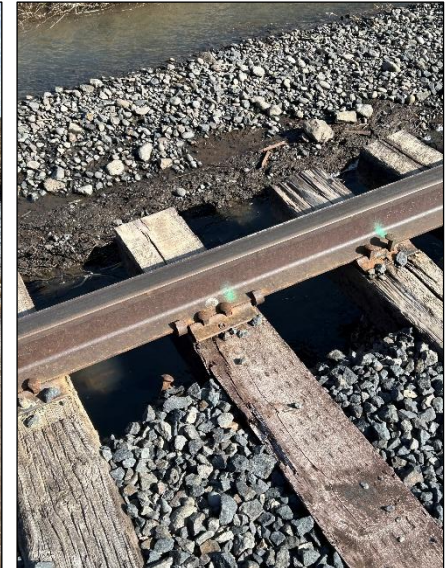
- Used \$90 million in state MWF funds to leverage an additional \$101 million in federal grants.
- Phase V includes system-wide bridge repair and replacement.
- The last three projects would not rank high based on federal grant scoring criteria, but can be completed solely with state funds and are important to bring those sections of track into a state of good repair.

Future PCC Capital Improvement Projects

	Project Location	Potential State Funding	Potential Federal Funding	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035
Phase IV	Wilbur to Coulee City	\$20 million	\$36 million							
Phase V	Systemwide bridges	\$35 million	\$65 million							
Future	Garfield to Fallon	\$8 million								
Future	Winona to Mockonema	\$12 million								
Future	St. John to Thornton	\$15 million								
TOTAL										

Addressing natural disasters

- Floods, wildfires and landslides all damage the PCC system.
- Wooden railroad trestles and ties throughout the system susceptible to fires.
- Tracks built in low-lying areas subject to washouts.
- Worn wooden ties eroding with severe weather.
- Tracks next to steep slopes are vulnerable to landslides.



Overcoming obstacles: Railroad resilience

Replacing wooden trestles with steel and concrete bridges to prevent fire damage and rotting timbers.



Re-establishing or building drainage systems to address flooding threats.



Upgrading public crossings by replacing timber crossings with concrete to reduce wear and tear.

Spraying weeds and clearing woody debris to manage vegetation along the tracks to avoid wildfires.



Grants and loans for freight rail improvements

Freight Rail Assistance Program (FRAP)

State grant program open to public and private applicants

- Projects must be shown to maintain or improve the freight rail system in the state and benefit the state's interests.
- 2025-27 award a total \$7 million to five recipients.



Freight Rail Investment Bank (FRIB)

State loan program is only open to public sector applicants

- All applicants must provide a minimum 20% match.
- Generally, a 2% interest rate is charged to cover administrative costs.
- 2025-27 loans total \$1.5 million to two recipients.



Rail, Freight & Ports Division Freight Rail Program: 2025

The map displays various rail projects across Washington State, categorized by funding source and project type. Key locations marked include Bellingham, Port Angeles, Seattle, Vancouver, Yakima, Walla Walla, and Spokane.

Rail Project Legend

- ☆ Project Points
- Rail Line Projects
- PCC Rail System
- PNW Rail Corridor
- Federal Funding
- State Funding
- WA Cities

Information

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