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ODOT purchases passenger trains

New train cars will enhance passenger train service in the Willamette Valley

SALEM—The Oregon Department of Transportation has negotiated the purchase of two new passenger trains from Talgo-America. Each train seats 285 people and will provide continued Amtrak Cascades passenger service in the Pacific Northwest rail corridor between Eugene and Vancouver, British Columbia.

The trains, which cost \$36.6 million, will be assembled at a new Talgo plant in Wisconsin with a majority of American-made components. There are 13 cars per train. The Oregon Transportation Commission approved use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus funds for the purchase on July 23, 2009. By pooling the train purchase with Wisconsin, Oregon saved about \$6 million.

Oregon's current passenger rail service relies on trains owned by the Washington state and Amtrak. As Washington state fulfills its plans to increase daily Portland-Seattle service, the trains would no longer be available to Oregon.

"The commission's decision to buy trains will assure continued passenger rail service in the Willamette Valley and provide the potential for increased service in Oregon at some future date," said ODOT Director Matthew Garrett.

When delivered in 2012, the Oregon-owned trains will join five older Talgo-America train sets; Washington state owns three, and Amtrak owns two.

Amtrak's Cascades and long-distance train services have a positive effect on the economy. Each year they purchase \$1.2 million worth of goods and services and sustain 73 Oregon jobs

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paying \$4.77 million in wages. Eventual expansion of Portland-Eugene service will require adding more jobs and purchasing more goods and services.

“This is a significant step forward for Oregon and the Pacific Northwest,” said President and Chief Executive Officer of Talgo-America Antonio Perez. “These new trains will greatly enhance service in Oregon and on the entire *Cascades* corridor.”

“Amtrak applauds ODOT’s forthcoming procurement of Talgo equipment,” said Joe McHugh, Amtrak’s vice president of government affairs and corporate communications. “Since the debut of the Amtrak Cascades in 1999, we have created strong partnerships with Oregon, Washington and Talgo to provide reliable, attractive and environmentally friendly intercity rail service in the corridor,” he said.

Since 1994, ridership has increased 823 percent on *Cascades* trains. In Oregon, more than 186,000 passengers rode trains in 2008.

The new trains will be updated versions of Talgo-made trains presently serving the Northwest. Amenities include WiFi capability, a Bistro (food and beverage) car, a business class section with roomier seats, and baggage car bicycle racks. Although the corridor’s current top speed is 79 mph, the new trains are designed to run up to 125 mph. Any diesel-electric locomotive can pull them.

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