Federal High Speed Rail Funding Coming to Washington

Local News

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OLYMPIA – Federal and state officials signed documents Thursday that guarantee Washington state will get $145 million in high-speed-rail funding originally intended for Ohio and Wisconsin. Washington was initially awarded this portion of federal funding in late 2010 when the U.S. Department of Transportation redirected money returned by governors in Ohio and Wisconsin. Thursday’s signatures by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) allow project teams to move forward and start work on improving and expanding Amtrak *Cascades* service in Washington. The $145 million adds to $590 million already obligated by the FRA, bringing Washington state’s total to approximately $735 million in American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) high-speed-rail funding. On April 4, WSDOT submitted an application for a $120 million portion of funds returned by Florida.

All funding will be used for improvements that boost the rail-line capacity and relieve mainline congestion, allowing Amtrak Cascades to offer more frequent and reliable passenger rail service between Portland and Vancouver, B.C. Work is expected to begin this summer. “This grant funding will allow us to expand our vision for the future of the Amtrak Cascades service,” said Washington Transportation Secretary Paula Hammond. “Ridership is steadily increasing, and we know this trend will continue as we add more schedule options and increase travel speed.” Earlier WSDOT reported the most recent award amount as $161 million. After review, the FRA chose to exclude the Centralia Station Modifications project, dropping the award amount by $16 million to the current $145 million. WSDOT resubmitted the project for funding as part of the application for the Florida money. Nearly $1.0 billion in capital and operating funds has been invested in higher speed intercity passenger rail in the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor since 1994. Visit WSDOT’s passenger rail website.