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May 12th, 2026

Renee James, Co-Chair
Curtis Robinhold, Co-Chair
Oregon Prosperity Council

Subject: Cascadia High-speed Rail as a Long-Term Economic Development Strategy for Oregon

Dear Co-Chairs James and Robinhold and Members of the Council,

Oregon stands at a pivotal moment. As the Prosperity Council develops recommendations to strengthen the state's business climate, workforce, and long-term competitiveness, we urge you to include Cascadia high-speed rail as a cornerstone strategy and catalyst project for Oregon's economic future. This project is not simply a transportation project—it is a generational investment that will expand economic opportunity, strengthen statewide connectivity, and position Oregon to compete in a rapidly changing global economy.

Cascadia high-speed rail aligns directly with the Council's charge: it improves the fundamentals of doing business, expands access to talent, and provides a durable platform for growth across every region of the state.

There is already momentum for Cascadia high-speed rail with \$55 million in federal and Washington state funding to begin planning. Now is the time for Oregon to engage and invest in this effort for our future economic prosperity.

Cascadia High-Speed Rail Will Strengthen Oregon's Business Climate

High-speed rail will link Oregon to one of North America's fastest growing megaregions with a combined economy approaching the 18th largest in the world, comparable in size to countries like the Netherlands or Saudi Arabia. A one-hour Portland–Seattle connection and a two-hour Portland–Vancouver, British Columbia connection would create a unified labor and business market of more than 10 million people. This scale is essential for attracting corporate investment, research partnerships, and innovation-driven industries.

Oregon's economic competitiveness is constrained by chronic congestion and limited intercity mobility options. When combined with investments in Amtrak passenger rail, high-speed rail provides a resilient, electrified, and reliable backbone that ensures goods movement, business travel, and workforce mobility remain reliable even as climate and infrastructure pressures intensify.

Global evidence shows that high-speed rail corridors attract billions in private development around stations—commercial, industrial, and mixed-use. Oregon’s cities can leverage this investment to accelerate housing production, innovation districts, and job centers without relying solely on public dollars.

High-Speed Rail Will Expand Workforce Access and Talent Mobility

Oregon employers consistently cite talent shortages as a barrier to growth. High-speed rail would effectively enlarge the state’s labor pool by enabling workers to access jobs across the region without relocating.

High-speed rail is not just a Portland project. When combined with investments in passenger rail to communities like Eugene, Albany/Corvallis, and Salem, and integrated with TriMet’s MAX, the system would connect Oregon’s cities to major job centers while allowing people to choose more affordable housing. This expands opportunities for residents while helping employers fill critical roles.

Younger workers increasingly prioritize sustainable, multimodal transportation. A modern, electrified rail system strengthens Oregon’s ability to attract and retain the next generation of talent while advancing the state’s climate commitments.

Advancing High-Speed Rail Creates a Platform for Long-Term Prosperity

High-speed rail is projected to create over 200,000 jobs and unlock \$355 billion in economic impact – supporting workers and attracting investment. Construction alone would create 38,000 high-quality, good-paying construction jobs. Once operational, the system would support ongoing employment in operations, maintenance, and station-area development.

The Cascadia corridor is uniquely positioned to leverage federal infrastructure funding, private capital, and cross-jurisdictional partnerships with Washington State and British Columbia. Oregon’s participation ensures we receive our fair share of these investments rather than being left behind as our neighbor’s advance.

As global competition intensifies, regions with fast, reliable, low-carbon mobility will outperform those without it. High-speed rail is a strategic hedge against economic stagnation, climate disruption, and infrastructure vulnerability. It ensures Oregon is a competitive, connected, and resilient place to do business.

As business and community leaders in Oregon we strongly encourage the Oregon Prosperity Council to recognize Cascadia high-speed rail as a foundational long-term economic development strategy. This project will expand opportunities for every region of the state, strengthen Oregon’s business climate, and ensure that our workforce and industries can thrive in the decades ahead.

We stand ready to support the Council’s work and to collaborate on advancing this transformative investment for Oregon’s future.

Sincerely,



Keith Wilson, Mayor, City of Portland



Andrew Hoan
President & CEO, Portland Metro Chamber