



November 30, 2022

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee,

The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Nation) respectfully requests your help in laying the groundwork for improving our transportation network, and specifically, restoring passenger rail service to Central and Eastern Washington via the Stampede Pass corridor. The Nation and some of its members gave up land for the railway to be established. At the time rail service was one of the main sources of travel, now the passenger service no longer operates and has not for some time, if passenger services are restored it would offer our tribal members as well as other community members another mode of travel.

The Nation is concerned about the environmental impact to the fisheries and water resources of the Yakima River and its tributaries due to automobile and truck traffic. Daily, thousands of vehicles travel the I-90 corridor, what happens to the roadway runoff, where does it go, what types of chemicals are in the runoff? We have made huge strides in reestablishing fish runs into the upper Yakima River basin, if the passenger rail system were to be restored, the impacts to the I-90 corridor would be further mitigated.

As you know, the Joint Transportation Committee completed a study in July 2020 regarding the feasibility of restoring Stampede Pass service. Among the findings were: that the service is technically and operationally feasible, there is a high level of community support, and annual ridership is estimated to be “above or comparable to some Amtrak state supported services”. The study also states that “further work will be required to confirm or refine its findings”.

Washington state has not yet undertaken the follow up benefit-cost analysis and economic impact analysis studies needed to determine whether the service is worthy of investment. The time is right to conduct the needed studies. The 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) makes available \$66 billion in federal funds for passenger and freight rail. Among the provisions in the BIL, Section 25101 provides a specific program to facilitate the development of intercity passenger rail corridors such as the Stampede Pass route from Seattle to Spokane. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) announced on May 13, 2022, the establishment of the “Corridor Identification and Development Program”. FRA intends for the Corridor ID program “to become the primary means for directing Federal financial support and technical assistance towards the development of proposals for new or improved intercity passenger rail services throughout the United States”.

The May 13, 2022, FRA notice requests that “eligible entities”, including states, submit “expressions of interest” stating their preliminary interest in the Corridor ID program. FRA plans to issue a notice soliciting formal proposals in the 4th quarter of calendar year 2022.

The funding opportunities for passenger rail infrastructure provided by the BIL opens the door to projects that may have previously seemed prohibitively expensive such as restoration of service via Stampede Pass. We should take advantage of BIL funding by submitting “an expression of interest” to FRA now and begin planning to submit a proposal for the route to be included in the Corridor ID program later this year. Additionally, the state should initiate actions to develop the data necessary to address the 14 corridor selection criteria described in the May 13, 2022, FRA notice. The U. S. DOT Secretary will use these criteria to evaluate eligibility for projects under the Corridor ID program.

Rail helps improve air quality, provide a cleaner environment, and reverse climate change. Passenger rail is three times more efficient than a car on a passenger mile basis at current occupancy levels. Freight rail is eleven times more efficient than trucks on a ton-mile basis. Transportation accounts for 29% of U. S. greenhouse gas emissions. Investment in rail and other public transportation is a key part of making transportation cleaner. The quickest way to reduce greenhouse gasses from transportation is to travel by train, and move goods by rail, instead of by roads or air. In addition to these environmental benefits, improved passenger rail will provide economic benefits, and underserved communities will reap improved equity as well.

Let’s take advantage of BIL funding opportunities by submitting an “expression of interest” from Washington state to the FRA. It will be the next step in the process of restoring passenger rail service via the Stampede Pass corridor.

If you have any questions or concerns you may contact Hollyanna Littlebull, office number 509-865-5121 ext. 6742 or via email [hollyanna_littlebull @yakama.com](mailto:hollyanna_littlebull@yakama.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerald Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Gerald Lewis, Chairman
Yakama Nation Tribal Council



September 6, 2022

The Honorable Amit Bose
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 NEW JERSEY AVENUE, SE
WASHINGTON, DC 20590

RE: Federal Rail Administration Docket No. FRA-2022-0031 Expression of Interest

Dear Administrator Bose:

The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Nation) respectfully request your help in laying the groundwork for improving our transportation network, and specifically, restoring passenger rail service to Central and Eastern Washington via the Stampede Pass corridor. The Nation and some of its members gave up land for the railway to be established and was given the right to travel in the Yakama Treaty of 1855. At the time rail service was one of the main sources of travel, now the passenger service no longer operates and has not for some time, if passenger services are restored it would offer our tribal members as well as other community members another mode of travel.

As you know, the Joint Transportation Committee completed a study in July 2020 regarding the feasibility of restoring the Stampede Pass service. Among the findings were: that the service is technically and operationally feasible, there is a high level of community support, and annual ridership is estimated to be “above or comparable to some Amtrak state-supported services”. The study also states that “further work will be required to confirm or refine its findings”.

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greenhouse gasses from transportation is to travel by train, and move goods by rail, instead of by road or air. In addition to these environmental benefits, improved passenger rail will provide economic benefits, and underserved communities will reap improved equity as well.

Begin the process of restoring passenger rail service via the Stampede Pass corridor.

If you have any further questions or concerns contact, HollyAnna Littlebull at 509-865-5121 extension 6742 or via email at hollyanna_littlebull@yakama.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerald Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

Gerald Lewis, Chairman
Yakama Nation Tribal Council