

Chapter 47.79 RCW
HIGH-SPEED GROUND TRANSPORTATION

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RCW 47.79.010 Legislative declaration. The legislature recognizes that major intercity transportation corridors in this state are becoming increasingly congested. In these corridors, population is expected to grow by nearly forty percent over the next twenty years, while employment will grow by nearly fifty percent. The estimated seventy-five percent increase in intercity travel demand must be accommodated to ensure state economic vitality and protect the state's quality of life.

The legislature finds that high-speed ground transportation offers a safer, more efficient, and environmentally responsible alternative to increasing highway capacity. High-speed ground transportation can complement and enhance existing air transportation systems. High-speed ground transportation can be compatible with growth management plans in counties and cities served by such a system. Further, high-speed ground transportation offers a reliable, all-weather service capable of significant energy savings over other intercity modes. [1993 c 381 § 1.]

RCW 47.79.020 Program established—Goals. The legislature finds that there is substantial public benefit to establishing a high-speed ground transportation program in this state. The program shall implement the recommendations of the high-speed ground transportation steering committee report dated October 15, 1992. The program shall be administered by the department of transportation in close cooperation with the utilities and transportation commission and affected cities and counties.

The high-speed ground transportation program shall have the following goals:

- (1) Implement high-speed ground transportation service offering top speeds over 150 m.p.h. between Everett and Portland, Oregon by 2020. This would be accomplished by meeting the intermediate objectives of a maximum travel time between downtown Portland and downtown Seattle of two hours and thirty minutes by the year 2000 and maximum travel time of two hours by the year 2010;

(2) Implement high-speed ground transportation service offering top speeds over 150 m.p.h. between Everett and Vancouver, B.C. by 2025;

(3) Implement high-speed ground transportation service offering top speeds over 150 m.p.h. between Seattle and Spokane by 2030.

The department of transportation shall, subject to legislative appropriation, implement such projects as necessary to achieve these goals in accordance with the implementation plans identified in RCW 47.79.030 and 47.79.040. [1993 c 381 § 2.]

RCW 47.79.030 Project priority—Funding sources. The legislature finds it important to develop public support and awareness of the benefits of high-speed ground transportation by developing high quality intercity passenger rail service as a first step. This high quality intercity passenger rail service shall be developed through incremental upgrading of the existing service. The department of transportation shall, subject to legislative appropriation, develop a prioritized list of projects to improve existing passenger rail service and begin new passenger rail service, to include but not be limited to:

(1) Improvement of depots;

(2) Improved grade crossing protection or grade crossing elimination;

(3) Enhanced train signals to improve rail corridor capacity and increase train speeds;

(4) Revised track geometry or additional trackage to improve ride quality and increase train speeds; and

(5) Contract for new or improved service in accordance with federal requirements to improve service frequency.

Service enhancements and station improvements must be based on the extent to which local comprehensive plans contribute to the viability of intercity passenger rail service, including providing efficient connections with other transportation modes such as transit, intercity bus, and roadway networks. Before spending state moneys on these projects, the department of transportation shall seek federal, local, and private funding participation to the greatest extent possible. Funding priorities for station improvements must also be based on the level of local and private in-kind and cash contributions. [1993 c 381 § 3.]

RCW 47.79.040 Rail passenger plan. The legislature recognizes the need to plan for the high-speed ground transportation service and the high quality intercity rail passenger service set forth in RCW 47.79.020 and 47.79.030. The department of transportation shall, subject to legislative appropriation, develop a rail passenger plan through the conduct of studies addressing, but not limited to, the following areas:

(1) Refined ridership estimates;

(2) Preliminary location and environmental analysis on new corridors;

(3) Detailed station location assessments in concert with affected local jurisdictions;

(4) Coordination with the air transportation commission on statewide air transportation policy and its effects on high-speed ground transportation service; and

(5) Coordination with the governments of Oregon and British Columbia, when appropriate, on alignment, station location, and environmental analysis. [1993 c 381 § 4.]

RCW 47.79.050 Facility acquisition and management. Subject to appropriation, the department is authorized to acquire by purchase, lease, condemnation, gift, devise, bequest, grant, or exchange, title to or any interests or rights in real property adjacent to or used in association with state intercity passenger rail service which may include, but are not limited to, depots, platforms, parking areas, and maintenance facilities. The department is authorized to contract with a public or private entity for the operation, maintenance, and/or management of these facilities. [1999 c 253 § 1.]

RCW 47.79.060 Gifts. Subject to appropriation, the department is authorized to accept and expend or use gifts, grants, and donations for the benefit of any depot, platform, parking area, maintenance facility, or other associated rail facility. However, such an expenditure shall be for the public benefit of the state's intercity passenger rail service. [1999 c 253 § 2.]

RCW 47.79.070 Adjacent real property. Subject to appropriation, the department is authorized to exercise all the powers and perform all the duties necessary, convenient, or incidental to the planning, designing, constructing, improving, repairing, operating, and maintaining real property adjacent to or used in association with the state intercity passenger rail service which may include, but are not limited to, depots, platforms, parking areas, and maintenance facilities, even if such real property is owned or controlled by another entity. However, any expenditure of public funds for these purposes shall be directly related to public benefit of the state's intercity passenger rail service. The department shall enter into a written contract with the affected real property owners to secure the public's investment. [1999 c 253 § 3.]

RCW 47.79.110 King Street station—Findings. The legislature finds that a balanced, multimodal transportation system is an essential element of the state's infrastructure, and that effective rail passenger service is an integral part of a balanced, multimodal transportation system. The legislature further finds that the King Street railroad station is the key hub for both Puget Sound's intermodal passenger transportation system and the state's rail passenger system. The legislature recognizes that the redevelopment of the King Street railroad station depot, along with necessary and related properties, is critical to its continued functioning as a transportation hub and finds that innovative funding arrangements can materially assist in furthering the redevelopment at reduced public expense. [2001 c 62 § 1.]

Effective date—2001 c 62: "Due to the irrevocable expiration of federal and Amtrak funds critical to the redevelopment of the King Street railroad station on or before June 30, 2001, sections 1 through 6 of this act are necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and take effect immediately [April 18, 2001]." [2001 c 62 § 7.]

RCW 47.79.120 King Street station—Acquisition. The department may acquire, or contract to acquire, by purchase, lease, option to lease or purchase, condemnation, gift, devise, bequest, grant, or exchange of title, the King Street railroad station depot located in Seattle, or any interests or rights in it, and other real property and improvements adjacent to, or used in association with, the King Street railroad station depot. The property may include, but not be limited to, the depot, platforms, parking areas, pedestrian and vehicle access areas, and maintenance facilities. These properties, in the aggregate, will be known as the King Street railroad station. [2001 c 62 § 2.]

Effective date—2001 c 62: See note following RCW 47.79.110.

RCW 47.79.130 King Street station—Department's powers and duties. During all periods that the department contracts to own or lease some, or all, of the King Street railroad station properties, the department may exercise all the powers and perform all the duties necessary, convenient, or incidental for planning, designing, constructing, improving, repairing, renovating, restoring, operating, and maintaining the King Street railroad station properties. These powers also include authority to lease or sell, assign, sublease, or otherwise transfer all, or portions of, the King Street railroad station properties for transportation or other public or private purposes and to contract with other public or private entities for the operation, administration, maintenance, or improvement of the King Street railroad station properties after the department takes possession of some, or all, of the properties, as the secretary deems appropriate. If the department transfers any of its fee ownership interests in the King Street railroad station properties, proceeds from the transaction must be placed in an account that supports multimodal programs, but not into an account restricted by Article II, section 40 of the state Constitution. [2001 c 62 § 3.]

Effective date—2001 c 62: See note following RCW 47.79.110.

RCW 47.79.140 King Street station—Leases and contracts for multimodal terminal. To facilitate tax exempt financing for the acquisition and improvement of the King Street railroad station, the department may lease from or contract with public or private entities for the acquisition, lease, operation, maintenance, financing, renovation, restoration, or management of some, or all, of the King Street railroad station properties as a multimodal terminal that supports the state intercity passenger rail service. The leases or contracts are not subject to either chapter 39.94 or 43.82 RCW. The leases and contracts will expire no later than fifty years from the

time they are executed, and at that time the department will either receive title or have the right to receive title to the financed property without additional obligation to compensate the owner of those properties for the acquisition of them. The secretary may take all actions necessary, convenient, or incidental to the financing. [2001 c 62 § 4.]

Effective date—2001 c 62: See note following RCW 47.79.110.

RCW 47.79.150 King Street railroad station facility account.

(1) The department may establish the King Street railroad station facility account as an interest-bearing local account. Receipts from the sources listed in subsection (2) of this section must be deposited into the account. Nothing in this section is a pledge of funds deposited to the account for repayment of tax exempt financing related to the King Street railroad station. The department may invest funds from the account as permitted by law and may enter into contracts with financial advisors as deemed necessary for that purpose. Only the secretary or the secretary's designee may authorize expenditures from the account.

(2) All funds appropriated to the King Street railroad station facility account by the legislature; all contributions, payments, grants, gifts, and donations to the account from other public or private entities; all receipts from departmental transactions involving capital facility sales, transfers, property leases and rents, incomes, and parking fees associated with the King Street railroad station; as well as all investment income associated with the account must be deposited into the King Street railroad station facility account for purposes specified in subsection (3) of this section.

(3) All funds deposited into the King Street railroad station facility account must be expended by the department solely to pay the following expenses:

(a) Costs for management of the account;

(b) Purchase and acquisition costs for King Street railroad station properties;

(c) Payments, including incidental expenses, relating to the King Street railroad station depot as required by a lease or contract under RCW 47.79.140;

(d) Maintenance and operating costs for the King Street railroad station properties; and

(e) Capital improvement projects initiated by the department associated with, and for the benefit of, the King Street railroad station depot occurring after the date of the department's beneficial occupancy of the renovated King Street railroad station depot, and for capital improvement projects initiated at any time by the department for the benefit of King Street railroad station properties other than the depot including, but not limited to, improvements to associated platforms, parking areas, temporary buildings, maintenance facilities, pedestrian access, and other improvements essential to the operation of the station as a multimodal terminal.

(4) Nothing in this section is intended to restrict the right of the department from otherwise funding purchase, acquisition, capital improvement, maintenance, rental, operational, and other incidental costs relating to the King Street railroad station from appropriations

and resources that are not designated for deposit in the King Street railroad station facility account. [2001 c 62 § 5.]

Effective date—2001 c 62: See note following RCW 47.79.110.

RCW 47.79.900 Effective date—1993 c 381. This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect July 1, 1993. [1993 c 381 § 5.]