



## **Washington – British Columbia – Oregon**

### ***Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)***

#### **On Committing to Advance Activities in Support of an Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation Project**

**WHEREAS**, the Cascadia region is facing climate, housing affordability, mobility, and social justice challenges arising from its rapid growth.

**WHEREAS**, these challenges require a regional effort to develop innovative approaches to transportation, land-use and housing infrastructure that prioritize equity and sustainability while decreasing greenhouse gas emissions.

**WHEREAS**, transportation sector emissions are a significant source of emissions in Washington, Oregon and British Columbia.

**WHEREAS**, as Governors of the states of Washington and Oregon and as Premier of the Province of British Columbia, we have worked to align policies and connect our states and province to expand the benefits of regional collaboration to our people, our economy and our environment.

**WHEREAS**, Washington, Oregon and British Columbia form a mega region that has experienced tremendous growth over the past few decades and will continue to experience growth as a net increase between three and four million people is expected to call the region “home” by 2050.

**WHEREAS**, this population growth, if not met with innovative and proactive policymaking and development, will magnify existing challenges by increasing the shortage of affordable housing and traffic congestion, worsening the climate crisis, and placing additional strain on our existing transportation infrastructure.

**WHEREAS**, the burdens of unmanaged growth fall most heavily on low-income individuals who are unable to afford housing within the job centers exacerbating inequity in the Cascadia region.

**WHEREAS**, bold investments and equitable deployment of clean technologies and modernized infrastructure can both address these challenges in a sustainable manner while creating an infusion of near-term good-paying jobs and long-term economic benefits.

**WHEREAS**, shared collaboration on technology, supply chain resiliency, climate abatement and emission reductions can be achieved through bringing together governments, companies and communities in implementing innovative solutions from academic experts and the private sector based on our common values, including a shared commitment to the environment, equality, and the entrepreneurial potential of our residents.

**WHEREAS**, there are opportunities for collaboration in climate mitigation to be significantly enhanced in key sectors, including transportation, ports, sustainable aviation fuels, supply chain efficiency, agri tech and life sciences.

**WHEREAS**, Washington, Oregon and British Columbia have explored a new Ultra-High-Speed Corridor connecting Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver B.C., with points-in-between, providing faster and more reliable trips between cities and linking to regional transit options.

**WHEREAS**, recent feasibility studies funded by Washington, Oregon, British Columbia and the private sector have demonstrated a compelling case for an Ultra-High-Speed Corridor that will create good-paying jobs, increase affordable housing options, clean our air, improve safety and reduce traffic.

**WHEREAS**, a 2019 Business Case Analysis showed that an Ultra-High-Speed Corridor could transport three million riders a year, generate \$250 million USD in annual revenue, reduce six million metric tons of carbon emissions, spur \$355 billion USD in economic growth and create 200,000 new jobs.

**WHEREAS**, a 2020 Governance and Financing report outlined funding and authorization options and recommended the creation of an inter-jurisdictional Coordinating Entity for project initiation activities to work with the community to advance this critical project.

**WHEREAS**, the results of a 2021 poll found Washingtonians and Oregonians show strong support for the project in both states, with voters particularly appreciating the benefits that the project would provide for reducing traffic congestion and increasing transportation options, strengthening the regional economy, addressing climate change, and promoting more equitable, affordable connections between jobs and housing.

**WHEREAS**, the 2020 updated Oregon State Rail Plan calls for participation in visioning to develop a conceptual corridor assessment and high-level costs for high-speed rail, including identifying actions needed by local, state, and federal agencies to advance development and funding.

**WHEREAS**, in the 2020 BC Throne Speech, the provincial government highlighted the potential for “high speed rail connections with our neighbours to the south” as an objective for the region.

**WHEREAS**, high-speed rail is consistent with British Columbia’s commitment to reduce emissions by building a more sustainable transportation system as laid out in its CleanBC plan and the CleanBC Roadmap to 2030.

**WHEREAS**, in July and August 2021, more than 45 business, labor, community organizations and elected officials in Washington and more than 50 in Oregon that support the Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation project urged their congressional delegation to include funding opportunities for the project as part of the reauthorization of surface transportation and infrastructure legislation.

**WHEREAS**, the private sector has been a collaborative partner in the exploration of an Ultra-High-Speed Corridor and is committed to ongoing engagement as the project proceeds.

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. federal government has joined state and provincial governments and the Government of Canada in making a transformative commitment to the Paris Climate Accords with its Nationally-Determined Commitment (“NDC”) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a minimum of 50 percent by 2030, compared to 2005 levels.

**WHEREAS**, Washington, Oregon and British Columbia stand ready to jointly pursue federal, state and other funding opportunities as they become available.

And, **WHEREAS**, the U.S. federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and Build Back Better proposals represent an unprecedented commitment to enacting America’s National Determined Contribution and building the jobs and infrastructure of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, including Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation. Additionally, those two federal proposals provide a unique and timely opportunity for the Cascadia region to compete for future federal funding to support the project.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that:

We commit to establishing a Policy Committee made up of Washington, Oregon and British Columbia designees and representatives from regional planning entities and the private sector to build relationships and coordinate efforts to

advance the project. A lead from the respective government departments or ministries will be identified to spearhead the related activities in each of our jurisdictions and engagement in the Policy Committee.

We commit our states and province to advancing work on the Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation project and to pursuing emissions reduction with a focus on equity, inclusion and meaningful community engagement.

We commit to developing an organizational framework that facilitates inclusive input and decision-making.

We commit to reaching out to the public along the Cascadia Corridor through an equitable community outreach and engagement process, coordinated with federal, state, provincial and local legislators, and Indigenous communities to gain support from key decision makers and commit to identifying opportunities to engage stakeholders to support the project.

We commit to jointly preparing for and pursuing federal, state and other funding opportunities as they become available and will identify resources to continue work on the project.

Subject to appropriation, we commit to establishing an inter-jurisdictional Coordinating Entity for project related activities; identifying opportunities to streamline future environmental clearance and initiate the planning and environmental process; and identifying next steps to continue the necessary work to secure support and funding for the Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation project.

Recognizing its regional significance, these activities will lay the groundwork for the creation of a formal entity to continue project development while seeking community engagement and input, gaining critical support from decision makers, and positioning the corridor for future funding opportunities and efficient environmental clearance. The Parties agree to convene a leadership meeting within one year to evaluate progress on the above areas and identify additional areas for collaboration to advance the project.

### ***Term and Effect***

This MoU shall come into effect upon signature of the three parties below and shall remain in effect for a period of five years and can be renewed or amended with the consent of the parties. Any party may decide to terminate the agreement by notifying the other parties with three months' written notice.

***Limitations***

The undersigned signatories agree that this MoU shall have no legal effect or impose a legally binding obligation on the state of Washington, the Province of British Columbia or the state of Oregon. None of the parties shall be responsible for the actions of third parties who may participate in the activities outlined in this MoU.

*Agreed and signed for the 2021 Cascadia Innovation Corridor Annual Conference, and dated on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of November 2021.*



Jay Inslee, Governor  
State of Washington



John Horgan, Premier  
Province of British Columbia



Kate Brown, Governor  
State of Oregon