

Amtrak Cascades Derailment Update

House Transportation Committee

ROGER MILLAR, Secretary of Transportation

January 10, 2018

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Derailment overview

Amtrak Cascades 501 derailed at 7:33 a.m. on Dec. 18, 2017

- Train left tracks near DuPont, causing railcars and one locomotive to fall onto I-5 below
- WSP reports 3 passengers killed; 62 injured in train; 8 injured in the 14 vehicles involved on interstate – injured transferred to area hospitals
- Southbound I-5 blocked for 57 hours, with long detours necessary
- Train consisted of 2 locomotives and 12 cars (WSDOT owned one locomotive and 11 of the train cars - Amtrak owned the remainder)
- Track is part of the Point Defiance Bypass – owned by Sound Transit and part of the 20 ARRA improvement projects
- National Transportation Safety Board investigation into the cause of the derailment began that evening

Road clearance and partnerships

Clearing derailed train and roadway a tremendous challenge – took many partners working together

- Sound Transit, Amtrak, local emergency responders, JBLM and WSDOT participated in joint incident responses exercises and trainings for the Point Defiance Bypass
- WSP's new UAV 3-D mapping program quickly documented the area for NTSB investigators; allowing clearing of roadway and track to begin quickly
- Prior planning by JBLM I-5 Working Group had agreements in place for a detour through JBLM, allowing local traffic to detour through Center Drive onto the military base
- WSP, WSDOT and local police officers flagged detour routes
- WSDOT modified detours and signal timing as needs to address local concerns
- Rail companies used specialized equipment to move rail cars and 270,000 pound locomotive
- WSDOT maintenance crews pre-staged and began inspections and repairs as soon as each area was cleared

Positive Train Control

- PTC is an advanced train control system designed to prevent train-to-train collisions, over-speed derailments, incursions into established work zone limits, and movement of a train through a switch left in wrong position
- Not a prerequisite for safe operations, but a value added safety overlay mechanism
- Congressional implementation deadline – December 31, 2018
- Not yet activated for Amtrak Cascades passenger rail on any segment of corridor
- More than 14 million boardings without a passenger fatality prior to derailment
- Three components
 - **Onboard equipment** – installed on all new WSDOT locomotives as part of procurement (additional interface software still needed)
 - **Wayside equipment** – installed on BNSF and Sound Transit tracks
 - **Back office systems** – Amtrak and host railroads need to integrate all three components and test servers to communicate seamlessly
- Amtrak has committed to meeting December deadline
- Amtrak Cascades will not return to Point Defiance Bypass until PTC activated



Next steps

- Investigation by National Transportation Safety Board (12 months)
- Amtrak agreed to pay all costs related to derailment
 - Medical expenses
 - Clean-up and repair of roadway, railway, and bridge
 - Equipment replacement
 - Restoration of passenger rail service
- Working with Amtrak to resolve contractual, insurance, and schedule issues
- Reverted to use of coastline route between Tacoma and Nisqually – using previous Tacoma station and supplementing fleet with Amtrak equipment
- Returned to schedule with just four roundtrips between Seattle and Portland
- Responding to multiple Public Disclosure Requests and litigation holds

History of Amtrak Cascades development

- Started service between Seattle and Portland – 1994
- Expanded to Vancouver, B.C. and Eugene – mid-1990s
- 2006 *Long Range Plan for Amtrak Cascades*
 - Vision (with unconstrained budget) was 13 roundtrips Portland and Seattle with speeds up to 110 mph by 2023
 - “Building block” approach for incremental improvements
- Applied for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grants from FRA for first set of improvements
- Awarded nearly \$800 million in 2009 and 2010 for incremental improvements



20 federally funded projects

- Projects started in 2010 with specific work plans for each project - federal reimbursements completed before September 2017 deadline
- ARRA projects were selected to achieve service outcomes (in conjunction with BNSF, Sound Transit, Amtrak, and FRA)
 - Two additional roundtrips between Seattle and Portland (for a total of six)
 - Improved on-time reliability to 88%
 - Shorter travel times between Seattle and Portland (saving 10 minutes)
- WSDOT's 20 ARRA projects stretched from Blaine to the Port of Vancouver USA, including:
 - Station upgrades and construction
 - Track and signal upgrades
 - New tracks, ties and sidings
 - Eight new locomotives
 - Landslide mitigation work

Partnerships

Roles and responsibilities

- WSDOT and ODOT fund and manage the Amtrak Cascades service
- WSDOT and ODOT contract with Amtrak to operate the service
- BNSF owns most of the tracks in Washington
- Sound Transit owns the tracks on the Point Defiance Bypass
- BNSF dispatches all trains in Amtrak Cascades corridor in Washington
- WSDOT owns some of the train equipment
 - Eight Charger locomotives (including the one in the derailment)
 - Three train sets (including the one in the derailment)
- ODOT owns two train sets (including the one in the July 2017 derailment)
- Amtrak Cascades trains include four daily roundtrips between Seattle and Portland; two between Seattle and Vancouver, BC; two between Portland and Eugene

Questions?

For more information,
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