

Cascadia High-Speed Rail and I-5 Program

PSRC Economic Development District Board

ROB BERMAN, ACTING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR
CASCADIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL AND I-5 PROGRAM

March 5, 2025

Overview

- Future growth and transportation needs
- WSDOT Cascadia High-Speed Rail and I-5 Program
- The next phase of work for Cascadia High-Speed Rail
- The next phase of work for the I-5 Master Plan
- Questions

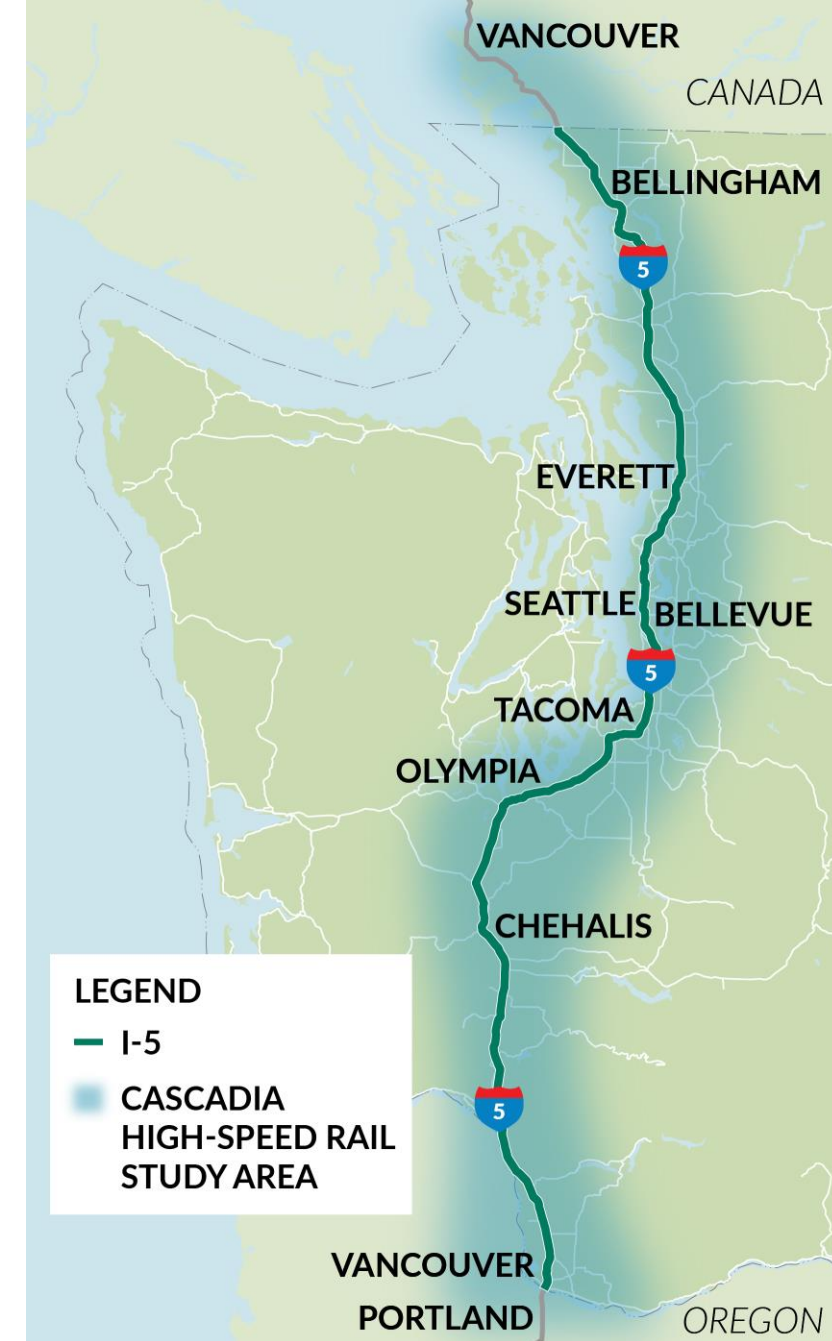
Cascadia megaregion: future growth and transportation needs

- 3-4 million more people expected in the Cascadia megaregion by 2050
- Need to modernize existing infrastructure and create new travel options with greater regional connectivity
- Maintaining our region's economic competitiveness requires investments in a future transportation system
- More extreme weather and seismic risk requires holistic and integrated planning for a resilient system



Cascadia High-Speed Rail and I-5 Program

- In 2023, WSDOT integrated the **I-5 Study** and **Cascadia High-Speed Rail** planning into one megaprogram
 - **Cascadia High-Speed Rail** planning in partnership with British Columbia and Oregon, close coordination with other modes and efforts
 - Development of an **I-5 Master Plan** within Washington state



Cascadia High-Speed Rail

Background and vision

- Partnership formalized in 2021: Oregon, Washington, British Columbia
- Speeds up to **250 mph**
- High-speed rail would use a **new** rail alignment, **not** existing BNSF line used by Amtrak Cascades
- Estimated economic growth potential of more than **\$355 billion**
- Estimated **200,000** new jobs related to construction and ongoing operation
- **Goals:**
 - Provide efficient, equitable and sustainable mobility
 - Promote regional integration
 - Stimulate economic growth and innovation



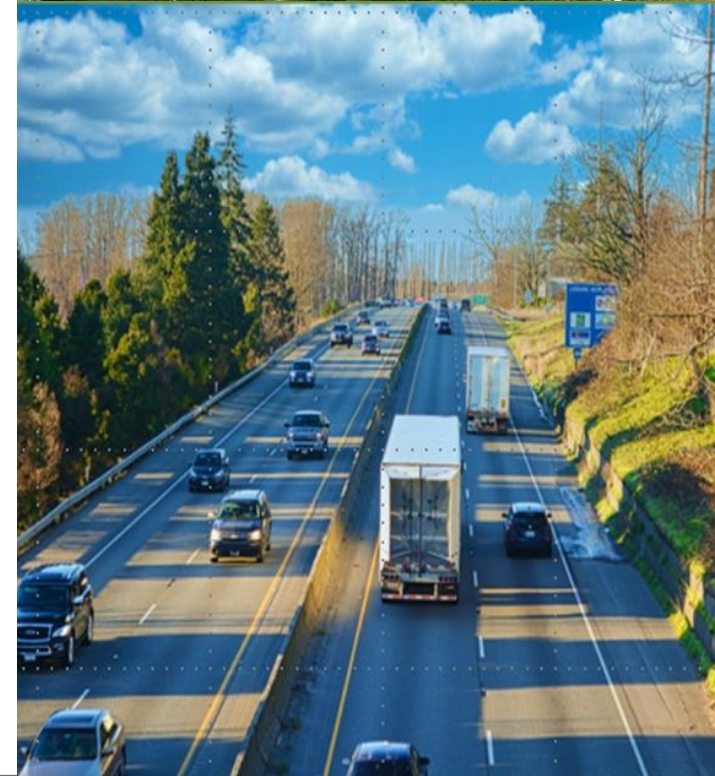
I-5 Master Plan

Background and vision

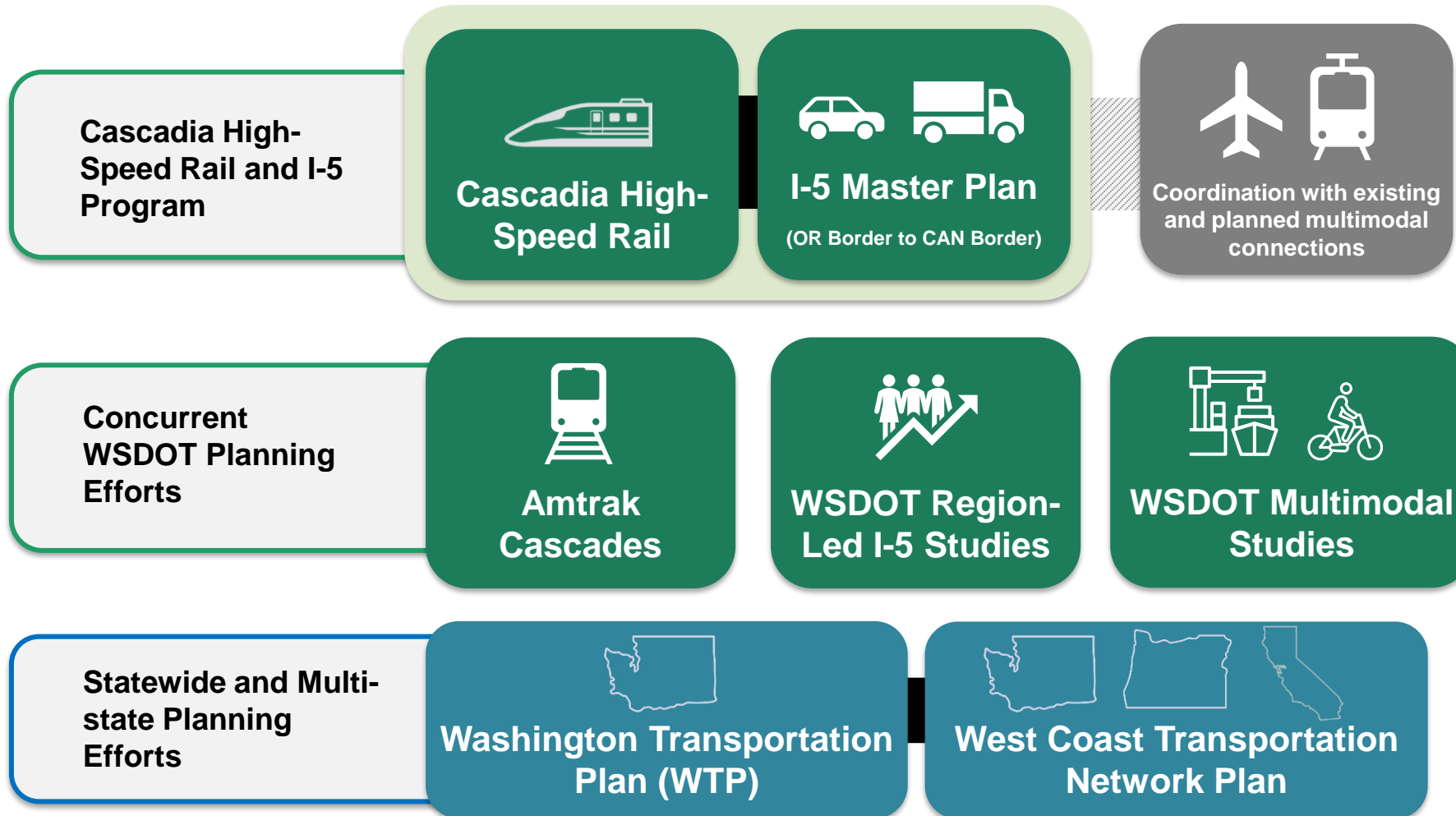
- Building on the I-5 listening sessions in 2022, WSDOT is currently developing a Master Plan for the I-5 corridor from the Oregon border to the Canadian border in Washington State
- The Master Plan will establish an overall shared vision and identify priorities and next steps for implementation
- The Program will also identify and implement near-term projects, focused on seismic and safety needs

Goals

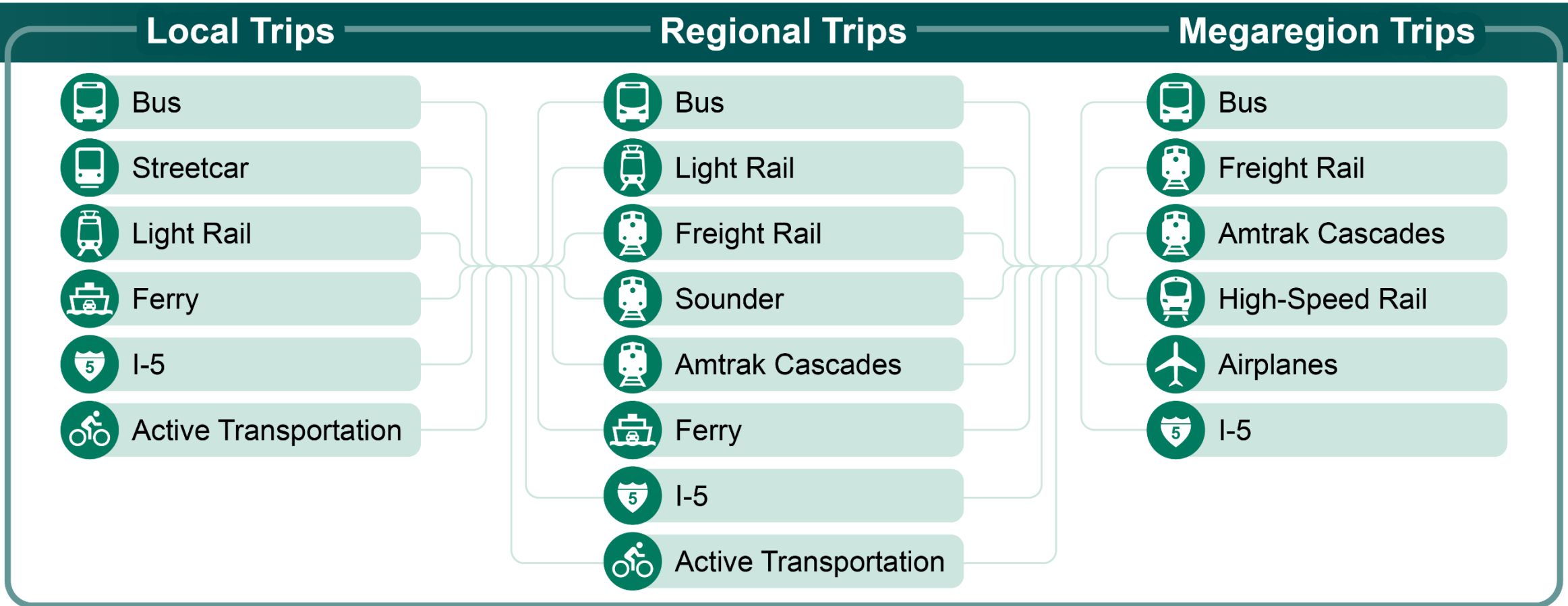
- Improve I-5 resilience to perform after a seismic event and other natural disasters
- Meet the needs of the rapidly growing region to continue to move people and goods efficiently through the state
- Provide travel options and innovations to prepare for transformational advances in transportation



Coordination with regions, modes and networks to plan for regional growth



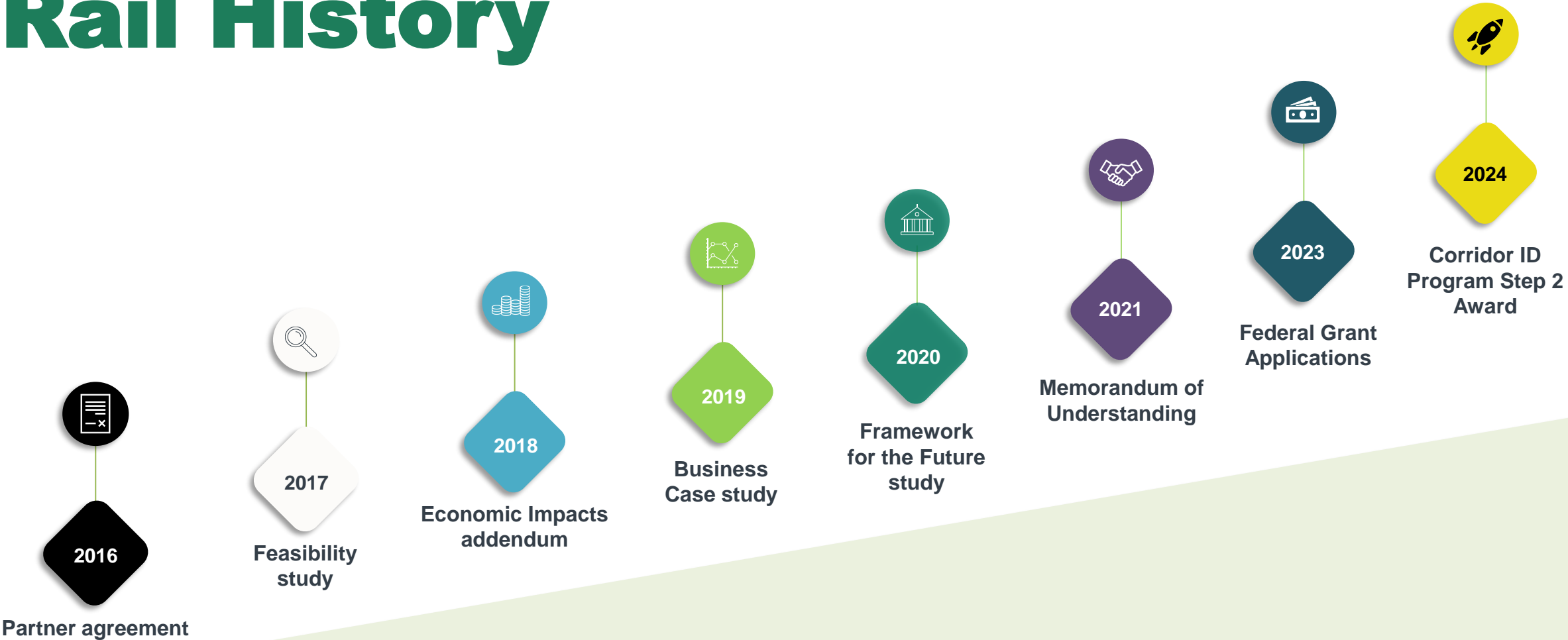
Planning for an integrated system to accommodate growth



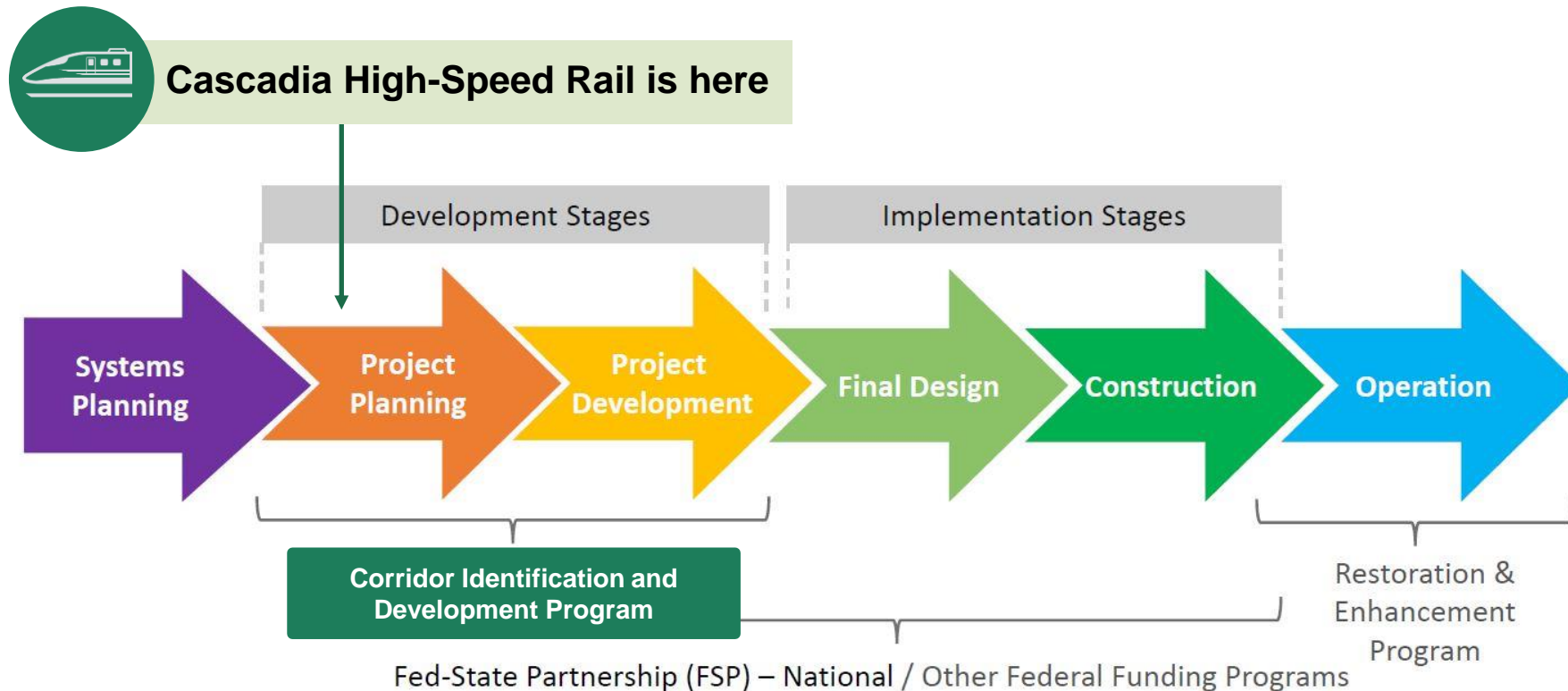


Cascadia High-Speed Rail: Next Phase of Work

Cascadia High-Speed Rail History



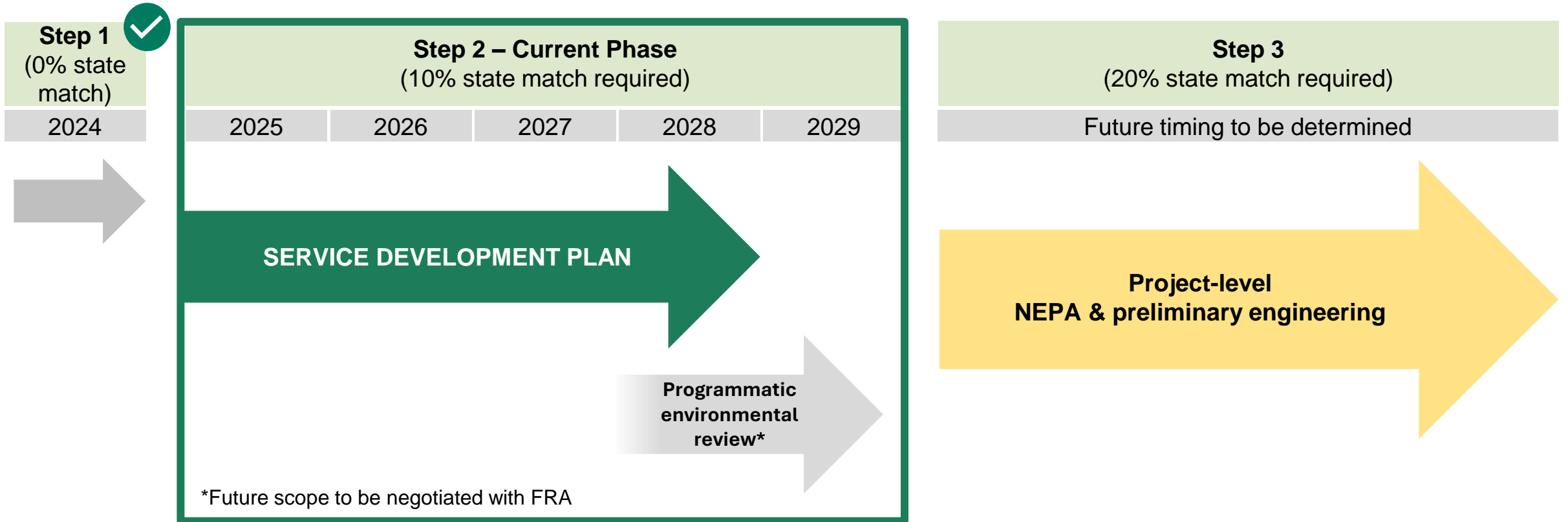
Federal funding pipeline for passenger rail



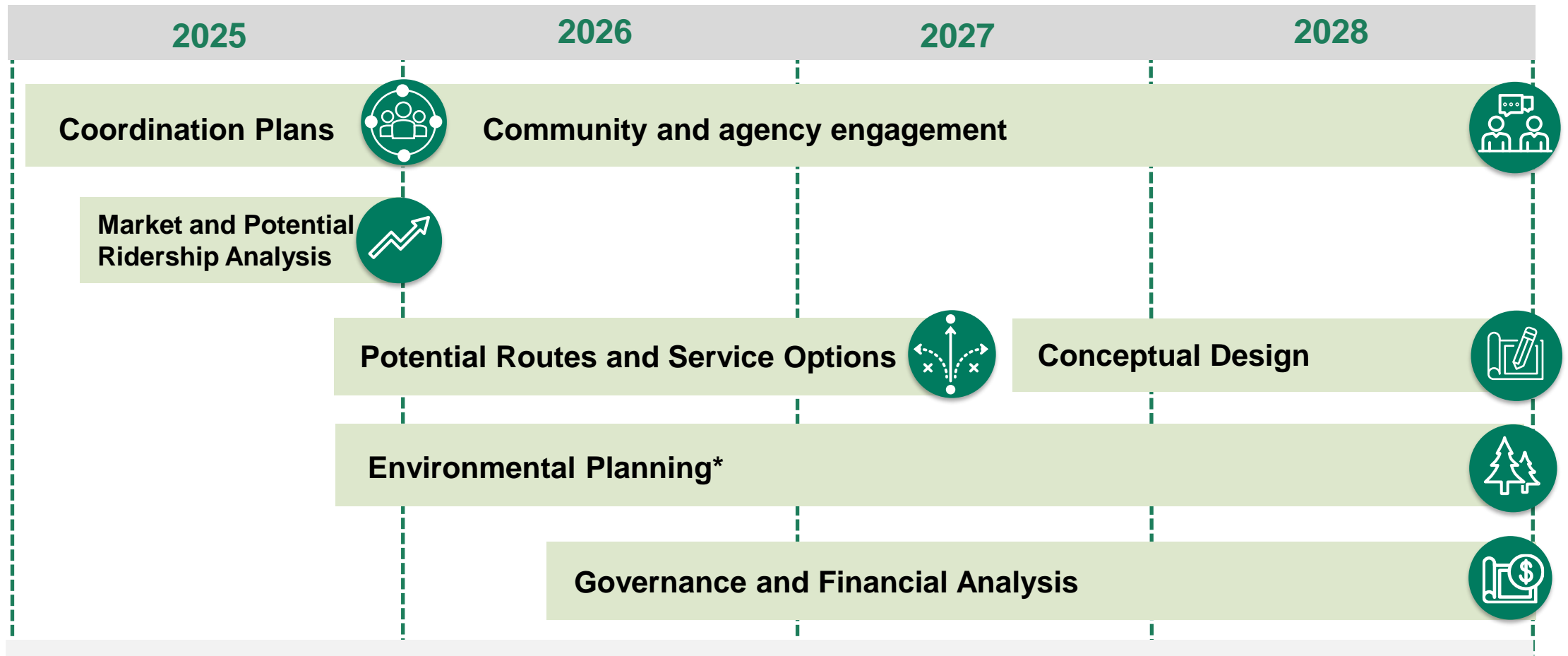
FRA Corridor ID Program

Cascadia HSR roadmap

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Corridor Identification and Development Program



Service Development Plan schedule



*Timing and scope for additional programmatic environmental review in Step 2 to be negotiated with FRA.

Market Analysis in the Service Development Plan (2025)

- Analyzes **how people move** throughout the region, demographic **trends**, and **economic** implications to identify the current and future **transportation market**
- Builds on **previous work**, including 2019 business case
- Provides quantitative support to understand potential **ridership** for a future high-speed rail system
- Informs the **draft purpose and need** statement





I-5 Master Plan: Next Phase of Work

I-5 System Critical Needs

Informed by the legislative requested I-5 listening sessions, project inventory and data analysis, several themes emerged for critical needs to modernize the corridor:

Safety challenges

Lack of connectivity and access for underserved communities

Vulnerability to natural events

Environmental impacts

Aging infrastructure

Lack of mobility and congestion

Key Needs and Opportunities

I-5 planning achievements to-date

required by ESSB 1225

- ✓ **Listening Sessions:** 91 sessions for baseline understand of critical needs, priorities and opportunities
- ✓ **Seismic Resilience:** Case study: Lake City Way to Boeing Field for approach to seismic vulnerability analysis
- ✓ **HOV Innovation:** Initial steps to advance emerging technology pilot project for systemwide performance
- ✓ **Emerging Technology:** Launched assessment of innovation opportunities to address key needs heard at the listening sessions
- ✓ **Seattle Ramp Reconfiguration Study:** Identified transportation considerations for the City of Seattle study of potential lid structures over segments of I-5 in Seattle
- ✓ **Data Collection:** Collected and compiled transportation, land use, environmental, and community demographic data along the **277-mile** I-5 corridor
- ✓ Initiated documentation of existing **environmental and transportation conditions**, and future baseline environmental conditions for **each** of the **nine counties** in the I-5 study area.

Planning for the future needs of the Washington I-5 corridor

2025

2026

2027

2028

Community, agency and partner engagement + advancing near-term projects (ongoing)



What are the **existing conditions, needs** and **challenges** along the corridor?



What **projects, strategies and policies exist** that could address the identified needs and challenges?



Which **criteria and performance measures** should be used to evaluate projects, strategies and policies?



Evaluate, screen and finalize projects, strategies and policies



Conduct **scenario planning** and **project prioritization**



Master Plan Recommendations

Cascadia Program: Planning the future of regional transportation

In the near-term we expect to engage you and other interested parties on key initial questions:

- **Spring 2025:** Briefings to educate and engage jurisdictions and interested parties on shared values and vision for the future of transportation
- **Summer 2025:** Convening through existing organizations to understand the opportunities high-speed rail and I-5 system innovation will bring to the megaregion
- **Ongoing:** Coordination with existing and future planning efforts to incorporate high-speed rail and I-5 system innovation



Questions?

Rob Berman

Acting Program Administrator
Cascadia High-Speed Rail and I-5 Program
Rob.Berman@consultant.wsdot.wa.gov

Clair Leighton

Deputy Program Administrator, Strategy and Communications
Cascadia High-Speed Rail and I-5 Program
Clair.Leighton@consultant.wsdot.wa.gov