

**CITY OF BLAINE
REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION
MEETING DATE:**

SUBJECT: Resolution 1608-12 Supporting the Establishment of an Amtrak Passenger Rail Stop
in Blaine Along the Route Between Seattle and Vancouver

SUBMITTING DEPT: City Managaer

PREPARED BY: Gary Tomsic

AGENDA LOCATION: Comments/Communications Consent Committee Reports
Unfinished Business New Business Public Hearing Standing Committees

ATTACHMENTS: Copy of Resolution 1608-12

ANALYSIS/SUMMARY: At the direction of the City Council the attached resolution was prepared. The resolution calls for the City Council to support Blaine as a passenger rail stop for Amtrak and for an inter-city regional program should it be funded and approved. The resolution calls for the WSDOT to initiate a cost/benefit analysis for a stop in Blaine and specifically asks that the study take into consideration the large market Sourth of Fraser River in B.C. Council Members Onyon and Oplinger worked on the resolution after consulting with Bruce Agnew

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that City Council approve the resolution 1608-12 Supporting the Establishment of an Amtrak Passenger Rail Stop in Blaine Along the Route Between Seattle and Vancouver. The Council also directs that the resolution, together with a letter, be sent to the Governor and Premier.

FISCAL ANALYSIS: No impact

REVIEWED BY:

City Manager _____ Finance Dir. _____ City Clerk _____

COUNCIL ACTION:

Approved Denied Tabled/Deferred Assigned to: _____

COUNCIL ACTION: _____

RESOLUTION 1608-12

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLAINE, WASHINGTON, SUPPORTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AMTRAK PASSENGER RAIL STOP IN BLAINE ALONG THE ROUTE BETWEEN SEATTLE AND VANCOUVER.

WHEREAS, the Blaine community appreciates the leadership of Governor Gregoire and Secretary Hammond in investing in the successful Amtrak Cascades rail service and in securing \$800 million in federal funding for service upgrades including track improvements in the Seattle/Blaine corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Governor and B.C. Premier Christy Clark have committed to advancing cross border transportation initiatives which include pre-clearance protocols which were recently announced through the Beyond the Border federal agreement signed by President Obama and Prime Minister Harper; and

WHEREAS, the municipalities of White Rock, Langley and Surrey, along with the Surrey Board of Trade and many residents in the B.C. lower mainland, have made a compelling case for enhanced regional rail access and have provided formal resolutions supporting rail passenger service in Blaine; and

WHEREAS, the remarkable number of Canadian residents using the Bellingham Airport is evidence of marketplace economics at work at the border and can also improve ridership for rail; and

WHEREAS, though Blaine is a small community of 5,000, the market area for a stop in Blaine is 750,000 potential customer; and

WHEREAS, the Washington State Passenger Rail Plan calls for up to four Seattle to Vancouver, BC roundtrip frequencies for the Amtrak Cascades service by 2023; and

WHEREAS, the findings of the Cascade Center's passenger and freight rail study recommends amending the Washington State Rail Plan to develop a "two-tier" passenger rail system to accommodate growth in the international Amtrak Cascades services and development of a future system between Everett and Blaine; and

WHEREAS, planned rail improvements in B.C. and the State of Washington will likely result in saving the time that a passenger rail stop in Blaine would add to the current 3.5 to 4 hour journey; and

WHEREAS, A Blaine train station is a key component of a new Gateway Semiahmoo initiative to promote cross border transportation, tourism, Native and First Nation history and culture and enhanced freight mobility and safety in the Semiahmoo Peninsula, Boundary Bay, Drayton Harbor and Birch Bay regions; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak Cascade and regional rail service would be a significant economic generator for local economies on both sides of the Canadian and USA border;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Blaine, Washington, as follows:

1. That the Blaine City Council supports the establishment of an Amtrak passenger rail stop in Blaine along the route between Seattle and Vancouver; and
2. WSDOT's current update of the state freight and passenger rail service considers the addition of a mid-day third roundtrip between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C. Until ridership matures and sufficient federal resources are identified at Vancouver's Central Station, a third round trip could operate in high season (May to October) and terminate in Blaine much as the second Amtrak Cascade service terminated in Bellingham for ten years.
3. That WSDOT evaluate whether the \$67 million in funding allocated by the Province of British Columbia for highway/rail grade separations on the BNSF line near Roberts Bank together with the \$147 million of federal funding which includes Blaine siding and storage improvements will save enough travel time to make up for a stop in Blaine; and
4. That Blaine commits to working with WSDOT, Fraser Valley communities, the Province of B.C., Bellingham Airport, First Nations and Native tribes, Whatcom County and Lower Mainland tourism interests to boost ridership on existing and enhanced Amtrak Cascades service to justify the renovation of the existing historic station which would have economic benefits beyond just serving as a train station. If it is determined that this cannot be accomplished Blaine would explore other alternatives.

PASSED BY the City Council of the City of Blaine, Washington, and approved by the Mayor on this 25th day of June, 2012.

Harry Robinson, Mayor

ATTEST:

Sheri Sanchez, City Clerk