# PACIFIC NORTHWEST ECONOMIC REGION

GLOBAL CHALLENGES | REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

Matt Morrison, Executive Director
Tara Edens, Program Manager

Pacific NorthWest Economic Region

# ABOUT PNWER

*Promoting Greater Regional Collaboration*

PNWER is a public-private partnership chartered by the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington; the western Canadian provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan; and Yukon and Northwest Territories.

PNWER is recognized by the federal governments as the model for regional and bi-national cooperation because of its proven success. It is the leading forum where people in the policy world and business world come together to determine solutions to regional challenges.



# WA STATE DELEGATES

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**Rep. Cindy Ryu**
PNWER President



**Sen. Bob Hasegawa**



**Sen. Matt Boehnke**



**Sen. Lisa Wellman**



**Rep. Mary Dye**



**Rep. Stephanie Barnard**



**Rep. Brandy Donaghy**

# PNWER WORKING GROUPS

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PNWER addresses a breadth of regional issues through working groups. Each working group is coordinated by a PNWER staff member and headed by two co-chairs, one from the private sector and one from the public sector.



AGRICULTURE



BORDER & TRADE



CROSS-BORDER LIVESTOCK HEALTH



DISASTER RESILIENCE



ENERGY



FORESTRY



INNOVATION



INVASIVE SPECIES



MINING



TOURISM



TRANSPORTATION



WATER POLICY

# REGIONAL TOURISM COUNCIL

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## Establishing the RTC

- Proposed during PNWER Annual Summit in Boise in July 2023
- Approved by PNWER Executive Board in September 2023
- Inaugural Governance Meeting in March 2024
- Regional Tourism Listening Session at PNWER Annual Summit in July 2024

## Goals of the RTC

- Initial focus on regional readiness for the 2026 FIFA World Cup
- Work collaboratively toward the safety, efficiency, and ease of cross-border travel
- Spotlight our region as a leader of responsible, sustainable, and resilient tourism!

## Governance Structure

- Two representatives from each of the ten PNWER jurisdictions
  - One Elected and One Industry Representative
- Supported by a strategic Advisory Committee

# TOURISM COUNCIL MEMBERS

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**Alaska**
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Tanya Carlson, ATIA

**Alberta**
Chelsae Petrovic, MLA
Danielle Vlemmiks, Travel Alberta

**British Columbia**
Minister Lana Popham
**Dave Cowen**, The Butchart Gardens, (RTC Co-Chair)

**Idaho**
Senator Kevin Cook

**Indigenous Representative**
Brady Smith, Indigenous Tourism Assoc. of Canada

**Montana**
Representative Denise Baum
Jennifer Pelej, MT Dept. of Commerce

**Northwest Territories**
Minister Caitlin Cleveland
Donna Lee Demarcke, NWT Tourism

**Oregon**
Representative Emerson Levy
Kevin Wright, Travel Oregon

**Saskatchewan**
Minister Laura Ross
Amy McInnis, Tourism Saskatchewan

**Washington**
**Representative Cindy Ryu** (RTC Co-Chair)
David Blandford, State of Washington Tourism

**Yukon**
Minister John Streicker
Amanda Deuling, Sport Yukon

# 2026 FIFA WORLD CUP

"The Canada-U.S. hosting of the FIFA World Cup in 2026 is not only a unique opportunity. It's a once in a generation opportunity that people are not aware of or fully appreciate…

This is so big that it calls not only for an all-of-government approach, but it requires a PNWER-like approach.

It's the kind of presence that PNWER convenes, of bringing all those stakeholders together, that has the capacity to really take advantage of that opportunity."

Ambassador David Cohen
at PNWER's 2024 Annual Summit



# REGIONAL READINESS

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## PNWER's Areas of Focus

- **Regional Tourism Marketing & Traveler Information Portal**
- **Border Preclearance Pilots**
- **Cross-Border Disaster Resilience & Emergency Management Planning**
- **Transportation and Infrastructure Connections**
  - Rail improvements - Amtrak Cascades
  - Long-term benefits for WA State and BC
- **Indigenous and Rural Tourism Opportunities and Economic Development**

Ambassador Cohen noted FIFA is an opportunity to showcase the world-class status of Seattle and Vancouver. Many visitors at FIFA are C-suite executives. Of the companies that relocated or were established in Vancouver since 2010, 80% had executives that attended the 2010 Olympic games.

# FUNDING NEEDED

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## Currently Funded Project

**Port of Seattle Tourism Marketing Support Program:** Grant to PNWER to develop a comprehensive regional tourism marketing & traveler information portal for domestic and international visitors to promote travel through Port of Seattle-owned facilities and encourage travel throughout the broader PNW region. **($30,000)**

## Proposal under Review

**PacifiCan Tourism Growth Program:** Canadian Federal grant to "Accelerate International Tourism and Travel Resiliency" with the goals to: **develop border processes to streamline info for travelers, establish regular bilateral cross-sector forums** on key issues, and maintain a Regional Tourism Dashboard. **($300,000 CAD)**
The BC government has committed **$75,000 CAD** toward this project.

## Funding Request

**PNWER is seeking $300,000 in match funding from WA State over the next two years to support regional tourism readiness and match Canada's contributions, particularly as we prepare to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup.**

# TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

## About the Amtrak Cascades

- Intercity rail service connecting each of the major population centers between Eugene, OR and Vancouver, BC
- Operational funding provided by the states of WA and OR
- Hosts six round trips between Seattle and Portland each day, and two round trips to Vancouver, BC each day

## Preparing the Amtrak Cascades for FIFA

- There is a critical need for improvements at Vancouver's Pacific Central Station to meet modern accessibility standards and allow for an increased volume of Amtrak Cascades riders
- Upgrading the existing facilities is a cost-effective opportunity to improve the customer experience and provide more frequent daytime service

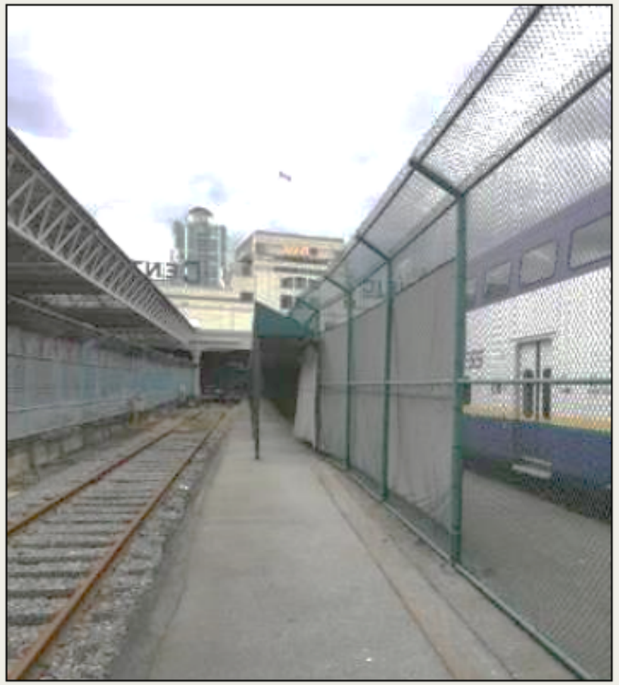


# IMPROVING AMTRAK CASCADES

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## Areas of Improvement

- Train speeds and on-time performance drop north of the U.S. - Canada border.
- The Amtrak platform at Pacific Central Station in Vancouver, BC is too narrow and low for new train sets and too small for the volume of passengers projected to visit the station in 2026.



Current Platform

←

→

Proposed Improvements



# PROGRESS MADE & NEXT STEPS

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## WSDOT & Amtrak Establish Customs Preclearance

- Will eliminate the need for southbound trains to stop in Blaine for U.S. Customs agents to board the train to check passengers
- Will save 10 minutes in travel time between Vancouver, BC and Seattle
- Targeting Spring 2025 for implementation

## High Performance Rail Working Group Efforts Include:

- Establishing a bi-national working group to enhance passenger train service to BC
- Securing funding for preliminary design and identifying funding sources for station improvements
- Improvements will achieve modern disability access compliance and allow for easier boarding/disembarking
- Identifying ways to improve on-time performance and add more daily trips between the U.S. and Canada via the Cascades with Amtrak and WSDOT

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# 2025 PNWER ANNUAL SUMMIT

## July 20-24 | Bellevue, WA

### WHY SHOULD YOU ATTEND?

The PNWER Annual Summit provides the opportunity to:

- **Advocate** for regional policies and cross-jurisdictional initiatives
- **Collaborate** and establish partnerships with Canadian & U.S. public & private sector leaders
- **Learn** about key economic issues facing the region
- **Strengthen** regional networks and cooperation

Learn more at www.pnwer.org/2025-summit




10 Provinces, States, & Territories

50+ Sessions & Networking Breaks

125+ Speakers from the U.S. & Canada

500+ Legislators, Business Leaders, & Decision Makers