



An Estimate of the Economic Impacts of Amtrak Cascades in British Columbia

Since 1995, Amtrak and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) have sponsored daily rail service between Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia. The service, commonly known as Amtrak *Cascades*, is primarily designed to provide the traveling public with an alternative to highway and air travel. A secondary benefit of the service is the economic activity generated by riders visiting the communities served by the trains.

In the late 1990s, WSDOT and Amtrak combined ridership data and statistics from Tourism Vancouver to produce an estimate of the economic impacts of Amtrak *Cascades* on Vancouver's economy. This brief describes the methodology used to produce the previous estimate and provides updated figures for 2005.

Estimated Impact in 1999

For several years, WSDOT and Amtrak used the figure of **\$11 million** (CND) when estimating the annual impact of inbound Amtrak *Cascades* riders on the greater-Vancouver, B.C. economy. This figure focused on tourism expenditures exclusively and did not include any calculation of the societal impacts associated with the rail travel, such as reduced automobile and aircraft emissions or increased public safety.

Based on data from Amtrak, approximately 360,000 passengers traveled on the daily trains between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C. in the first four full years of service (1996-1999). Approximately half of these riders (180,000) took the northbound train during this time period, with approximately 90 percent of these train riders traveling through to Vancouver (162,000).

Of the 162,000 inbound riders, 30 percent visited Vancouver for a single-day trip (48,600), and the rest (113,400) spent one or more nights in the greater Vancouver metropolitan area.

Tourism Vancouver data from 1999 indicated that day visitors to Vancouver spent approximately \$40 (CND) per person per visit, and overnight visitors stayed approximately 2.6 nights in the greater Vancouver area and spent \$380 per visit.

Economic Impact Calculations 1996-1999

Amtrak <i>Cascades</i> travelers to Vancouver, BC: 1996-1999 (40,500 inbound travelers per year)	162,000
Single day travelers (30% of riders)	48,600
Travelers spending one or more nights in Vancouver, B.C. (70% of riders)	113,400
Single day traveler expenditures (48,600 x \$40 per day)	\$1,944,000
Overnight traveler expenditures (113,400 x \$380 per visit)	\$43,092,000
Total expenditures by Amtrak <i>Cascades</i> passengers in Vancouver, B.C: 1996-1999	\$45,036,000
Average annual expenditure by Amtrak <i>Cascades</i> passengers in Vancouver, B.C (1996-1999): ($\$45,036,000 \div 4$ years)	\$11,259,000

All figures in Canadian dollars

2005 Calculations

The table below updates the calculations from 1999 and includes the latest data from Tourism Vancouver. No data was collected on single day travelers after 1999, so the \$40 per person figure was used again, although it is likely that this is a conservative estimate for 2005.

Economic Impact Calculations for 2005

Amtrak <i>Cascades</i> travelers to Vancouver, BC in 2005	46,000
Single day travelers (30% of riders)	13,800
Travelers spending one or more nights in Vancouver, B.C. (70% of riders)	32,200
Single day traveler expenditures (CND) (13,800 x \$40 per day)	\$552,000
Overnight traveler expenditures ¹ (32,200 x \$416 per visit)	\$13,395,200
Total estimated expenditures by Amtrak <i>Cascades</i> passengers in Vancouver, B.C in 2004	\$13,947,200

All figures in Canadian dollars

¹ From *U.S. Overnight Visitors to Vancouver, 2003*, by Tourism Vancouver. The classification used for Amtrak *Cascades* passengers is 'Pleasure Visitor,' who stayed an average of 2.37 nights per visit and spent an average of \$175.70 per day, for a total of \$416.40 per person per visit.