

Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority and PNWER to Host 2026 Greater Northwest Rail Summit in Helena

Transportation, business and government leaders gather in Helena to discuss passenger rail, freight, economic development and regional connectivity.

HELENA, MT, UNITED STATES, July 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ --

Transportation leaders from across the Western United States and Canada will gather in Helena August 25–27 for the [2026 Greater Northwest Rail Summit](#) and [Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority](#) Annual Conference, a three-day event examining how passenger and freight rail are driving economic development, strengthening regional connectivity, supporting workforce development, and expanding transportation opportunities throughout the Greater Northwest.



Registration is now open for the 2026 Greater Northwest Rail Summit, August 25–27 in Helena, Montana. View the agenda and register at bigskyrailmt.gov.

Hosted by the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) in partnership with the [Pacific Northwest Economic Region](#) (PNWER)'s Regional Infrastructure Accelerator, the Summit will bring together federal and state officials, Tribal leaders, railroads, transportation agencies, business and manufacturing interests, tourism organizations, local governments, passenger rail advocates, and community partners to discuss some of the most significant transportation initiatives underway across the region.

A major focus of the conference will be the Big Sky North Coast Corridor, the federally designated effort to restore passenger rail service between Chicago and Seattle/Portland through southern Montana and North Dakota. The Corridor represents one of the nation's most significant long-distance passenger rail restoration initiatives and has the potential to reconnect communities, expand transportation choices, strengthen rural mobility, and support long-term economic growth across an eight-state region.

"Rail is more than transportation. It is an investment in our communities, our economy, and our future," said BSPRA Chair Dave Strohmaier. "The Greater Northwest Rail Summit provides a unique opportunity to bring together public and private sector leaders to strengthen regional partnerships, exchange ideas, and continue building momentum for modern passenger and freight rail throughout the West."

The Summit will feature discussions on federal and state transportation policy, Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID), freight and passenger rail investment, economic development, tourism, manufacturing, workforce development, and regional collaboration. Participants will also hear updates on major passenger rail initiatives including the Big Sky North Coast Corridor, Amtrak Cascades, Borealis, Front Range Passenger Rail, and Alberta's long-range passenger rail planning.

Featured speakers currently include Tim Sheehy, U.S. Senator (MT-R); Michael Rutherford, Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Multimodal Freight; Michael Giordano, Senior Advisor to U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy; Elaine Clegg, Amtrak Board Member; Rebecca Higgins, Vice President of the Eno Center for Transportation; Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of the Rail Passengers Association; and Art Guzzetti, Vice President of the American Public Transportation Association. Additional speakers representing the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration, Amtrak, Class I freight railroads, state departments of transportation, and regional transportation organizations continue to be announced.

The conference will also include BSPRA's Annual Board Meeting and an opening reception in the historic Montana State Capitol Rotunda.

Registration is now open. Transportation professionals, elected officials, local governments, Tribal representatives, economic development organizations, business leaders, tourism professionals, rail industry representatives, passenger rail advocates, and others interested in the future of transportation throughout the Greater Northwest are encouraged to attend.

For registration, the current agenda, hotel information, and speaker updates, visit:

<https://bigskyrailmt.gov/2026-gnwrs-bspra-annual-meeting>

About the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority

The Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority is a multi-county regional transportation district working to restore long-distance passenger rail service through the Big Sky North Coast Corridor while strengthening regional mobility, economic opportunity, and community connectivity throughout the Greater Northwest. BSPRA serves as the project manager for the eight-state Big Sky North Coast Corridor under the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development Program.

About PNWER

The Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) is a statutory public-private partnership

representing U.S. states and Canadian provinces and territories across the Pacific Northwest. PNWER works to strengthen regional cooperation, economic development, trade, transportation, and infrastructure through collaboration among public and private sector partners.

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