

Washington Rail News

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June/July 2003

Publication of the Washington Association of Rail Passengers
A Not-for-profit Consumer Organization
"...getting the Pacific Northwest on the right track."

Senator Patty Murray honored by passenger rail advocates

Senator Patty Murray (D-Shoreline) was presented the National Assoc. of Railroad Passengers' George Falcon Golden Spike award at a May 1 reception at Washington Union Station.

The award was presented by NARP in appreciation for Sen. Murray's "hard work" last summer as chairman of the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee "to prevent a shutdown of Amtrak or of its individual routes." The wording on the plaque also notes her

"Last year was very difficult but I was pleased to be able to provide [Amtrak's request of] \$1.2 bill. in the Senate bill and to get to \$1.05 bill. [in the final legislation]," Murray continued. "Another tough year is ahead of us."

Murray concluded, "I look forward to working with NARP, with David Gunn and his great team at Amtrak, with the states that rely on intercity passenger rail, and my colleagues in the Senate and House to make sure that we have a safe, efficient and viable passenger rail system in this country."

The senator became the second Washingtonian to receive the Golden Spike award. Former Rep. Al Swift (D-Bellingham) was a 1992 recipient. Murray thanked Swift for "getting in fray" and teaching her the proper lessons on Amtrak and passenger rail.

NARP also awarded a Golden Spike to Rep. Bill Young (R-FL) for his key role in the House last summer in preventing an Amtrak shutdown.

Gordon Bowe, a UP conductor operating Chicago-area Metra commuter trains, was presented the Dr. Gary Burch Safety Award by the Burch family for his extensive work with Operation Lifesaver, the national partnership to promote public safety on and around railroad property.

Other NARP board meeting highlights included very frank presentations by Jonathan Klein, Amtrak Chief Mechanical Officer, and John Tucker, Amtrak Chief of Operations Planning. Both discussed the state of Amtrak's mechanical department and its repair facilities and improvements that are being made. Klein also expressed concern about the continuing contraction of the railroad supply industry, making it more difficult to obtain even many standard repair parts.

We also heard from Tim Gillespie, (See **Murray**, page 4)

Additional \$226 mill. for rail in state transportation package

The transportation package passed by the Legislature and signed by the governor on May 19 with great fanfare (see executive director's column for his perspective the plan) contains \$226 mill. for intercity rail projects in our state over the next ten years. This amount is in addition to what will be funded with the existing transportation taxes. The legislation also funds a fourth Amtrak Cascades roundtrip between Seattle and Portland. The DOT Rail Office is exploring ideas on how to implement this additional frequency as soon as possible.

Here are some of the Northwest Corridor passenger rail capital projects funded from the "nickel package" (with the state's share of the cost and the year the project starts):

- Vancouver rail yard, a bypass mainline to connect the Seattle line with the Columbia River line and build a grade separation at 39th St to improve passenger train reliability, \$53.6 mill., 2007 (but may advance several years).
 - Kelso-Martin Bluff, add 18 miles of high speed 3rd main track for passenger trains and upgrade existing tracks, \$250 mill. (\$50 mill. in nickel package), 2010.
 - Pt. Defiance bypass in Tacoma, upgrade BNSF branch line through south Tacoma, Lakewood and Ft. Lewis for passenger service to reduce travel time by 11 minutes, \$120 mill. (\$21 mill. in nickel package), 2009.
 - PA Jct. curve realignment and Delta Yard upgrades in Everett to increase speeds and reduce travel time by 4 minutes, \$9 mill., 2004
 - Purchase an existing trainset owned by Talgo and currently leased by Oregon, \$7.5 mill, 2005
- Construction of five sets of high speed crossovers and various siding (See **Rail**, page 4)



After receiving her Golden Spike Award, Senator Murray shares the moment with fellow Washingtonians and rail advocates Hans Mueller (center) and Lloyd Flem. Photo by Jim Hamre

work this year, as ranking member of the same subcommittee, "to provide a reasonable funding level for the current fiscal year."

NARP President Alan M. Yorker said, "The Association appreciates Sen. Murray's perseverance during the difficult situations of the past year. Additionally, Sen. Murray's strong support for mass transit helps move this country towards a balanced transportation system that gives its citizens, wherever they may live, the travel choices they want and need."

In accepting the award, Sen. Murray stated, "Intercity passenger rail service is very important to the citizens of the U.S., especially Cascades and Acela Express riders.

*From the
Executive
Director's Desk
by
Lloyd H. Flem*

**Celebration!;
No play in
DeeCee;
Helping our
neighbors**

While staying at the wonderful old Isaak Walton Inn, adjoining Glacier National Park and BNSF's high line (ex-GN), prior to the Northwest region NARP meeting in Shelby, MT and the later national NARP meeting in DeeCee, I received a most pleasant phone report from WSDOT rail manager Ken Uznanski.

Following persuasion from some Seattle-area mom and pop businesses (little outfits called Boeing and Microsoft; a few of you may have heard of them!) the Washington State Legislature passed, by large bi-partisan margins, the largest transportation package in well over a decade. In that package was significant funding for not only continuation but growth of our respected and successful intercity passenger and shortline freight rail programs.

Given grim January prospects for increased state investment in rail or other transportation modes following last fall's defeat of R-51, this victory for transportation funding was a pleasant development indeed. In this regard, our State Legislature did its job. Elected state officials are sent to Olympia to make tough but essential decisions, not to avoid their responsibilities by referring anything difficult to the public. We are a constitutional republic, not a populist mobocracy, despite the noise coming from Mukilteo and from "hot talk" radio.

On May 19th, at the Winged Victory statue near the under-repair Capitol, Governor Locke, with Slade Gorton, legislative transportation leadership, members of the Transportation Commission, a Boeing VP and other VIPs at his side, happily signed the bill that will fund state transportation investments for the next decade. Wearing the WashARP hat, I was pleased to join the celebration. Following the signing, many of us remained, extending the happy moment. Of importance to WashARP membership is the high regard in which our organization is held by statewide transportation leaders of all stripe. We are now part of the Transportation Varsity in Olympia because we work with and for those who believe in compre-

hensive multimodal transportation.

Would WashARP have preferred a higher percentage of the investment monies for rail and other non general-purpose-highway-lanes options? For most of us, yes. Compared to nearly all other wealthy capitalist nations, American monetary commitment to intercity passenger rail is miniscule. But we are practical. We got a piece of the Olympia pie. Eighteen or so years ago, public support of passenger rail at the state level was non-existent.

Thank you to all who contacted your legislators urging their support of rail funding. Now, do not forget to thank those legislators who voted for the funding package. The final House vote was 60-38; the final Senate vote was 38-11. Representatives voting yes: Anderson, Bailey, Berkey, Chase, Chopp, Clibborn, Cody, Conway, Cooper, Darneille, Dickerson, Dunshee, Edwards, Erickson, Flannigan, Fromhold, Gombosky, Grant, Hankins, Hatfield, Hudgins, Hunt, Hunter, Jarrett, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Kirby, Lantz, Linville, Lovick, Mastin, McCoy, McDermott, McIntire, McMorris, Miloscia, Moeller, Morris, Murray, O'Brien, Pettigrew, Pflug, Priest, Quall, Rockefeller, Romero, Ruderman, Santos, Schual-Berke, Sehlin, Shabro, Simpson, Sommers, Sullivan, Tom, Upthegrove, Veloria, Wallace, Wood. Senators voting yes: Brown, Carlson, Doumit, Eide, Fairley, Finkbeiner, Franklin, Fraser, Hale, Haugen, Hewitt, Horn, Jacobsen, Johnson, Kastama, Keiser, Kline, Kohl-Welles, McAuliffe, Morton, Oke, Parlette, Poulsen, Prentice, Rasmussen, Reardon, Regala, Rossi, Schmidt, Sheahan, B. Sheldon, Shin, Spanel, Swecker, Thibaudeau, West, and Winsley.



Our trip on the *Empire Builder* east to Essex (site of the Walton Inn) and Shelby, MT and on to Chicago was near flawless. The *Capitol Limited* east from Chicago to Washington, DC was delayed, though the on-board crew did their best to minimize the resultant inconveniences. While the Capitol's delays were only partially the fault of the host railroad this time, we need to emphasize the good job our primary host railroad, the BNSF, regularly does in getting Amtrak trains across the tracks on the *Builder* route and the *Cascades* north of Portland.

I try to visit DeeCee every other year to attend the Spring NARP meeting and visit members of Congress. This year I had meetings with my representative, Brian Baird (D-Vancouver), Rep. Pete DeFazio (D-OR 4th) and our Sen. Patty

Murray (D-Shoreline), who received the Golden Spike award from NARP. I met and spoke with staff people from sixteen other Congressional offices, from that of Maine's two pro-rail Republican Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins to Florida's delightfully spirited Democratic Congresswoman Corrine Brown. Important meetings were held with staffers of Northwest Reps Rick Larsen (D-Everett) and Earl Blumenauer (D-Portland). In all cases I thanked the electeds or staff for the ongoing support of Amtrak and passenger rail at the federal level. To Northwesterners, successes of the Amtrak *Cascades* were stressed, plus the need for a strong federal partner.

To ND and MT senators, our support for their efforts to save the *Empire Builder* was emphasized. To senators and representatives from elsewhere, we gave WashARP's thanks for their continued willingness to vote for and work for passenger rail. (Left business card and notes for all the Congressfolk, plus a token gift from Olympia (WA) to Olympia (Snowe). Also a box of quality Chehalis mints for Patty Murray. (It's the thought that counts. WashARP is not a Big Spender lobbyist!)

Most NARP delegates from the Far West attended a House Transportation and Infrastructure Hearing on 30 May, chaired by rail-friendly Rep. Jack Quinn (R-NY). Unfortunately, the two Senate and other House committee most important to Amtrak and rail funding do not have rail-friendly chairs. It's a tough game for us in DeeCee these days. Several of us were also invited and attended a meeting of PhD-heavy government economists, the topic being rail funding. As we guests were invited to literally join the economists at the table, I did so and added affirmatively, I was told, to the presentations.

All previous DeeCee trips allowed me some time to visit the magnificent museums which line the Mall west of the Capitol. (This is a real Mall, not a euphemism for a multi-store retail facility beloved by teenaged girls!) Not this time. Was all work and no play in DeeCee. But that's what you pay me for.



While we in Washington can be pleased about the legislative passage of increased funding for rail, we now need to help our friends and Northwest Corridor partners in Oregon. With a (See Lloyd, page 5)

The View Down the

Tracks =====

with Jim Cusick

850k-Hour Fitness

"eight...."

<grunt>

"nine...."

<nnngghhh, eaaarrggghh!!!>

"TEN!!!"

"Whew! Let's see, add 15 lbs, and do 10 more and I'll be done with the strength training. Tomorrow, 40 minutes of 'in the zone' aerobics on the treadmill!"

What am I doing?

Why, I'm getting my money's worth, that's what I'm doing.

Rail travel is not just for the infirm, or only for those who cannot drive (as if that is physically strenuous anyway). People who ride the rails have to be in shape, both mentally and physically. Mentally because they are free from concentrating on the mindless task of driving and can spend their time solving the great mysteries of the universe while commuting. Physically because they can stay active visiting others on the train, walking to the dining car or bistro for a refreshment, or even that one activity that no auto dependent person would seriously think of accomplishing during their commute...going to the bathroom! Heck, taking a walk on the train is even good for upper body strength. The most effective way to move about in a train, by stabilizing yourself using the seatbacks, is the closest we come to our brachiating cousins.

Yes, but what does this have to do with saving money, how fit I might want to be, or the price of tea in China, for that matter?

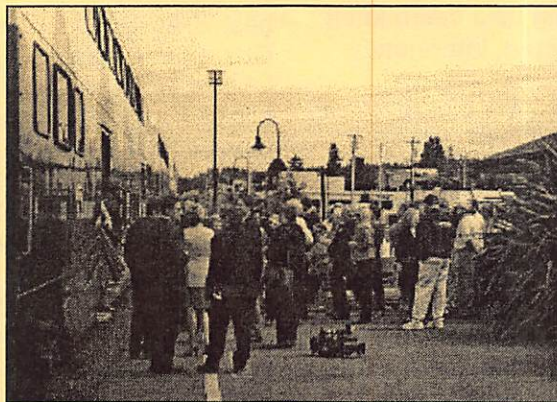
Many of us have felt the process of getting rail up and running in this region has been painfully long. We are pleased to see Sounder service in the Seattle-Tacoma segment and are anxiously anticipating the expansion of service to Lakewood (and beyond), along with the increase in frequency and hours of operation. I can live with the 40 year lease Sound Transit has worked out with BNSF for that segment, since I think I can make use of most of that service agreement as long as I take care of myself.

However, with proper fitness training, good eating habits, and a little red

wine each day, (and a potential human lifespan of 120 years), I figure I can make good use of the 97 years of Sound Transit's agreement with BNSF for the Seattle-Everett service.

It was the s'mores.

Or maybe it was the fear of the scary stories that were going to be told around the campfire while people were hiding in their sleeping bags at the Everett ceremony Sen. Patty Murray (D-Shoreline) arranged. Kudos to one of our elected representatives who understands that leadership is the process of compromise. It's unfortunate, but



A special Sounder train was operated from Everett to Seattle on May 28 to commemorate Sound Transit and BNSF reaching a preliminary agreement to extend Sounder service from Seattle to Everett and from Tacoma to Lakewood. Here, additional passengers board the train at a stop in Edmonds. *Photo by Warren Yee.*

for too long our region has been plagued with the attitude that compromise is equivalent to capitulation. Leadership is not digging in your heels and being unbending in your convictions, but involves looking to the long term, understanding the merits of both points of view, and having the courage to make the compromises necessary to get the job done.

Sen. Murray will get my vote again.

I'd also like to congratulate Sound Transit and BNSF for looking to the future and working out the Seattle-Everett agreement. I wonder what treats were presented that sealed the deal?

Now I know that the agreement didn't come up with the six round trips that the Sound Move plan had promised, and at the hoped-for cost. However, the long-term agreement's best attribute is its length.

In an interview, Edmonds City Councilman Dave Earling made the following comment: "The thing about commuter rail is the predictability. We

can drive from Edmonds to Seattle and it might take us 20 minutes or it might take us 40 minutes. The train is always within a minute or two."

The key word in Dave Earling's comments is PREDICTABILITY. That is what gives rail its value. The other comforts aside, not having to worry about details of planning around traffic is its greatest selling point. Although he is quite accurate when he added: "To have this kind of scenic view—it's almost a tourist attraction. I can't imagine a more restful way to get to work."

The two trains that didn't appear to make it into the agreement are the off-peak/reverse commute runs. However, all is not lost, since Amtrak's Cascades service to the north provides some off-hour mobility. The price might be a bit higher, but the Cascades have the added benefit of the Bistro car, which allows one to purchase that life prolonging drink. (Frankly, I think the bar car should make its return to the rail commute scene!)

A little hazelnut with that LRV?

While Link won't take you as close to the airport as it will in the future, you can always enjoy the hazelnut view. Why hazelnut? The earliest people in Tukwila were the Duwamish who made their homes along the Black and Duwamish Rivers. They named Tukwila for the lush forests of hazelnut trees, which grew around them. Tukwila is the Duwamish word for hazelnut.

A recent visit to the ST open house in Tukwila not only revealed that little piece of trivia, but revealed a look at a building technique that will make the elevated Tukwila segment of construction seem to move at light-speed.

The technique is the same that was used to build the Skytrain Millennium line in Vancouver, BC. The guideway will be built using a unique application of truss-erected segmental precast guideway construction. Four 200-ton overhead erection trusses, with lengths in excess of 325 feet, will be used to build the guideway. Standing on the guideway's support columns, the launching girders will raise precast guideway segments into place. Crews then thread steel post-tensioning tendons through the concrete segments to form self-supporting beams wide enough to carry the two Central Link (See **View**, page 4)

Murray, from page 1

former Amtrak vice president for government affairs and now a rail consultant, on ideas being floated to provide substantial funding for expansion of high speed passenger rail service throughout the country. Getting these ideas such as tax credit bonds through Congress remains a formidable challenge.

Joe McHugh, the current Amtrak vice president of government affairs, provided his usual Capitol Hill update. He said, as Sen. Murray noted, this is another tough year for passenger rail. Three of the four major committees that Amtrak must face are now hostile to Amtrak or passenger rail. We must push hard on the appropriations side as there will most likely not be an Amtrak reauthorization this year. The Senate will be more friendly to passenger rail than the House and is the starting point for working to get the \$1.8 bill. Amtrak has requested. This is the first installment of Amtrak Pres. David Gunn's proposal to get Amtrak's assets into a state of good repair that would poise the company for future growth and expansion.

However, the Bush Administration shows no sign of supporting Gunn's plans to stabilize Amtrak and ready it for that growth and expansion. Unlike with highways and airways, the administration seems bent on dumping much of the costs of a national passenger rail system on the already cash strapped states while ignoring that states like California and Washington have already invested hundreds of millions of their own dollars in passenger rail with little or no federal support.

McHugh urged rail advocates to start working on candidates for office and to get them on the record concerning their support or lack thereof for a national passenger rail system.

Support for Amtrak's \$1.8 bill. request is the subject of a bipartisan letter gathering names in the House. The

goal is 218 signatures. The initial signers are Railroads Subcommittee Chairman Jack Quinn (R-NY) and

ranking member Corinne Brown (D-FL); James Oberstar (D-MN), ranking member of the full Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure; and Michael Castle (R-DE). Urge your representatives to sign on to this letter. Calling or fax is best. E-mailing is OK, but mailing a letter is problematic as it may take months for it to be delivered, after going to Ohio for a

decontamination process.

"A national rail service is the responsibility of the federal government."

Then-Texas Gov. George Bush in 1996 when Amtrak planned to eliminate the Texas Eagle

"The administration...envisions a system in which the federal government pays 50% of capital funding (much less than for highways and aviation), no operating funding, and with states deciding where service would be...It would be a death knell for an interconnected, interstate service."

NARP Hotline (Friday May 2, 2003) on Deputy U.S. Transportation Secretary Michael Jackson's Washington Post comments concerning the administration's long promised Amtrak plan

Rail, from page 1

and track improvements are also included in the plan. There is funding for construction of the Mukilteo intermodal terminal for both ferries and Sounder, and money to start design of the Edmonds intermodal terminal for ferries, Sounder and Amtrak.

On freight rail side, there are many projects to improve the track and bridge infrastructure of the state's short lines to accommodate standard 286,000 pound rail cars; increase tracks capacity at various rural grain terminals; and purchase the Palouse River and Coulee City RR. Funding of the D St. grade separation in Tacoma is provided. This project will untangle a major road/rail choke point and allow BNSF to improve the sharp curve at the end of the Foss Waterway, substantially increasing train speeds at this location.

Current law and new law funding for passenger and short line freight rail projects in the 03-05 biennium (starting July 1) totals \$36.3 mill.

For more details visit www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/nickel/Default.htm and leap.leg.wa.gov/leap/Budget/Detail/2003/st0305projlist_0427.pdf.

View, from page 3

light rail tracks. Each section between columns will take an average of two days to complete, including moving the erection trusses to the next section.

If you go on a 2-week vacation, the

landscape in the elevated section through Tukwila will be markedly different when you get back. For a project that seems to be glacial in its progress, this is truly an encouraging piece of news.

In addition, I have the perfect suggestion for the molecule that the artist is contemplating for the atrium of the station – caffeine! Make it an active sculpture, too. Have it vibrate! I would also suggest to Sound Transit that they plant at least 1 hazelnut tree on the property. Just what does a living hazelnut tree look like anyway?

As the latter part of this year approaches, I'll be looking forward to reporting even more good news for rail in this region. It's a good feeling! Don't they say smiling is good for you? It helps you live longer when you have a positive outlook. I wonder, can I be the one to solve the mysteries of the universe? On the train, of course.

Northwest Rail Roundup

King Street Station renovation finally starts! We know, we've been saying this for over ten years, but work actually started on phase one the first week of June with removal of the neon "King Street Station" sign facing Jackson St. The sign will be restored and reinstalled. The high tech portable restrooms are under construction and will be in place by mid-July, allowing the station's shabby restrooms to be overhauled...**Vancouver's Amtrak station project** is also finally moving forward. The \$700,000 restoration project was ready to go last year but the state Historic Preservation Office objected to the design of the elevator shaft. The elevator will now be detached from the building and connected via a bridge. The passenger and ticketing areas will be enlarged, restrooms remodeled and leaseable office space built on the second floor...**Full station staffing** and baggage service (seven days a week) is restored at many Amtrak stations. Cities on the *Empire Builder* route include Pasco, East Glacier Park, Williston, Minot, Grand Forks, Fargo, Winona, La Crosse, and Columbus; on the *Coast Starlight* route is Salinas...**Amtrak Cascades ridership** for March was 50,437, up 1.4% over 2002. Northwest Corridor ridership totaled 57,369, up 2.0%. In April, ridership was 52,143, up just 0.1% from 2002; total corridor ridership was down 0.7% at 59,081...**Amtrak has 30%** of the air/rail market between Seattle and Tacoma. While certainly not phenomenal, what makes this statistic interesting is that most city pairs with higher percentage rail shares are in the Northeast between Boston and Washington. Of course, I-5 remains the *Cascades'* main competitor.

Lloyd, from page 2

state fiscal situation even worse than that in Washington, the Oregon Legislature's proposal to date zeroes out the state contribution to the Oregon portion of the Amtrak Cascades. Should the zero prevail, the Cascades would continue south to Portland, but the train service south to Salem, Albany, and Eugene and all Oregon's successful Amtrak Thruway bus service would cease. Only the *Coast Starlight* would remain south of Portland.

Another tough hurdle in Oregon is that rail money (though not highway money) must compete with everything else in their very strapped general budget. We in Washington have the advantages of sources of "flexible" transportation funding politically attached to but separate from the gasoline tax, and independent of the general budget.

So what can WashARP members do? The best chance for legislative approval is to demonstrate to Oregon legislators that state money supporting their trains is not just a subsidy, but is an investment in economic development.

When Washingtonians travel by train south of the Columbia, we are very likely to spend significant Washington-state money in the Beaver State. Wife Darleen and I plan to attend the Bach festival in Eugene. Would require overnights and meals, as well as festival tickets. Would not consider attending if the Cascades trains did not go there. Ditto the Summer Old Homes Tour in Albany. Please, write a polite letter to "Leadership, Oregon State Legislature" citing that rail is THE mode which would carry you to Oregon to spent money there! Of course be spe-

cific about the what and how much, citing past such trips to Oregon, if that is your history. Tourism is a very important source of income for many areas. Fiscally-conservative Oregonians understand the need for "outside" dollars into their state. Their trains are a means by which these dollars flow. Please mail (not email; we need real letters) to me at 2508 Columbia St SW, Olympia 98501. In working with AORTA, I will pass these on to the appropriate people in Salem.

While not an Amtrak Cascades train, Oregon's *Lewis and Clark Explorer*, an excursion train which will run four days weekly (FSSM) for the summer between Portland and Astoria, is an excellent example of the direct economic benefit of passenger trains. Businessfolk in that little old river town understand that most riders of the LCE would not visit Astoria, stay several hours—minimum—and spend money if the train didn't exist.

The LCE currently departs from the old neighborhood of Linnton, about five miles NNW of downtown Portland along US Highway 30. Parking is free for those driving there. (I recognize that "ample, free and convenient parking" is a value nearly equal to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness to many of our countrymen!) The train leaves from Linnton at 8:00 AM. We rail loyalists will travel by train to Portland, overnight in that most delightful city, and take the dedicated shuttle bus from Portland Union Station, leaving for Linnton at 7:30 AM. Union Station opens at 6:45 AM, at least on LCE days. Then a great trip to Astoria, several hours there, a return to Portland via train and the Linnton shuttle, another night in Portland, and back north the following day. A civilized outing, to

be sure.



WashARP applauds our fellow WashARPer and friend Jim Slakey, who has recently retired from a long and respected career in public transportation. Jim's recent years were as the very effective and nationally recognized head of the WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division. Jim has always been a strong and effective supporter of the rail portion of his division.

The fit and youthful Mr. Slakey and WashARP have worked closely together to advance the cause of rail and other balanced transportation modes for over fifteen years. Jim has long served as a volunteer station representative at Centennial Station and will now also be a guide on the *Empire Builder*. Jim's retirement will be a loss to WSDOT, but not to active rail advocacy.

Thanks, Jim, and we'll continue seeing you. Judy Giniger, the newly-appointed head of PT and R comes highly recommended. We shall soon invite her to be a guest at an upcoming WashARP meeting.

Finally, another WashARP member, Mark Foutch, is running for mayor of Olympia. Mark, a long-time member of the Olympia City Council, has been the single most important advocate for rail on that council, which has in turn been the most supportive of passenger rail service of any city in the state.

While WashARP does not endorse even mayoral candidates, as individuals we surely can and should. Mark's supporters are a bi-partisan who's who in Thurston county. I plan to celebrate this WashARPer as mayor of our capital city.

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All are evening numbers, except Lloyd's, which is available 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily.

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U. S. House of Representatives: Washington, DC 20515
U. S. Senate: Washington, DC 20510
Capitol Switchboard (all members): 202 224-3121
State Legislature: State Capitol, Olympia 98504
Hotline for leaving messages: 800 562-6000
Amtrak Reservations/Information: 800 872-7245
WashARP e-mail: washarp@scn.org
WashARP: www.trainweb.org/washarp
NARP: www.narprail.org
NARP Hotline: www.narprail.org/hot.htm
Amtrak: www.amtrak.com
Amtrak Cascades: www.amtrakcascades.com
Sound Transit: www.soundtransit.org

WashARP News

July 12: WashARP meeting at **12:45 p.m.** at **Andy's Diner**, 2963 4th Ave S, **Seattle** (just north of Spokane St).

July 17: Commuter Rail Section meeting at **6:30 p.m.** at **Andy's Diner**, 2963 4th Ave S, Seattle (just north of Spokane St).

August 9: WashARP meeting at **noon** at **Jim Hamre's home**, 13307 104th Ave. Ct. E. on Puyallup's South Hill. Bring a potluck item. Hamburgers and beverages will be provided. Call or e-mail for more information. See p. 5.

The Post Office has changed the ZIP code for WashARP's mailing address, effective July 1. The new ZIP code is 98127.

WashARP welcomed the following new members in April and May: Arthur Dwight Campbell, Des Moines; Austin Anderson, Bellingham; and Richard Hendryx, Camas.

Members contributing to this newsletter include Warren Yee, Ron Sheck, Lloyd Flem, Jim Cusick, Jeff Schultz, Ken Uznanski and Tony Trifiletti.

Rail photographer alert! Amtrak is sponsoring a contest to find **the** picture for its 2004 calendar. For details, go to www.amtrak.com/press/atk200305120-71.html. Deadline is July 7.

Washington Association of
Rail Passengers
P. O. Box 70381
Seattle, WA 98127

Return Service Requested

The annual joint spring meeting of NARP Region 8, AORTA, MTWYarp and WashARP was held in Shelby, MT on Apr. 26. MTWYarp was host for the 57 atten-

dees, many of us traveling from Oregon and Washington via the *Empire Builder*.

After a welcome by Shelby Mayor Larry Bonderud, we heard from Dick Turner, head of multimodal planning for Montana DOT. He filled in for the MDT secretary who had to remain in Helena for the wrap-up of their legislative session. He noted that 59 Montanans are employed by Amtrak and over 100 other jobs are directly related to Amtrak's existence. The *Empire Builder* is vital to Montana for tourist travel, medical travel, bad-weather travel, small express shipments, and, most importantly, basic day-to-day personal travel. Montana policy is preservation before expansion. "Federal support for passenger trains is essential in rural states like Montana," Turner emphasized.

We next heard from Ray Lang of Amtrak government affairs in Chicago. He said the *Builder* is a prime example of what Amtrak does best: connect small towns and rural America to the bigger cities. He feels this train has a promising future. Lang praised Amtrak



Everyone enjoying social time before the joint meeting at Patty's Restaurant in Shelby, MT.

Photo by Jim Hamre

President David Gunn as a go-getter and stated Gunn is committed to the national system.

Lang discussed Amtrak's 2004

budget proposal, noting that it is fully defensible. Amtrak has much improved its accountability to the taxpayers and now makes monthly financial reports to Congress and the DOT.

When asked about freight rail relations, Lang stated BNSF is at the top of list of railroads that work with Amtrak to properly operate its trains.

NARP at-large director Art Poole and Lloyd Flem led a discussion on what Region 8 members expect from NARP. This information will be shared with the officers and staff.

MTWYarp did a great job and we had a successful meeting in a rural area of expansive Region 8 (MT, ID, WA, OR and AK).

After the meeting, many attendees toured the rail facilities in Shelby which include a 160-car grain loading loop, and lumber and steel transloading facilities. Much freight is trucked in from Alberta for loading onto BNSF trains.

The morning of Apr. 26, an Amtrak town hall meeting was sponsored by Sen. Conrad Burns (R-MT). Present were Burns' staff people and Amtrak's Ray Lang. Burns set up the meeting to gather input from his constituents concerned about the future of the *Empire Builder*.

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