

# Washington Rail News

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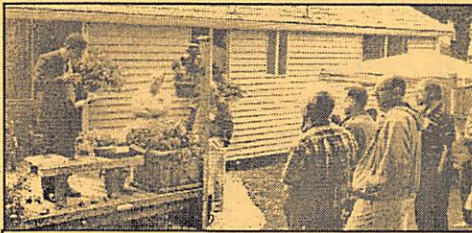
Publication of the Washington Association of Rail Passengers  
A Not-for-profit Consumer Organization

"...getting the Pacific Northwest on the right track."

## Sen. Kastama and gubernatorial candidate Talmadge speak at WashARP meetings

State Sen. Jim Kastama (D-Puyallup) was the featured speaker at WashARP's annual picnic Aug. 9 on Puyallup's South Hill. Lloyd Flem introduced the senator, praising him for his work on transportation in the Legislature. Kastama noted that transportation is his specialty and stated that for too long the Legislature had not done enough to address our state's transportation problems.

Kastama is concerned about the



Above, Sen. Jim Kastama (D-Puyallup), left, speaks at the Aug. 9 WashARP picnic in Puyallup. Below, Democratic gubernatorial candidate Phil Talmadge speaks at the Sept. 13 Lacey meeting.

Photos by Jim Hamre (top) and Warren Yee



deep divides on transportation issues between rural and suburban and urban areas. He said that Sound Transit is now a much improved agency, and other

transit systems have experienced similar problems in getting their projects off the ground. Kastama stated to a round of applause that road projects do not get the same scrutiny as transit projects when their costs balloon and timetables slip.

The senator noted that Sounder is already having a positive impact on home sales in the Puyallup and Green River valleys and the commuter rail line will bring more good development in years to come. Kastama is a regular Sounder rider.

Kastama said the public continues to be in a tax cutting mood and is becoming more and more resistant to spending tax money for the greater good of the citizenry. He did say that he's found rural legislators tend to be more supportive of the intercity passenger rail program than they are of local transit projects. Some rural lawmakers do understand intercity passenger rail's connection to positive economic growth.

It's time that leaders in this state transcend party politics and start solving our problems and look to the future, said Kastama. Lloyd thanked the senator for being with us and for taking time from his family vacation to do so.

Democratic gubernatorial candidate and former state senator and Supreme Court justice Phil Talmadge was our featured speaker at the Sept. 13 meeting in Lacey. (Democratic gubernatorial candidates Ron Sims and Christine Gregoire and Republican candidate Federico Cruz were also invited but were unable to attend.)

Sixty-three WashARPer were present to hear Talmadge's views on transportation issues facing the state. He started off by telling how, as a senator, he worked across party lines to resolve problems affecting his constituents. He stated we need to put aside the political rhetoric in the Legislature and in the governor's mansion to solve transportation problems today.

"I'm a very strong proponent of passenger rail service," stated Talmadge emphatically. He noted that he started riding trains as a young man commuting to New York City for college. Talmadge continued, "We need to focus on passenger rail service as part of a balanced transportation system. As governor, I would support intercity passenger rail service."

(See **Talmadge**, page 4)

## Moving forward with "nickel package" rail projects

Ken Uznanski, manager of the WSDOT Rail Office, was recently interviewed by WashARP. The discussion centered around the Rail Office's plans for implementing the passenger rail components of the 10-year transportation package adopted by the Legislature last spring.

Uznanski said one of the most immediate projects is to acquire the fifth Talgo trainset. It is still owned by Talgo and is currently leased to the state of Oregon. Talgo wants to sell the trainset and there are others, such as North Carolina and Kazakhstan, with interest in it. This equipment is vital to continued operation of the existing Amtrak Cascades service (see the executive director's column for good news from Oregon) and to expansion of service. However, the \$7.5 mill. to purchase the trainset is in the 05-07 biennium and the equipment will probably be sold before then. DOT plans to move the funding forward to this biennium.

With completion of this purchase, DOT is poised to add a fourth Cascades roundtrip between Seattle and Portland by 2005. First, BNSF will require the installation of two additional crossovers between the mainline tracks in the Tacoma area. One is funded this biennium and the funding for the other (See **Moving Forward**, page 4)



Nearly a thousand citizens welcome the first Tacoma Link train as it pulls into the Tacoma Dome Station on Aug. 22 amid fireworks and a shower of confetti.

Photo by Jim Hamre



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

**Good News  
from Our  
Northwest;  
Oh those  
Myths; Other  
Good News**

Good news concerning intercity rail continues in our corner of the country. Thanks to an agreement between the State of Oregon and the Union Pacific, both of the Amtrak *Cascades* daily round trips between Portland and Eugene will continue for the next two years. While I rarely side with UP concerning their treatment of passenger trains which "rent" space on UP tracks (BNSF is a much better landlord; they actually treat Amtrak and commuter railroads as valued customers), the Omaha-based rail giant was correct this time. Oregon had not yet paid the \$15 mill. for track improvements the state had agreed upon as a condition of running the second Portland-Eugene train.

Considerable credit for coming up with 15 million track improvement bucks goes to Gov. Ted Kulongoski (D), whom, I learned while helping AORTA lobby the Oregon legislature in Salem these past months, is firmly pro-passenger rail and wanted to preserve the train service. Our Gov. Locke's "Dear Colleague" letter urging Gov. K's support of our Northwest Corridor, the efforts of many Oregon mayors, the 1700 letters generated by AORTA to the Legislature, solid efforts by ODOT-Rail, and many others who believe in rail as part of the Northwest's transportation future all in effect encouraged Kulongoski to use his office to keep all the trains running. Thanks to the Oregon legislators who voted for the operating funds and to the governor for getting the capital monies for infrastructure. It is also understood U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D) and Congressman Pete DeFazio (D) were involved in dealing with UP.

Rail advocates' previous Salem victory in getting two-years of operating funds from the Oregon Legislature would have been hollow without the capital investments. UP would have cut back to allowing one round trip per day; like it or not, they had legitimate grounds for doing so. But for now, our Northwest Corridor stays whole.

WashARP members needed to support the continuation of the Port-

land-Eugene service for at least three reasons. First, we favor our southern neighbors having the option of rail in their portion of the Northwest Corridor. We "care" that others, not just us, have this very safe, environmentally and socially-sound travel mode. Second, the success of the Washington portion of the Amtrak *Cascades* is in part directly dependent on these two round trips (plus connecting bus service) running south of Portland. A significant percentage of those riders continue across the Columbia, directly supporting the success of the *Cascades* in our state. Finally, the two-state success of the *Cascades* has received broad bipartisan praise by national political leaders. When (hopefully not "if") serious federal investment in intercity passenger rail service becomes a reality, having both Oregon and Washington as active financial participants will assist in our Corridor's remaining at or near the top of all lists for those federal bucks.

Despite the Pacific Northwest being the most economically-hard-hit part of the U.S. during the current economic downturn, ridership on the *Cascades* remains high. August was the second best month ever and set a new record for revenue at \$1.6 mill. As elected officials properly monitor the public-sector share of monies needed to operate these passenger trains, the *Cascades'* continued ridership and revenue successes bode well for us, both in Olympia and in Dee Cee.

Recently the 21 members of the Western Governors Association, in a position paper authored by Gov. Judy Martz (R-MT), strongly supported continued and increased funding for a national system of intercity passenger trains. This support comes from states which generally do not have the level of nationally-funded Amtrak service enjoyed by many eastern states. Similar statements of support have come from the nation's mayors on several occasions. A clear majority in Congress also support a larger role for intercity passenger rail and feel it ought to be adequately funded. Unfortunately, the Bush Administration proposal for intercity rail, while praising our Northwest Corridor, is seen as wholly inadequate and has little chance of passage. It is however, better than that of a handful in Congress, currently in positions of power, who are ideologically opposed to passenger rail and claim to believe in

myths which seek to justify their views. Most prominent of Congressional anti-rail ideologues currently is Rep. Ernest Istook (R-OK), Chair of the House Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee, who not only attempted to effectively kill Amtrak with an appropriation so low members of his party not particularly pro-Amtrak raised it to the Administration's better-but-still-inadequate level. Istook has also intervened in funding for Sound Transit, trying to use his position to sabotage Seattle's light rail project, in direct contrast to Bush's Federal Transit Administration, which has given its strong stamp of approval to Central Link.



On to myths:

Istook has been quoted as saying if people wish to ride trains, they should pay all costs **LIKE CAR DRIVERS DO** (my emphasis) and not be subsidized. The myth is of course the idea that we as drivers pay all public costs through user fees, in our state essentially motor fuel taxes. To the contrary, if only the direct costs of street and highway construction are considered, 41%—and increasing—are now funded by other than user fees, by definition a subsidy. This of course does not include the massive costs of "free" parking, the large percentage of urban space, once put into pavement, permanently "given" to drivers, the public costs of accidents, pollution, etc. These are true social costs we all pay, whether drivers or not. Now I fully support cars and trucks as valuable and needed means of moving people and goods. But public policy made by such people as Istook based upon the myth that passenger rail is subsidized and road travel is not simply cannot be allowed to stand.

An ABC reporter, in a recent story about Amtrak, repeated a couple more pieces of popular semi-fiction. "Money-losing Amtrak has never made a profit." Literally true, but so what. When capital costs are considered, neither does any regular-scheduled passenger rail service in the world. All "lose money." If all public investments are tossed in, neither do airlines nor bus companies. And when was the last time I-90 "made a profit"? Or the 90% tax-payer funded lock and dam system on the Columbia river, developed to facilitate the barge industry, directly competing with the independently-funded tax-paying freight (See **Flem**, page 5)



# The View Down the Tracks =====

with Jim Cusick

## Desert Transit

Well, this has been an interesting and enjoyable summer. I was able to travel on an excellent transit system that is not only quite enjoyable to ride, but is great for the environment. It occurred on a trip to Utah.

No, I'm not referring to Salt Lake City's TRAX light rail system, which I have already experienced, but the bus transit system farther south.

Where would that be, you ask? There's nothing but desert and national parks south to Phoenix, Arizona?!

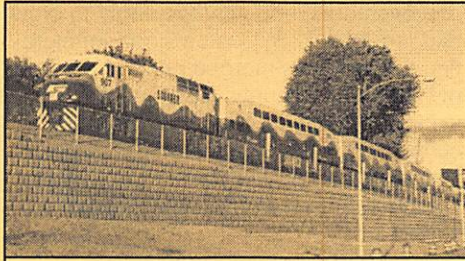
**EXACTLY!!**

The system? Zion National Park.

Why is there a shuttle bus system in Zion? Well, if you walk around the Zion Visitor Center, there are reader boards describing the things to do such as hiking trails, driving restrictions in the tunnel, lodge accommodations, etc. There is one board that asks that very same question.

Accompanied with that question and answer is a very large photo of the road that runs up the Virgin River to the Narrows part of the canyon, where the road ends. It's easy for you to imagine the picture. Just think back to the last time you were southbound on I-5 at South-center Hill on a Friday afternoon before a holiday weekend. I think you understand. Now, only the shuttle buses are allowed on the road up the Virgin River in Zion.

Even filled with people, the cars, motor homes and SUVs still clogged the road in the summertime. Now the road is wide open. What's the difference if those families filled cars before (the perfect carpool), and those same people rode the shuttle bus? The reason is because the shuttle buses hold about 60 people at a time. The shuttles consist of a 30' bus, with a trailer coupled to it. They depart at 10 minute intervals during the peak season. They are propane powered (but not air-conditioned) and travel at approximately 20 mph (unless they stop to let the riders observe the local wildlife, such as coyotes, wild turkeys, deer, etc.). They are not as quiet as electric trolley buses or electrified rail, but the key thing here is what the benefit of high capacity transit is (HCT—relatively speaking in this particular environ-



On Sept. 15, an afternoon Sounder climbs the grade on the new connection between BNSF and Tacoma Rail. This was the first day of service to the permanent Tacoma Sounder station at Freighthouse Square. The much shorter walk from the Tacoma Dome Station parking garage should give Tacoma ridership a boost. *Photo Jim Hamre*

ment). Those people travel past only every 10 minutes, not in a continuous stream of cars (assuming the cars are even moving, that is). The quiet time in between is what truly enhances the experience and grandeur of the scenery (ignoring any screaming kids, of course).

It's a simple equation. Any environment can be corrupted if your view of it only extends to your windshield. It might be nice and quiet and private in your auto, but seriously, is the thing really screwed on to your butt that tightly? I'm a gearhead, and even I don't **HAVE** to be in my car **ALL** the time. By the way, I've been accused by all of my neighbors every time I start working on my cars in the driveway that I only do it because I love it! (Quite honestly, since I can do most major work on all my cars, I do it because I save the labor costs and don't have to worry about unnecessary work being sold to me.)

So I talk up transit in other cities, including those conservative transit social engineers in Salt Lake City. But what about around here?

## Destiny, the City of

Having just opened Aug. 22, Tacoma Link already is at its projected 2010 ridership of 2000 a day. They now have a very impressive intermodal exchange in the Tacoma Dome Station/Freighthouse Square facilities. What is Tacoma doing right?

Not arguing with one of its alternate personalities, that's what! They at least have the foresight to move ahead with things that they know will pay off bigger in the future. They have decided not to go through the endless "navel gazing" we're so fond of in the environs north. Now that Sounder is stopping at

Freighthouse Square, the merchants are already seeing a difference, and that's not as easy as it sounds. Even in high pedestrian traffic areas such as Grand Central Terminal in New York, not every business flourishes. It will take some truly honest assessment of their own businesses, along with a critical observation of the pedestrian traffic to know how to target potential new customers (no lassoing allowed). Remember, even an auto-oriented shopping mall is Transit Oriented Development, just without the transit. Freighthouse Square now has, potentially, the best of both worlds, since the key here is "Pedestrian Traffic."

Keep your eyes on Tacoma. Their success will be what shows the rest of the region the way.

## Rails in the Desert?

On the trip from our accommodations in St George, Utah to the nearby national parks, it was obvious this wasn't New York City in the making, now or in the near future. It certainly wasn't close to Los Angeles, but since the area is auto-dependant, it's a lot closer to a Los Angeles-type environment than it is to any other future look. Once you're out on the roads away from I-15, there are times when you don't see another car at all for miles (unless it's that ubiquitous motor home that always seems to get in front of you on an uphill grade, with no way to pass).

But it got me to thinking. Just when do you start a rail or a bus or any other type of non-SOV service? It just seems so out-of-place to put something like that out there. If you travel north to Salt Lake City, you can see that even though the population has sprawled all the way out into the valley and even up the canyons, there are still a lot of places to build. So why is Salt Lake City looking to expanding their light rail system, along with the purchasing rights-of-way for commuter rail? Why are all the local cities looking for more? Why is the biggest complaint the Tukwila Complaint?

The Tukwila Complaint is the complaint that says "We want it **SO BAD** that we're willing to do what we can to keep anyone else from getting it until we get **EXACTLY** what we want **NOW!**" Actually, Salt Lake City and the other areas haven't gotten that deep into the endless arguing like we have in the (See **Cusick**, page 4)



**Talmadge**, from page 1

Talmadge called the transportation package passed this spring by the Legislature a wonderful first step for rail. He emphasized that not only must we continue expanding the Amtrak *Cascades* service between Vancouver, Seattle and Portland, but we need to expand passenger rail service to eastern Washington.

We need to think outside the box, he said, and he outlined his transportation principles:

- move people, not cars
- use objective factors in choosing the best projects to build
- congestion reduction is a prime criterion to use in prioritizing projects
- move rapidly ahead with projects
- maximize system efficiencies
- make institutional improvements in transportation agencies

Talmadge concluded his remarks by suggesting it is time to revisit the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which requires all gas tax money be spent solely on roads and auto ferries. This amendment made sense in the 1950s but in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we need to be able to spend all transportation dollars on the projects that are the most effective in providing mobility and congestion relief, no matter what the mode.

WashARP is pleased to continue bringing top state and federal transportation leaders to our meetings to present their viewpoints; we will continue to do so as we move into next year's elections.

**Moving Forward**, from page 1

will be moved forward. Completion of phase one of Sound Transit track and signal improvements between Seattle and Tacoma is also necessary and will be finished by 2005.

When asked about taking further advantage of the Talgos' tilting system that allows faster speeds in curves than convention passenger equipment, Ken stated the trains are currently running at 5 inches of cant deficiency. (This is a measurement of additional centrifugal forces placed on the infrastructure and the passengers as the train travels through a curve.) The Federal Railroad Administration has authorized 6 inches and BNSF wants a reserve factor. Right now the F59 locomotives are the limiting factor. Because of their size and weight, the ride through curves is rough for the engineer and the forces on the track structure are high. Low slung, lighter weight locomotives are needed to further increase speeds in curves. There is no funding for this in the 10-year plan.

However, many of the continuing track and signal upgrades, both north and south of Seattle, will allow incremental improvements in schedules. These upgrades include improved signal systems, increased track capacity at key points, grade crossing

improvements, and improvements to draw bridges. With U.S. Customs and Immigration departments merged under the Office of Homeland Security, DOT and Amtrak are working to have all security clearances completed in the Vancouver, BC station. This would eliminate the need to stop the southbound train at Blaine for Customs inspections.

One of the biggest complaints WashARP hears is the inconvenience of getting *through* Seattle on the *Cascades*, for example, Bellingham to Tacoma or Portland to Everett. DOT has been directed by the Legislature to improve the experience. "We absolutely want to reduce the dwell time in Seattle," stated Uznanski. DOT is looking at ideas to shorten the layover. This must be balanced against the need for limited train servicing during the layover, but the long-term goal is to reduce the connecting time to a half hour.

When asked about getting the Seattle-Bellingham train extended to Vancouver, BC, Uznanski said, "The opportunity is there. The British Columbia government is talking about expanded rail service for the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics."

Other projects DOT is looking to tweak the schedules of include the Vancouver (WA) Yard rail project, which received federal environmental approval in August. This project would increase safety, reduce rail congestion and improve *Cascades* service. Though construction is not scheduled until the 07-09 biennium, funds would be moved forward to start design work and right-of-way acquisition. Funding for four projects between Seattle and Mt. Vernon would be completely or partially shifted from 03-05 to 05-07. BNSF has revised its long-term operating and infrastructure plans for this area and is not yet ready to start these projects.

Uznanski also reported on a meeting he had as vice chairman of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition with Amtrak President David Gunn, Amtrak Vice President Gil Mallery and North Carolina DOT Secretary David King, who is chairman of the coalition. Gunn stated Amtrak must have an equal level of consistency when dealing with its state partners. Uznanski urged the bar be kept high and bring the other states up to the level of states like Washington, North Carolina, California and Oklahoma. Uznanski and King told Gunn that while the states recognize the need for Amtrak control of overall operations throughout the country, Amtrak must recognize and support the important role the states play in the delivery of passenger rail service.

(For more information: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/rail/](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/rail/) and [www.wsdot.wa.gov/accountability/GrayNotebook.pdf](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/accountability/GrayNotebook.pdf).)

**Cusick**, from page 3

Puget Sound Region.

Even Salt Lake City knows that you can't expand freeways forever, and they

have done major freeway building in the 20 years since I've lived there. I don't know how bad it is now, but during winter temperature inversions you couldn't see the Wasatch Range, which is only 10 miles away and at least 3000 ft above the valley floor, because of the smog.

**Salt Lake City and Eastside  
Commuter Rail**

When the Union Pacific merged with the Southern Pacific railroad, the UP put the duplicate rail line up for sale. It was purchased by the Utah Transit Authority.

Why is this relevant to Eastside Commuter Rail?

A check of population densities from the US Census Bureau shows that the communities on the east side of Lake Washington are almost the same size as the communities that the current UTA TRAX line passes through.

This is relevant because at the Sept. 13 WashARP meeting it was announced by the WSDOT Rail Office that BNSF, in an attempt to concentrate their efforts on their mainline business, is selling off many of its branch lines. The Woodinville Subdivision (a.k.a. the Spirit of Washington Dinner Train route, and beyond) is up for sale.

During the I-405 Corridor Program EIS development, the executive committee had the unfortunate short-sightedness to not even study this rail corridor for future high-capacity transit use because of the objections of the City of Renton and the Kenndale Neighborhood Association. They didn't even look at what mitigation measures would satisfy their complaints and neither were any cost estimates done. At my request the staff did some "sensitivity" modeling to see what the ridership would be if there was direct service from the Kent valley where Sounder currently runs. They reported that an estimated 3000 people would use such a service each day.

This will be a watershed event. If the "movers and shakers" in the region miss this opportunity to acquire and begin a starter commuter rail service, which requires retaining the rails, then they will have proven that the maximum time into the future they are capable of planning for is defined by the next election.

And before everyone gets too smug about "those silly politicians," just remember, we voted them in. If their message of "I will protect our turf, at all costs, regional or otherwise" is what gets them elected, then... **"We have met the enemy, and they is us."**

The faux-Bavarian tourist city of Leavenworth, nestled on the east slope of the Cascade Mountains, is in talks with Amtrak on getting a stop for the *Empire Builder*. With a successful outcome, the *Builder* could begin service there by next summer. WashARPer Rich DeGarmo, who led the Olympia-Lacey Centennial station project in 1988-90, has been contacted by the city for advise and assistance.



**Flem,** from page 2

railroads? When will "reporters" start to complain as much about Boston's "Big Dig" highway project, with cost overruns of multiple billions of dollars, as they do, say, about the much less costly overruns of some rail transit projects? Our ABC pal continued with, "Trains are important on the East Coast but run mostly empty in the West." Has the boy ever tried to book a sleeper on any long-distance train serving our country west of Chicago or New Orleans? Mostly empty?! These trains "lose money" primarily because they simply lack the available equipment to serve existing and latent demand. They are often sold out months in advance.

I doubt the ABC reporter is actively hostile to rail. He is ignorant, simply repeating the silly clichés he hears or reads from other uninformed. Our job as rail advocates is to attempt to give reasonable and balanced information, not to condemn any other modes, but to show that passenger rail should be a larger part of the American transportation scene.

Another tall tale is being spread by those around Seattle that rail transit is a "failure" and bus rapid transit, monorail, HOV lanes, anything but rail is "better." First, I support all of the above modes. Modally-balanced transportation includes more than just the addition of more steel wheels on steel rails. But some of these rail critics are so desperate to knock rail they join forces with those against anything but more single-occupant-vehicle asphalt. The latest is that the amazing increases in property values and private investment around Portland MAX stations and the Portland Trolley are due to "subsidies." (There's that "s" word again!) I chose to check with Portlanders directly involved. Reality: A couple of Max station developments had a few public bucks for sidewalks from the new developments to the stations. But the overwhelming percentage of investment dollars came from the private sector, who saw and are realizing profits from rail-transit-oriented development. The little Portland Trolley is the engine for rede-

velopment of Portland's Pearl District northwest of downtown. Anti-rail pathologues are really annoyed by Portland's love for and success with urban rail and that Oregon's Rose City is seen as one of the most successful urban places in America.

Portland too "green" or "left wing" for you? Try Salt Lake City or Dallas! These staunchly conservative cities love their urban rail and want more. Their problems are too much success too fast. While intercity passenger rail is WashARP's prime mission, we also want urban rail to thrive where people wish to have it as part of their transportation mix. As pro-rail conservative Paul Weyrich says, urban rail helps build communities and helps ensure traditional values. A darn good idea in this era of "What's in it for me?!" with little or no concern for the others sharing their part of the world.



**Other Good news:**

An interesting phenomenon, as Class One railroads (BNSF, UP, etc) concentrate more on mainline long haul business, is the renaissance of short line railroads, which are increasingly serving smaller markets, local businesses, and being innovative and entrepreneurial in areas the Class Ones simply cannot afford to serve, given their costs and scale. Hats off to these short liners. WashARP fully supports freight rail at this "retail" level.

Active WashARP member Ray Allred, who is also the freight rail specialist at WSDOT, was honored by Idaho State University at the exact time of our September Lacey meeting for his having been an All-American football defensive lineman at ISU in 1976 and 1977. Ray, with his parents present, was inducted into the ISU athletic Hall of Fame, had his number retired, and received proper accolades from the half-time crowd. Yeah, we forgive him for missing the WashARP meeting. Congrats, Big Guy!

Also congrats to WashARP's Membership and Marketing Committee for their collective work in arranging for the Lacey

meeting. I was happy to see many Olympia and Lacey members, including several who are residents of Lacey's fine adult community, Panorama City, where the event was held. Oh, per capita, Oly and Lacey are numbers one and two in percentage of WashARP members among the cities of our state. Were the rest of the state as involved as are people in the two Thurston County towns, we would have about five times the current WashARP membership.

On 23 September, the Legislative Transportation Committee was informed, by Andrew Johnsen of the governor's office, of a Maritime Trade Summit to be held in Seattle on 12 November. The summit will focus on the importance of international trade for our state and what is needed to preserve and expand this most important economic activity. Rail and road, as well as water transportation will be considered. While not explicitly passenger rail, WashARP has long advocated Washington state focus on such transportation.

WSDOT Rail boss Ken Uznanski recently returned from a Buffalo, NY meeting of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' Standing Committee on Rail, where he serves as vice chair of the rail group. Ken reports that state officials, industry reps, academics, and the feds agree that rail, passenger and freight, needs a more serious financial commitment. The problem seems to be how. With most states in the worst financial pinch in decades, and federal deficits growing with major tax cuts coupled with massive expenditures for Iraq and Afghanistan, dollars for any needed infrastructure investments will be hard to come by. Recall, there are two separate but related issues here: First, keeping Amtrak alive. Nearly all agree, if Amtrak dies, getting funding for other rail passenger programs would be politically difficult. Second, is the issue of long-term capital funding for passenger and freight rail infrastructure. Our country's well-being needs both.

Our job as rail advocates right now is to inform Congress of these two issues. While I thank those of you who have written to members of the Washington House delegation, based in part on the letters WashARP President Tony and I sent you, the many of you who have not, need to. Rail advocates who communicate only with ourselves rather than praising and pushing our elected officials are simply not getting the job done. You want to preserve and increase the role of rail in our country? Then do something tangible about it!

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

**Important Addresses and Phone Numbers**

- 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

**October 11:** WashARP meeting at **12:45 p.m.** at **Andy's Diner**, 2963 4<sup>th</sup> Ave S, **Seattle** (just north of Spokane St).

**November 8:** WashARP meeting at **12:45 p.m.** at **Andy's Diner**, 2963 4<sup>th</sup> Ave S, **Seattle**.

**November 20:** Commuter Rail Group meeting at **6:30 p.m.** at **Andy's Diner**, 2963 4<sup>th</sup> Ave S, **Seattle**.

**December 6 (first Saturday):** WashARP meeting at **12:45 p.m.** at **Andy's Diner**, 2963 4<sup>th</sup> Ave S, **Seattle**.

WashARP welcomes the following new members in August and September:

Alan Blair, La Conner; Conor Corkrum, Seattle; Raymond DeBuse, Olympia; Dennis & Gloria McVey, Rainier; Martin Paup, Seattle; V. R. Rausch, Bainbridge Island; Mary Alice Sanguinetti, Seattle; Kyle Sundin, Seattle; Kathleen Wallace, Olympia; Raymond Torretta, College Place; Thomas Smith, Camas; Steven Mozel, Redmond; Larry Johnson, Issaquah; Ray Nicola, Seattle; Lynn Gaston, Tukwila, and C. B. Hall. Concrete.

WashARP members contributing to this newsletter include: Ken Uznanski, Jeff Schultz, Kirk Fredrickson, Steve Anderson, Warren Yee, Jim Cusick, Lloyd Flem, Thomas Smith, Zack Willhoite, Tony Trifiletti, Jim Longley and Rich DeGarmo.

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

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## Letters...

I enjoyed reading my first copy of the WashARP newsletter.

About [two] months ago, we had to make a trip to Bellingham and Seattle on one day's notice, so our son could interview some colleges. I logged onto Amtrak's website, and was unable to make a reservation since it indicated the 12:30 train from Portland was completely sold out. In a panic, I tried calling the 800 number, and fortunately was able to get the last 3 Business Class seats on that train. The train was packed, both going up and coming back, and this was mid-week. I was even surprised at how many people were riding the Seattle-Bellingham train; the south-bound trip was almost full when it departed Bellingham, with a large number of passengers traveling to points south of Seattle (in spite of the long layover), and even a number of passengers going to Albany and Eugene. I have traveled the route many times, and have never seen it so crowded.

The trip was pleasant, but the thing that bothered me was the limitation of the Talgo equipment, since it is likely other passengers who would have traveled by train did not, because they could not get aboard. The Talgos may be getting rave reviews from passengers, but like the Turbo trains of some years ago, they are not what we need here. Or maybe what we really need is more of them. Growth in this corridor will never occur when trains cannot handle any more passengers. The underused outer legs of the corridor (Bellingham & Eugene) which could use more ridership cannot grow either when potential passengers cannot get on the Portland-Seattle segment. Even if more trains were added, there would still be heavy demand for certain departures. I think a conventional train with Amfleet, Horizon, or California-type cars might be better suited.

For years I lived in Wilmington, Del. halfway between New York and Washington. If you needed to go either way, you could just go to the station, buy a ticket, and get on. No reservation hassles. Sometimes (but rarely) you might have to stand, but you did get there. Didn't have to wait long, either, as there was a train at least every hour.

The point is that it is easy to be seduced by the popularity of the Talgos with passengers, and ridership growth, but this is a "corridor" that is being run as a long distance operation, requiring reservations and advance planning on the passenger's part, conditions which are usually not applicable to other successful corridors as in the east and California. I would hope that WashARP will focus its efforts on capacity!

Thomas Smith  
Camas, WA

Amtrak's 2004 funding level remained up in the air at press time. The House version of the transportation bill still has the shutdown \$900 mill. figure. The Senate version, thanks to our Sen. Patty Murray (D-Shoreline), has \$1.346 bill. for Amtrak in 2004, plus payment deferral of the \$100 mill. loan from DOT made last year. Amtrak's \$1.812 bill. request includes repayment of the loan; that leaves a \$366 mill. shortfall *if* the Senate version prevails. Amtrak would need to eliminate many critical capital projects to make up this difference. Murray, who deserves our appreciation for getting the Amtrak number where it is, said, "This level is not as high as I would like to see it, given the substantial capital backlog that Amtrak faces, but I don't believe there are other pots of money to cut to further boost the Amtrak figure." With the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, it's likely transportation will be rolled into an omnibus bill. It's critical the final Amtrak amount not go below \$1.346 bill.

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(always welcome and appreciated)

Note: if you move, let us know in advance and save WashARP 75¢ for address correction service.

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