

# Washington Rail News

February/March 1991

Publication of the Washington Association of Railroad Passengers

A Not-for-profit Consumer Organization

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

## Amtrak to Boise: Adios!

In its latest attempt to do something about the Pioneer's 5:00 a.m. Seattle departure, Amtrak has proposed to bypass Boise, the state capital. It generated 18,351 of Idaho's 45,767 passengers in FY 1990 (40%). Amtrak proposes to provide a bus connection to Nampa, 20 miles west of Boise.

Boise lies on a slow speed branch line the Union Pacific is in the process of selling to a short line railroad. By staying on the UP mainline Amtrak says it will save 11 miles and 45 minutes.

After consulting Northwest rail advocates, NARP president Jack Martin wrote to Amtrak president Graham Claytor strongly protesting the move. Jack points out the removal of service will almost certainly be permanent. This is too high a price to pay for a marginally better Seattle departure.

Jack wants to know why Amtrak isn't as aggressively pursuing other alternates to reduce running time. These include:

- o Significant speedup of Seattle-Portland running times. Amtrak needs to put as much energy into getting BN to provide cost estimates for implementing speed increases approved by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission last July as it is in trying to bypass Boise.
- o The Rio Grande "returning" at least 30 minutes of the hour Amtrak gave it last October. Four months

earlier, Rio Grande agreed to increase passenger train speeds from 70 to 79 mph over much of the Salt Lake City-Denver route. This should have reduced running time by about 20 minutes.

- o There should be opportunities to reduce running time on the UP as a result of ongoing track capacity improvements and increased familiarity with its new dispatching system.
- o The change of stations in Salt Lake was supposed to produce a time savings that has yet to be reflected in the schedule.
- o Five or ten minutes may be able to be saved on the approach to Chicago Union Station.

NARP sent copies of the letter to the Idaho congressional delegation. Mr. Claytor found himself trying to explain to them why it is good for Amtrak to bypass Boise.

It appears Amtrak will implement its proposal despite our protests. We then demand that a minimum quality of service be maintained:

- o Continue fully staffing the Boise station, offering ticketing, checked baggage, and express.
- o Provide a Thruway bus connection to Nampa.
- o Construct a new station in Nampa to replace the Amshack. The station must be fully staffed, providing all services.

NARP's Scott Leonard: "Ending rail service to Boise is a mistake."

## First steps to restore King Street Station

Seattle *Times* transportation reporter William Gough wrote an excellent article on the proposed restoration of King Street Station. It would become an intermodal transportation facility for busses and intercity and commuter trains.

WashARP president Chuck Mott spent three hours touring the station with Gough. He is extensively quoted in the article.

At our urging, Seattle city councilman and WashARP director George Benson is leading the charge. The city is applying for a DOT grant to study the proposal.

Greyhound and Gray Line are interested in moving their bus operations to King Street and the station would be the downtown terminus for Metro's proposed commuter trains. Metro is considering fast-tracking its proposed Auburn-Seattle commuter trains, with implementation by 1994 or 1995. This would add more impetus to rehabilitating King Street.

Don't forget to respond to our fund raising letter of last month. Your extra contributions make it possible to fund Executive Director Lloyd Flem's critical Olympia work. Even if you can't send a contribution, please call your legislators and ask them to support revision of the 18th Amendment to allow gas taxes to be used for mass transit, including rail.

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

We are Ad-  
vocates: Ev-  
ery week or  
so Wash-  
ARP's Olym-  
pia office

receives information, ideas, and even detailed and credible "plans" of how to improve rail service in Washington state. Accompanying the material are often "get the job done" demands.

My real frustration is, given the modest nature of your Executive Director's position, my response has to be less than these ideas deserve. Even with a full-time fully-funded staff, WashARP can only advocate, not imple-  
ment the enhancement, improvement, and ever hoped-for increase of rail service in our state.

We are respected catalysts of pro-rail and pro-balanced transportation ideas. WashARP has been, if not always the inspiration, at least involved in pushing for passenger rail improvements for our state. Just some are: marshalling Cong. Al Swift (D-Bellingham) and the Bellingham community to work for restored Vancouver, BC service; raising interest in a Wenatchee intermodal transportation facility; being public interest allies of BN and Amtrak in their pursuit of train speed increases; getting the Coast Starlight to stop in Olympia; critical players in developing the new Olympia station; lobbying for the first-ever Amtrak enhancement legislation in our state; and getting people together on the proposed restoration and conversion of King Street Station into an intermodal facility.

We have excellent rapport with key Amtrak, freight railroad, and WSDOT people; top legislators; members of Congress; regulatory agencies; and important local government agencies. But we can only "praise and push,"

we cannot do. Many times we can only hope to persuade corporate and public sector professionals to do what they are paid to do!

Your Olympia office will continue the good fight, but we simply lack the position to authorize (and operate!) more and better rail service.

California-Some Reasons  
for the Rail Miracle: Car-crazy Californians have learned freeways are not the answer to human mobility; they are the problem! Amtrak LA's Ron Scolaro, regional transportation authorities, Caltrans, Calif. legislative staff, and the Train Riders Association of Calif. are joyfully stunned with the victories for rail, as voters in densely populated counties, plus the state in total have chosen to tax themselves for acquisition, capital development, and operation of intercity, commuter, and transit rail. These expanding systems are succeeding!

In late Dec. and early Jan. I met with representatives of the above groups and rode the state-sponsored San Diegan and San Joaquin trains/busses as well as the Sacramento and San Diego light rail lines.

Rail advocates and dedicated government elected officials were key in starting things back on track 15 years ago. In addition, a small but dedicated number of Caltrans employees pushed their jobs to the limits of the enabling legislation. Their deepest career objectives were to see a rerailing of Calif. and they have been vital in the rail miracle.

A decade ago, Amtrak was seen by Calif. rail people as a recalcitrant bureaucracy 3000 miles away. Today Amtrak has its first out-of-DC government affairs office in LA. Credit Amtrak for making the move but credit a few inspired public employees who were there working

when it counted.

Ron Scolaro on the San Diegan: A productive and enjoyable day was spent with Amtrak-LA's government affairs chief on Dec. 28. I continue to be favorably impressed with Ron's energy and dedication to being Amtrak's point man overseeing the rerailing of Calif. Ron likewise expressed his willingness to work with us in the Northwest substantially because of his respect for the professionalism of the WashARP people he met. We will keep in close contact with LA and Sacramento.

In Olympia: WashARP's current top priority is pushing for implementation of the Amtrak portion of HB 1825, which was signed nine months ago. Also, we're supporting a bill that would combine definitive studies of high speed rail linking Seattle with Portland, Vancouver, BC, and eastern Washington. WashARP feels these services could provide significant answers to increasing congestion at Sea-Tac and on I-5. Write your legislators to urge implementation of 1825 and passage of the high-speed rail study bill.

#### Olympia station dedication

Between intermittent showers on Dec. 15, the new Olympia-Lacey station opened in Oct. was dedicated. 200 people were on hand as dignitaries gave speeches and cut the ribbon. Nov. 1990 ridership at Olympia was up 43% over Nov. 1989! The Amtrak Depot Committee hopes to finish the station building by late summer.

#### Bush, Oil, and War

Almost 20 years after the first oil crisis, the U.S. is at war, partly because of oil, and yet we still have no national energy policy. Urge the president to support a policy based on conservation. His staff opposes this.

# Spring Membership Meeting National Association of Railroad Passengers Region 8

**Washington  
Association of  
Railroad  
Passengers**



**Oregon  
Association of  
Railway  
Passengers**

Join us in Shelby, Montana on Saturday April 27, 1991

Our featured Speaker will be

**Mr. Arthur L. Lloyd**

Director of Public Affairs-West Amtrak

Mr. Lloyd will discuss current Amtrak happenings with an emphasis on the Region 8 states of Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

There will be discussion of a "NARP Agenda." This is a list of up to five items that the Board of Directors would approve at each board meeting for NARP to actively pursue with Amtrak, Congress, the states, etc. It should and probably will differ from Amtrak's agenda. We will also discuss and vote on making NARP an IRS tax exempt organization. This would allow NARP to receive grants from foundations and allow members to deduct contributions on their income tax returns.

Plan to attend our Shelby, Montana meeting at the Deli Shoppe Restaurant on Sat. April 27. There is a map on the back. The meeting is scheduled between the eastbound and westbound Empire Builders so people coming from the west will not need to spend the night. Registration begins at 11:30 a.m. and lunch will be served at noon. The program follows and will conclude prior to train time. The registration fee, which includes a buffet lunch, is \$15.00 per person for all registrations postmarked by April 17. After that date the fee will be \$18.00. Please fill out the coupon below and mail it by April 17. Call Barry Green (Glendive, MT) at 406 365-8056 or Jim Hamre (Puyallup, WA) at 206 848-2473 for more information. Make your Empire Builder reservations early!

\_\_\_\_\_ I (We) will attend. (Please indicate number of people attending.)

\_\_\_\_\_ I (We) am making an additional donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to defray meeting expenses.

\_\_\_\_\_ I (We) can't attend but will donate \$\_\_\_\_\_ to defray meeting expenses.

Total enclosed \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (include area code) \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail your check or money order to Barry E. Green, NARP Region 8 Director, PO Box 162, Glendive, MT 59330.

The registration fee is \$15.00 for early registration postmarked by April 17. After that date the amount is \$18.00. See you in Shelby on April 27.

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DELI  
SHOPPE

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FORD

Highway 2

1 1/2 BLKS  
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SHOPPE

SHELBY  
DEPOT

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# 1990 Amtrak Ridership Data

## THREE YEAR WASHINGTON STATE RIDERSHIP

CITY	1988	1989	1990	% CHANGE '89 vs '90
Seattle	332,203	338,283	328,168	-3.0
Tacoma	79,211	79,575	78,163	-1.8
Spokane	51,714	51,236	45,676	-10.9
Vancouver	39,411	37,221	39,745	+6.8
Kelso-Longview	17,610	17,890	16,351	-8.6
Centralia	16,791	17,094	17,094	0.0
East Olympia	14,258	14,822	15,983	+7.8
Everett	11,921	12,288	13,514	+10.0
Pasco	10,773	11,290	11,743	+4.0
Wenatchee	8,517	9,238	8,897	-3.7
Edmonds	6,928	7,030	7,157	+1.8
Ephrata	2,002	2,013	1,918	-4.7
Wishram	1,646	1,884	1,542	-18.2
Bingen- White Salmon	667	862	792	-8.1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>593,652</b>	<b>600,726</b>	<b>586,743</b>	<b>-2.3</b>

In Fiscal Year 1990, system wide Amtrak ridership was 22,186,300, up 3.9% from 1989's 21,363,151. But in Washington ridership was down. The largest declines were in several of the cities served by the Empire Builder. This train seems to have passed the Pioneer/California Zephyr/Desert Wind in unreliability. In the last year your editor rode the west-bound Builder three times with all three arrivals between 4 and 6½ hours late into Seattle. The scheduled 3:00 a.m. departure from Spokane doesn't help either.

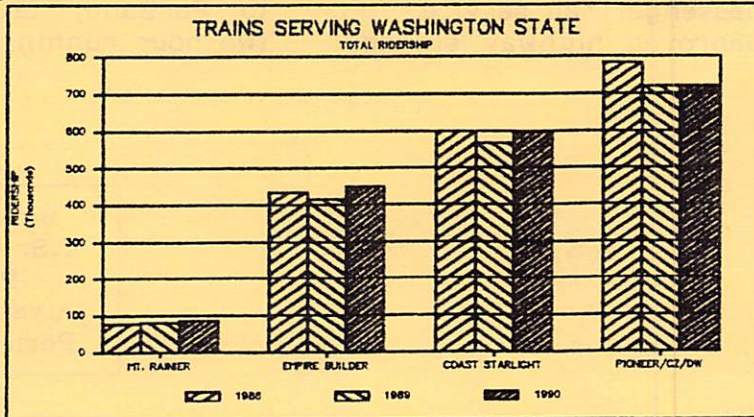
Northwest Corridor ridership has been soft. Much of this can be attributed to the Pioneer, with its 5:00 a.m. Seattle departure and somewhat unreliable Portland departure, virtually becoming a nonentity as a corridor train. Amtrak is mounting an extensive TV and newspaper advertising campaign in the state's major markets to help boost ridership.

Interestingly, the four trains serving Washington posted ridership gains in 1990 despite fewer riders boarding here.

Amtrak's FY 1990 revenue to cost ratio remained at 1989's level of 72%. The goal was 75%, but the slump in the travel in-

dustry forced Amtrak to sell more tickets at lower prices.

Total passenger miles again set a new record of 6.057 billion. Passenger miles per train mile for our trains are listed at the right. The first figure is 1990, the second, 1989.



Mt. Rainier: 97.8 (91.6)  
 Empire Builder: 182.0 (171.9)  
 Pioneer/California Zephyr/  
 Desert Wind: 212.1 (209.7)  
 Coast Starlight: 331.9 (321.7)

The Starlight is second only to the Colonial in passenger miles/train mile yet is sold out much of the year.

## WashARP Goals for 1991-1992

Expand WashARP's now-respected role as the primary coordinator in Washington State of those persons and groups interested in development and expansion of rail passenger service.

Actively influence WSDOT's long range Rail Planning Advisory Committee in developing comprehensive policies for future passenger and freight rail services.

Continue the positive relationships with key members of the Legislative Transportation Committee. In so doing, propose specific rail and balanced transportation legislation that would implement comprehensive rail planning policies.

Advise and assist WSDOT in the implementation of HB 1825's Amtrak section, including, but not limited to, direction for specific uses for funds allocated for Amtrak service enhancement.

Continue to expand our relationships with NARP, other state ARP's, Amtrak, the freight railroads, and appropriate local and state public sector entities.

In pursuing the above overall organizational goals, WashARP seeks to serve as an effective advocate for the following specific objectives:

1. The implementation of WUTC approved passenger train speed increases throughout the state, with a near-term decrease of Seattle-Portland running times to 3½ hours. As a corollary, work to get the Pioneer's Seattle departure back to 7:00 a.m.
2. The development of inter-modal transportation facilities in Seattle, Spokane, and Wenatchee; and completion of a station building for Olympia.
3. The preservation of the Stampede Pass rail corri- (See Goals, page 4)

**WashARP News**  
1991 WashARP directors

and officers are:

Phil Arnautoff, Seattle  
George Benson, Seattle  
James Cox, Bainbridge Island  
Richard DeGarmo, Olympia  
Lloyd Flem, Olympia (Exec. Director)  
Robert Hackley, Edmonds  
James Hamre, Puyallup (Editor)  
Noel Hancock, Anacortes  
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Marion Sherman, Maple Valley  
Steve Spear, Pacific (Secretary)  
Eleanor Stewart, Seattle  
Richard Tait, Bellevue  
Pete VanZanten, Olympia

The meetings for the next three months are on Feb. 9, Mar. 9, and Apr. 13. All are at Andy's Diner in Seattle and will begin at 12:30 p.m.

We welcome all information and clipping you come across, particularly from outside the central Puget Sound area. Send any items to the WashARP address.

Next issue: French TGV and German ICE verses maglev.

**1990 WASHARP FINANCIAL REPORT**

January 1, 1990 balance: \$795.60

INCOME from:		
Dues Renewals	\$4185.80	48%
New Members	540.00	6%
Donations	2082.50	24%
Luncheon Receipts	1804.00	21%
Miscellaneous	123.00	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$8735.30</b>	<b>100%</b>

EXPENSES for:		
Misc. Postage	\$396.10	4%
Newsletter Postage	413.83	5%
Misc. Printing	629.49	7%
Newsletter Printing	488.39	6%
Olympia Office Rent	1560.00	17%
Lloyd Flem Salary	3800.00	42%
Supplies	5.41	<1%
Bank Charges	72.00	1%
Luncheon Catering	900.00	10%
Miscellaneous	740.02	8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$9005.24</b>	<b>100%</b>

December 31, 1990 balance: \$525.66

Thirty-three percent of our members renewed at a level above the basic dues. Many also contributed to our special appeals. We thank you for your support in our fight for balanced transportation. If everyone enlisted a new member in 1991 we'd double our membership and triple our effectiveness.

Hans Mueller, Treasurer

Goals, from page 3

dor for future freight and passenger rail service.

4. Improved highway signage

and other information concerning rail stations and services.

5. The completion of a state public transportation passenger services map similar to Oregon's.

Over the long term, in cooperation with others, including rail advocacy groups:

1. Extension of the Mt. Rainier to Eugene.
2. Amtrak Thruway bus service in the model of California to cities not now served by Amtrak. Points served could include Aberdeen, Bellevue, Bellingham, Bremerton, Ellensburg, Mt. Vernon, Port Angeles, Pullman, Walla Walla, and Yakima.
3. Development of effective rail transit and increased coordination of bus, ferry, and other non-single occupant vehicle transportation modes in our state.
4. Development of frequent, dependable high speed rail service, using proven and effective technology, from Vancouver, BC to Seattle, Portland, and Eugene.
5. Development of hourly passenger trains, Seattle to Portland, targeting a two hour running time.

Washington Association of  
Railroad Passengers  
P.O. Box 70381  
Seattle, WA 98107

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(always welcome and appreciated)

Renew 07.91

Mr. Charles E Mott  
19243 Ashworth Ave N  
Seattle WA

98133