

Washington Rail News

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A Not-for-profit Consumer Organization

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

National passenger rail funding: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

June and July have been tumultuous months in the quest for "adult" funding for nationwide passenger rail funding. Let's take these three themes in reverse order.

First the Ugly.

On July 11, the House Appropriations Transportation subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Ernest Istook (R-OK) passed out a 2004 spending bill that slashed proposed Amtrak funding from the company's request of \$1.812 bill. and the Bush Administration's level of \$900 mill. to \$580 mill. The bill also slashed spending for transit, the essential air service program and many other intermodal programs. Istook proposed to increase highway spending by \$2.5 bill. over this year and \$4.8 bill. more than the administration had requested, with over a half billion extra dollars being directed to Oklahoma. Istook also proposed increased airline spending, though not to the level of his increased highway spending.

On June 25, 219 members of the 435-seat House sent a "Dear Colleague" letter to the Appropriations committee urging full funding of Amtrak's grant request. Even a majority of the House failed to influence Istook. Signers of the letter from our state included Jay Inslee (D-Bainbridge Island), Rick Larsen (D-Everett), Brian Baird (D-Vancouver), Norm Dicks (D-Belfair), Jim McDermott (D-Seattle), and Adam Smith (D-Tacoma).

Of course, the proposal was immediately met with howls of protest from many quarters. Of the Amtrak figure, President David Gunn said, "You would crash. You would shut down. It would be a chaotic shutdown."

NARP send a letter to full committee chairman Rep. Bill Young (R-FL). Executive Director Ross Capon wrote, "We are shocked and outraged at the July 11 action of the subcommittee, cutting David Gunn's tight budget from \$1.8 bill. to \$580 mill., and claiming that it 'provides for continuing Amtrak operations.'... We believe the committee has a responsibility to see that the U.S. has balanced transportation which maintains the rail choice."

NARP also joined 30 other organi-

zations in writing the committee outlining the many deficiencies in the subcommittee's bill, especially the shut down figure for Amtrak.

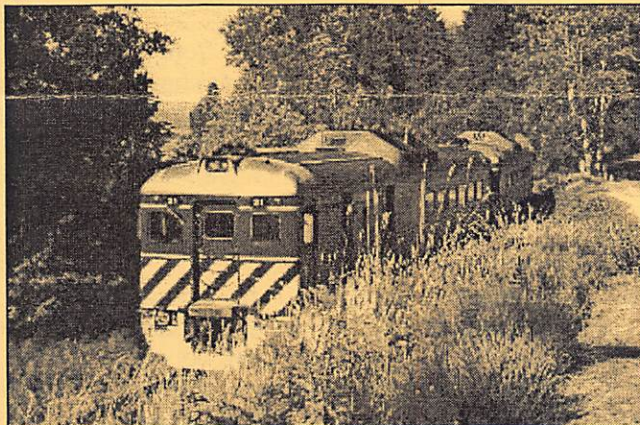
When the full committee met on July 24 to consider Istook's bill, many changes were made. Amtrak funding was increased to \$900 mill., still a shut down budget. Subcommittee ranking Democrat John Oliver (MA), offered an amendment to further increase the Amtrak funding level to \$1.4 bill., but it was defeated on an unrecorded voice vote. No further action will be taken on the transportation bill until Congress returns from its summer recess.

Now the Bad.

Finally, on July 28, after over two years of promises, USDOT Secretary Norm Mineta released the Bush Administration plan for intercity passenger rail service. The sole Congressional sponsor of the plan is Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), an outspoken critic of Amtrak.

The six-year plan would divide Amtrak into three entities: a private operating company, a private infrastructure company to manage the Northeast Corridor and a tiny DOT agency that would license the Amtrak brand and track access rights to the private operators. By the end of the sixth year the federal government would end operating grants for national network trains, forcing the cashed-strapped states to pick up all the costs after forming multistate compacts. The formation of these compacts is an unrealistic expectation. The result will be the loss of all national network trains, with perhaps corridor service remaining in about 20 states.

Capitol needs would be funded on a 50/50 basis between the federal government and the (See **Rail funding**, page 4)



The Lewis & Clark Explorer makes its way along the Columbia River (here, just visible in the distance) on the evening run from Astoria to Portland. Sponsored by Oregon DOT, reservations and ticketing is through Amtrak, and operation of the train is by the Pacific and Western RR. The train operates with three rail diesel cars purchased by ODOT from BC Rail. It leaves from the Linnton District of NW Portland (12222 NW Marina Way) at 7:50 a.m. and departs Astoria at 4:50 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays. A free shuttle is provided from Portland Union Station, departing at 7:30 a.m. and returning upon arrival of evening train. Fenced parking is available at Linnton. Service was scheduled to end on Labor Day, but the overwhelming popularity of the train has led ODOT to extend the season through Sept. 15. On Aug. 1, virtually all trips were sold out through Labor Day. The LCE is planned to also operate for the next three summers. For more information: www.odot.state.or.us/rail/PDFfiles/Lewis&Clark2.pdf.

Photo by Jim Hamre

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

Oregon and Other Difficult Subjects

As an
American who
has spent

much of my professional life for the last eighteen years advocating, from what I like to think is a responsible and politically-centrist position, a mode of intercity transportation that is at once the safest, most comfortable, environmentally-sound, and potentially the most socially and economically productive, I get weary year after year having to fight for the very survival of our American passenger trains. We did "win" in the recent Washington State Legislature. Along with massive future investments in highways came an increase in our intercity passenger and short line freight rail programs. Again, we thank the many legislators, both Republicans and Democrats, and Governor Locke, who supported these rail investments.

While pleased for our successes here, when one compares the amount invested in rail, whether in absolute or per capita terms, with that spent on highways and in comparison with our "peer nations," other wealthy capitalist democracies, even our better-than-most state of Washington would be pretty low on the list. The countries that invest heavily in rail (up to forty times greater per capita than the US! (1999 data)) are a who's who of countries that are wealthy, have very high rates of motor vehicle ownership and excellent highway systems and airports. They include Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, The Netherlands, Britain, Germany and Japan.

"Oh, but they are much more densely populated. That's why they have good train systems." Ok, but how about Norway, Sweden, Finland, Australia, and now even Canada (granted, only marginally better than us), with population densities less than that of our country. Besides, the areas of the US where most passenger rail investment should be made include regions such as our Northwest Corridor, where, in fact, population densities easily equal that of the crowded European lands. Two economically significant countries, South Korea and Taiwan, were lower per capita than the US. Were lower. Since 1999 both East Asian countries have begun major passenger rail de-

velopment programs. Only here, unfortunately, do we suffer influentials, including major elected officials, who choose to not recognize the value of the passenger rail mode. Could they alone be right, and the rest of what we until recently called the "free world" and in fact 70%-plus of the American people, be wrong?

At this writing whether our neighbors south of the Columbia will retain their portion of the Amtrak *Cascades* trains is in doubt. This doubt is not because our Oregon friends "don't care." WashARP's Oregon equivalent, AORTA, has received over 1400 individual letters, about 75% from Oregonians and the remainder from out of state, urging continuation of the two daily trains which serve the Willamette Valley from Portland to Eugene.

The Oregon constituent letters (plus considerable other correspondence sent directly to Oregon legislators) have been delivered to the appropriate Senate and House members. Copies of all the letters (including the 25% from non-Oregonians) have been hand delivered to legislative leadership. AORTA's Dan McFarling and I ("borrowed" from WashARP to help our friends) have met with most of the Oregon legislators involved in deciding whether their trains will be saved. Dan and I have also worked with allies and hoped-for allies, urging them to lobby for saving the trains.

Mayors and community leaders from Eugene, Springfield, Salem, Albany, and Oregon City continually work the Capitol in Salem. Amtrak's Gil Mallory and Liz O'Donohugh, with whom we work closely, have pled the case. Governor Kulongoski (D) has the Amtrak *Cascades* service in his budget. Except for the two monster issues of education and health care, we have been told there is more communication to the Oregon legislature favoring retention of the *Cascades* than for any other issue!

The Oregon legislature did raise taxes and fees which will bring in an estimated \$134 mill. annually for roads and highway bridges. AORTA does not oppose these "new taxes." Safe and efficient highway travel is in everyone's interest. But when saving the trains would cost less than \$5 mill. annually, we wince when we are told Oregon can't afford it.

Over 122,000 people rode Oregon's *Cascades* between Portland and Eugene last year. If the trains went

away, some folks, many of whom are elderly or disabled, would simply be stranded. A few passengers would ride intercity bus, a handful might fly. Most would drive or be driven by private motor vehicle on I-5, that linear root canal between Vancouver, BC to Eugene and beyond! While we like to assume most train riders are "nicer" than the norm even when driving, their presence would further crowd I-5. Aggressive driving, leading to "road rage," is becoming a national epidemic. With too many people driving farther and faster, the addition of these train riders on I-5 simply exacerbates an already bad situation. While law enforcement people are properly cracking down on aggressive drivers, the added costs of these police, higher insurance costs, the inevitable added accidents, and yes, the emotional and economic costs of resultant added injuries and deaths would more than offset the "savings" of not funding the trains. A passenger is 22 times less likely to die and 66 times less likely to be injured on an Amtrak train than in a private motor vehicle.

And what about that 25% of the riders who are non-Oregonians who bring new money into Oregon? One can go on and on. Even legislators unlikely to vote to save the trains admit we make a good case. But, Oregon (whose economy has been harder hit than has Washington's the past 2½ years) "has no money"...for the trains. Rail advocates are giving it our best shot in Salem. At this writing I cannot say whether the Amtrak *Cascades* will extend beyond Portland in months to come. But we have tried.

While Oregon has always been "behind" Washington in intercity passenger rail investment (again, not due to any lack of effort by rail advocates), Portland continues to shine ahead of the Puget Sound area when it comes to urban rail. While the Sounder commuter train is doing quite well given its severe limitations of service, yet another barrier has been placed before the construction of Seattle's Central Link light rail line. Without questioning the motives of the latest additions to traditional anti-rail opponents, a major reason given by the opposition, that light rail "won't solve traffic congestion," warrants comment.

Yep, the opponents are right. Light rail, commuter rail, even metro (subway) won't solve traffic congestion! (See **Flem**, page 5)

The View Down the

Tracks =====

with Jim Cusick

I'm going into business!

I'm going to take the plunge. I've decided that there's money to be made in the private sector. After all, there are those who argue that it's the only way to improve efficiency and service for any transit operation.

However, I'm going into the TOLL ROAD business. Lately, the regional discussions are starting to come around to the idea of tolls on the newly constructed roadways. Will wonders never cease?

Since I was heavily involved in the planning for the I-405 Corridor Program, I've still got all the good estimates, and quite frankly, I believe they are accurate. I say that because after having worked around the staff of the many agencies in the region and the state, I have come to respect their competence. And, yes, that includes all those who are highway planners and consultants.

I'll start by estimating how much this dang thing will cost to build and operate. I could talk in "budget" dollars for the four new lanes, but I think I'll use the figures that have been CEVP'd. That's the new term that you're beginning to see in the media.

What that means is, rather than just saying it will cost \$4.5 billion dollars for the four lanes for the full 31 miles of the corridor, because that's what it cost the last time we did it, we apply the Cost Estimating Validation Process (CEVP) to the numbers. That means we ask a lot of experienced people to take a shot at estimating what the eventual costs might be, given all the normal pitfalls large projects run into.

What this results in is YOE, or Year Of Expenditure, dollars. It's how Sound Transit's Central Link light rail went from the \$1.7 billion dollars in the pre-1996 election pamphlet to the \$2.9 billion figure reported in the media, seemingly like magic. The larger figure is the extrapolated dollar amount, after more complete engineering is done.

In the case of I-405, the \$4.5 billion for the four additional general purpose lanes will actually cost around \$7 billion by the time it's all over. I can deal with

that. All I have to do is figure out how long of a time span to amortize that over. Well, that also is available from the I-405 Program data. The answer is 30 years.

So, if I will spend \$7 billion, and get to charge a toll for 30 years, then all I have to figure out how much that toll needs to be in order to recoup my investment. By the way, I possess the magic "Dehydrated Highway in a Box—Just add water" (both made by ACME, of course) so there is NO WAITING! Poof! Instant Highway!

Now, if I set this new toll road next to the current I-405 FREEWAY, I



Tacoma Link opens on Friday August 22! Above, a training run enters the ramp from Pacific Ave. to Commerce St. The opening ceremonies will be at 10 a.m. at the Tacoma Dome Station Plaza, 423 E 25th St. Watch for the full program from Sound Transit. One hundred Golden Ticket winners will ride on Link's inaugural run. Link will continue to run through Tacoma's downtown festivities until 10 p.m. and will operate everyday without fare after that. Golden Tickets will be in some Zingo® mint tins that will be given away free (with purchase) at many downtown Tacoma businesses. Look inside your commemorative mint tin to see if you're a winner. If you are, follow the directions on the ticket to be one of the first 100 riders on board Tacoma Link. A list of participating merchants can be found at www.soundtransit.org/linkrail/tacoma/goldenticket.htm.
Photo by Zack Willhoite

probably won't be getting anybody in the non-commute hours. I mean, who would pay a toll if there's an open road for free right next to it?

However, I'm figuring the 6 commute hours a day will be incentive enough for people to pay me to ride in my lanes. After all, I'll guarantee an average speed of at least 45 mph.

So, let's see... 2100 vehicles per lane per hour X 4 lanes = 8400

And the 6 hours 6 X 8,400 = 50,400 vehicles per day

A years worth 365 X 50,400 = 18,396,000 vehicles per year

For the lifespan 30 X 18,396,000 = 551,880,000 vehicles total

Divide the \$7,000,000,000 total cost of the highway by that 551,880,000 and I come up with... \$12.68 for one 31 mile

trip, end to end, one way!!

YESIREE!! Wouldn't you be willing to pay that for an uncongested commute?

Hmmmm, maybe there is NO PROFIT to be made (let alone break even) in operating a tolled highway.

That does bring up an interesting question, though. How does that work now, with only the gas tax? How will it work if the toll being proposed is only the \$1.00 that Senator Horn has suggested. Well, it works because the gas tax I pay for trips around town and during the non-commute hours on that freeway makes up the difference. In

other words, my driving is SUBSIDIZING the congestion-free trips those commuters demand.

I thought only transit was a subsidized form of transportation.

Will wonders never cease?

Jennifer Dunn is trying to kill the I-405 Corridor Program!

Will wonders never cease?

Yes, I know she's in the district that will be served by the increased highway capacity. I'm also aware of her discussions with Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK). Yes, I realize that the I-405 Corridor Program settled on a road only solution, ignoring the survey they did that revealed that the public thinks that RAIL is one of the solutions that should be sought for the Eastside. Yes, I know the program's executive committee even decided that preserving the width of the current BNSF corridor for future transportation uses was not worth the small investment towards a true LONG TERM solution.

No, I haven't lost my marbles.

What I want to know is, if she goes out to enlist the aid of the US Congress looking to kill Central Link, a project that isn't even in her Sound Transit sub-area (which, by the way, the road projects in King County don't have), how on earth does she expect to get the rest of the voters in King County to even consider the current RTID? \$14 billion is a lot of money, and if half the county sees that the other half is getting a large share of money, with minimal transit improvements to their area, why would they vote for funding a project that's in her district?

I know, she really doesn't like government being involved in transportation, and she's really planning to go into the TOLL ROAD business!! That's it!!

(See Cusick, page 4)

Rail funding, from page 1

states but no source for this funding was identified.

Mineta held up the *Cascades* service as a model of interstate cooperation. He made many valid points about the cooperative efforts of Washington, Oregon and Amtrak to build and expand the Northwest Corridor and pointed out that we've done it all so far with very little federal participation. However, to suggest this is a model of an interstate compact is stretching it. Oregon and Washington do work together and fund projects that benefit the entire corridor, such as the Oregon-funded real-time passenger information system being installed at all stations. But the Eugene-Portland segment and the Portland-Seattle segment are really semiautonomous pieces. One could continue operating without the other, albeit greatly weakened. Mineta also failed to mention the erstwhile third partner in the corridor, British Columbia, has yet to bring any funding to the table.

To think that what Oregon and Washington have struggled mightily to achieve (and Oregon may still lose; see Lloyd Flem's column) can translate into multistate compacts to operate the national network trains is either naïve or a way for the administration to wash its hands of the demise of our national passenger rail system. How can anyone believe that Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois could ever agree on the operation and funding of the *Empire Builder*, even if the states had the money to operate it? A prime example of what can happen is the 1997 demise of the *Pioneer*. Oregon and Idaho had interest in saving the train, but no money. Washington, Utah, Wyoming and Colorado showed little interest in keeping the train running so Amtrak proceeded to terminate it.

The administration plan was nearly universally criticized by rail advocates, politicians, the states and the media. A sampling:

- NARP's Ross Capon: "The administration plan not only avoids addressing the capital needs of rail passenger service but proposes to shift costs—including costs of the long-distance trains—to states even though interstate commerce is the responsibility of the federal government."
- Sen. Trent Lott (R-MS): "I think that what they have proposed on Amtrak is a total non-starter and for the most part will get almost no consideration in the Senate, which is what it richly deserves. If after two and a half years that's all they can come up with, they ought to be ashamed. It is a guarantee to fail."
- Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX): "If you turn Amtrak over to the states, it's gone."
- Sen. Patty Murray (D-Shoreline): "If

the Bush White House gets its way, all the reform proposals in the world won't matter because there won't be any operating railroad to reform."

- Amtrak President David Gunn in a letter to his board of directors: "In all my 39 years in the industry, I have never seen anything like this proposed legislation. The closest parallel would be the privatization of British Rail and the separation of their operations and infrastructure maintenance. In that case, it took years to accomplish and it consumed billions of dollars in government funding. We know the results of this endeavor. You have been given one year and no money."
- The Great Falls (MT) *Tribune*: "We urge Montana's delegation to join Hutchison and other lawmakers to put the brakes on Bush's plan. It will only serve to further isolate rural communities and states. That's no way to run a railroad."
- The *Centralia Chronicle*: "In a time when our nation's highways are becoming increasingly congested, Amtrak offers a different path of travel. Placing the future of Amtrak in states' hands is a shortsighted solution. Congress needs to get past Bush's plan and fully fund the operational needs of Amtrak."

And finally the Good!

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved a three-year Amtrak reauthorization on June 25 which provides \$2 bill. a year in funding.

On June 26, the Senate Commerce Committee approved a similar \$2 bill. a year reauthorization for six years.

Reauthorizations are supposed to be used as a blueprint for the appropriations committees, but that doesn't always happen (see Ugly).

Also on June 25, the above House committee approved a ten-year high speed rail investment bill that lets states issue \$12 bill. in bonds that are federally tax-exempt and \$12 bill. in bonds with federal tax credits; expands the Railroad Rehabilitation and Infrastructure Financing loan and loan guarantee program to \$35 billion; and reauthorizes the Swift Rail Development Act at \$100 million a year, converting it from technology development to corridor development.

Sponsors of both House bills are Don Young (R-AK), Jack Quinn (R-NY), James Oberstar (D-MN) and Corrine Brown (D-FL). Sen. Hutchison added the Amtrak reauthorization as an amendment to the surface transportation bill, much to the displeasure of Sen. McCain.

Then, on July 30th, the big one: the American Rail Equity Act was introduced by Sen. Hutchison, Sen. Lott, Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and Sen. Conrad Burns (R-MT). This is a revised Senate reauthorization. It is for six years and would provide \$2

bill. a year to Amtrak and create a Rail Infrastructure Finance Corp. to issue \$48 bill. in federal tax credit bonds for rail projects. A 20% state match is required to obtain funding. The bill has a few items that are objectionable to Senate Democrats. Compromise and negotiations are needed to produce a bipartisan bill as the House has done.

At the press conference introducing the bill, Sen. Burns stated, "This bill will allow Montana's *Empire Builder* route to maintain current levels of service as well as give the route an opportunity to flourish under new resources."

Congress is in recess and members are home through Labor Day. Now is the time to contact your representative and senators, perhaps even arranging a meeting, to discuss the importance of intercity passenger rail service to the nation's transportation network.

Cusick, from page 3

Words of advice for my Republican friends on the eastside:

Stop.

Please...just STOP.

I know you believe strongly in roads, and I do appreciate your enthusiasm.

However, your constant effort to undermine a rail solution solves nothing.

Look, it's only a train! Even conservatives in other parts of the country RIDE the TRAIN. Look at Salt Lake City! They've embraced rail. I don't think I'd call that part of the country a bastion of liberal social-engineers. Believe me, I've lived there.

And now for some good news!

Look, it's a train!

Coming up on August 22nd, the Tacoma Link light rail line will open! Great news! Even though the vehicles will be the same as the Portland Streetcar, the line has been built to accommodate the larger, heavier Central Link vehicles, when the two systems are eventually connected.

Look, it's money for a train!

Sound Transit will be getting some of that federal money for the Central Link system, and will be able to break ground this fall!

I'm looking forward to a train...in the north end! Later this year twice-a-day Sounder service will begin. Hooray!

Speaking of that service, in the last newsletter, my comment about the meeting where scary stories were being told, but maybe the s'mores made the deal, was garbled. [Your editor takes the blame for that.] It mistakenly was printed to say that meeting occurred at the celebration ceremony in Everett. The meeting this was supposed to occur at was in Patty Murray's office when she brought together BNSF and Sound Transit for those negotiations, and threatened to have them bring sleeping bags in case they had to stay the night.

I still think it was the s'mores.

Flem, from page 2

Why? Because nothing one can build "solves" a condition absolutely inherent to successful and vibrant urban places! Traffic congestion has been an integral part of every successful city since at least First Century Rome, where vehicles were actually banned near the Forum for parts of the business day because of their congestion and pollution. London in 1665 (just before the Great Fire) was probably the most traffic-congested place ever. Today's Paris, despite many 100,000s achieving access to places daily on their Metro (and remember access is the end; mobility is not an end in itself), also has severe traffic congestion. Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Houston have spent billions building toll-free highways. These highways and most of the rest of their endlessly sprawling areas are poster children of pollution as well as congestion. Oh, there is a "solution" to traffic congestion: the loss of a place's economic base. There are little mining and logging towns here in the Northwest with less traffic than in 1929. How so? The mines closed and the mills consolidated with a fraction of the labor force. Congestion solved.

WashARP supported investments in road infrastructure as well as in rail in the recent legislature. Added road capacity has its place in growing urban areas. But so does urban rail, bus transit, car pool lanes, commute trip reduction programs, and, hopefully, more cost incentives in terms of land use and travel behavior. None will "solve" congestion. Rail affords access in a safe and environmentally benign fashion. That is important. Also important is that rail is essentially permanent in place. Urban rail opponents are now pushing buses instead of trains because buses are locationally flexible, as though that is a virtue! A trip to Portland or Vancouver, BC demonstrates how private-sector investors feel about the issue. Surrounding many of the Westside MAX stations in Portland or Skytrain stations in Vancouver are multi-millions of new private investments in higher-end housing, retail, and office space, precisely because the investors know rail is NOT flexible. Rail

will be there in 40 years, whereas the bus line could move next week. Stable, quality communities are being built and enhanced because of urban rail. There are no such investments at bus stops. And these same investors know that middle and higher-income people, their clients and customers, will ride the trains but are less likely to ride a bus. I'm not justifying this reality, just reporting it.

Kind readers, this column is rather a grim polemic to be sure. One more topic to endure. While a clear majority of Americans "like trains" and, as even conservative columnist George Will concedes, want their elected offices to fund rail, many of our fellow citizens simply don't often think of passenger trains as a mode of real transportation. We rail advocates and the providers of rail must continue at all times and in all places to remind our fellow citizens of the trains, when and where they exist. Do not allow without editorial response, someone to ask you concerning a significant trip, "Did you fly or drive?" Tell them you chose the mode (or should have chosen the mode) civilized grownups in all other industrialized democracies choose, a modern, safe and comfortable passenger train! I note the several on-line travel purveyors talk only of "flights and rental cars" as if no customer could even consider that in Japan or most of Europe, intercity trains and urban rail transit are infinitely the better choice than attempting to pilot a rented vehicle in Rome, London, or Tokyo. Also, for example, when a hotel advertises they will pick you up at the airport, insist they also provide the same service to the train station. Be relentless.



Bits of better news:

In my weekly round trips from Olympia or Centralia to Portland, our Amtrak Cascades and their crews have been near flawless in performance. I enjoy overhearing adult passengers saying how much better the train is than the I-5 pressure cooker or the hassles of SeaTac. Other passengers are doing obvious business work or a college assignment. These are

not "rail buffs"; they are busy Americans achieving access to places they need to reach as civilized grownups. Kinda makes all our efforts worth it.

Vancouver, BC's getting the bid for the 2010 Winter Olympics is potential good news. Interest in increasing rail service from Vancouver south to Seattle and within BC's Lower Mainland among political and business leaders on both sides of the border is already growing. International visitors to the Olympics, many from the winter-sports-oriented countries of Europe and East Asia, will expect and make use of rail service that can, among other things, bring considerable economic benefit to all the Northwest Corridor. WashARP will certainly support the development of increased passenger rail service north of Seattle.



Our condolences to WashARP member Dennie Chelemados of Maple Valley, whose wife Sue, passed away on July 2. Also to Reverend Bob Walker of Lacey, whose wife Mardi died on July 7. Bob and Mardi, both WashARP members, had been married 49 years. They have been good friends of Darleen and me for years. Our thoughts are with Dennie, Bob, and their families.

Another loss, although of an entirely different nature, is that of Jean-Pierre Ruiz's resignation as CEO of Talgo-America. J-P was an excellent representative, not only of the Madrid-based rail car manufacturer, but of passenger rail in North America. It is deeply unfortunate that this fine company with their excellent products may decide to focus future marketing in places like Kazakhstan, an underdeveloped Third World former Soviet "republic," because that land offers better potential sales than the US. Make you proud, Ernie?

Thanks to the tireless efforts of NARP director Doras Briggs of Calif., AARP, the large group for people 50+, endorsed passenger rail in its 2003 Policy Book. The book is used by staff and members when working on behalf of the organization. Go to www.aarp.org/legipoly.html for details.

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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

September 13: WashARP meeting at noon at the **Panorama City** retirement community in **Lacey**. Cost is \$12 for sandwich, soup and salad buffet, and includes room rental and other meeting costs. We are inviting gubernatorial candidates for a discussion on transportation. Rides will be provided from Centennial Station from train 11 southbound and to train 506 northbound. Driving: from I-5, north or south, take exit 108 (Sleater-Kinney Rd. south). Travel about 1 mile to the Panorama City entrance, about 500 feet past 14th Avenue on the left. Follow the Information Center signs to parking adjacent to the Administration/Restaurant building. Proceed through the main entrance to the Garden Room on the second floor.

September 18: Commuter Rail Section meeting at **6:30 p.m.** at **Andy's Diner**, 2963 4th Ave S, Seattle (just north of Spokane St).

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

WashARP welcomes the following new members in June and July: Christina Wolf, Bellingham; Diane Adams, Seattle; Harvey Bowen, Seattle; Doug Keniston, Covington; Joan Yuen,

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

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Bellingham; and Amanda Schmidt, Seattle.

WashARP members contributing to this newsletter include: Gay Banks-Olson, Bob Krebs, Kirk Fredrickson, Tony Trifiletti, Lloyd Flem, Jim Cusick, Warren Yee, Zack Willhoite, Dennie Chelemedos and Jim Longley.

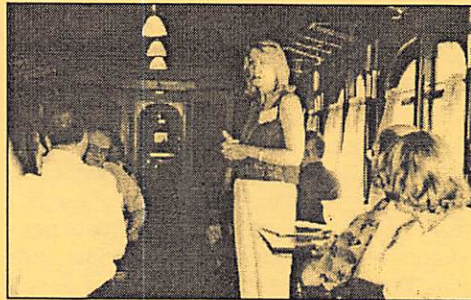


Photo by Jim Hamre

Above, Gay Banks-Olson, standing, director of the Amtrak Cascades, speaks at the July 12 WashARP meeting in Seattle. Gay, a WashARPer, noted that while year-to-date ridership is up 2%, revenue is down 3%. With the travel industry continuing to be hurt by the economy, most of the increase in riders is from the weekday Schools on Trains program, where fares are only \$5 to encourage ridership. Many kids will then be pushing their parents for another ride, increasing patronage in the long run. The Cascades' customer satisfaction index remains high at 92 (on a scale of 1 to 100), second only to the Heartland Flyer. A new marketing effort is underway for the Cascades and new menus from chef Kathy Casey have recently been introduced. Gay added that a new seat design for the Talgos is being considered as the existing seats are getting harder to maintain and get

parts for. She also discussed the new organizational structure David Gunn has put in place and said Gunn is personally focusing on the on-time performance problems on UP. He is doing it one train at a time, starting with the *California Zephyr*. We hope he soon gets to the *Coast Starlight* and *Cascades* south of Portland.

At the June 14 WashARP meeting in Seattle, we were introduced to the new head of WSDOT's Public Transportation and Rail Office, Judy Giniger. She admitted that she has a lot to learn about rail, but she hopes WashARP will be open to teaching her. (We can be sure Professor Lloyd has already begun lessons!) Judy wants a partnership with WashARP to work toward continually improving the Northwest Corridor. She is assessing the funding plan passed by the Legislature to determine if capital projects need to be reprioritized for more efficient implementation.

Northwest Rail Roundup

Amtrak Cascades ridership in May was flat, dipping 0.4% from 2002 to 54,190. Total corridor ridership was down 0.8% to 62,471. June Cascades ridership was up 2.3% to 48,782. Total corridor ridership cannot be compared to 2002 because of double counting of some passengers on the *Coast Starlight* during a major UP track work project that forced Amtrak to bus between Eugene and Klamath Falls... **Schools on Trains** program saw 2500 students from 56 schools ride the Cascades in the first quarter of 2003... **Correction:** In the last newsletter, the note about air/rail market share should have stated Amtrak has 30% of the air/rail split between Seattle and Portland (not Tacoma).

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