



WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

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A Not-for-profit Consumer Organization
"Moving forward... On Rail."

Rail Conference: "Northwest Passenger Rail – Investing in Regional Mobility"

The Assoc. of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates hosted another highly successful joint membership meeting with Region 8 of the National Assoc. of Railroad Passengers, the Montana Assoc. of Railroad Passengers and All Aboard Washington on Feb. 23 at Portland's historic Multnomah Hotel. Attendance topped 170, a new record for our annual joint Northwest meeting. The theme was "Northwest Passenger Rail – Investing in Regional Mobility."

Donald Leap, AORTA president was master of ceremonies. He started the meeting by introducing Hans Bernard, Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski's (D) transportation policy advisory. Bernard accepted an award from AORTA on the governor's behalf honoring his pro-rail work in Oregon.



Rep. Blumenauer

Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) was then introduced by Leap. He also received an award from AORTA for his pro-rail work.

Blumenauer started by focusing on the years 1808, 1908 and 2008. In 1808, following the highly successful Lewis and Clark Expedition, Albert Gallatin, Pres. Thomas Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury, presented the president's plan to Congress for development of a system of roads and canals to expedite westward expansion of the fledgling United States of America. His plan, based on George Washington's vision, also led to railroad expansion (as

that mode developed in the 1830s), public schools, homesteading and mining. The Gallatin Plan was used as a blueprint for westward expansion into the 1870s.

In 1908 Pres. Theodore Roosevelt convened a conference of all the country's governors to develop a national infrastructure plan for the next hundred years. It included roads (leading to the Interstate Highway Act of 1956), hydro power, inland waterways and parks. Roosevelt's plan served us well into the 20th century.

Blumenauer stated that in 2008 it's time for a new infrastructure vision for the 21st century. We need to take the best of previous efforts as a basis for a new plan, which must include a major urban, commuter and intercity rail component. The plan must take into account all the emerging environmental issues. The US currently spends less than 1% of its gross domestic product on infrastructure while China spends 8% and India spends 4%. "Saying we have a third world rail system does a disservice to Malaysia and India," said Blumenauer. There are 72,000 miles of sewer and water lines in the US that are more than 80 years old and built of wood and brick. The American Society of Civil Engineers gives the United States a "D-" on infrastructure. Blumenauer called the current administration the most hostile to infrastructure investment in the country's history.

The Congressman said rail is already embraced by the people and that the politicians will soon be on board. Our increasing road and air congestion can only be addressed by investing in rail. With the highway trust fund almost broke, the whole approach to funding our transportation system must be overhauled. More funding is needed as well as creative partnerships with local governments and private (See **Rail Conference**, page 4)

May 10: National Train Day and relaunch of the *Coast Starlight*

Amtrak has set May 10 as the first annual National Train Day. The golden spike was driven on May 10, 1869 at Promontory, Utah, marking the completion of the first transcontinental railroad. Amtrak is planning major events in Washington, DC, New York City, Chicago and Los Angeles. Events are also being jointly planned by Amtrak, rail advocates and local officials in cities and towns throughout the country, including Seattle. Amtrak is also still planning to relaunch the *Coast Starlight* on May 10, despite the massive landslide in the Oregon Cascades that severed its Union Pacific route, causing Amtrak to suspend service north of Sacramento and run a coach only train south of there. All Aboard Washington is helping prepare for both events at Seattle's King St. Station. (See page 6 for more details on participating in the events; also visit www.nationaltrainday.com.)



Rail advocates up and down the west coast have protested vigorously to Amtrak and Congress about suspension of service north of Sacramento after the Jan. 20 mudslide. In February, Amtrak did finally institute an overnight bus connection between the truncated *Starlight's* Sacramento terminus and Portland, where one can connect to a *Cascades* train. Advocates continue to push Amtrak to run a full service train to Klamath Falls with a short daylight bus ride to a connecting coach train at Eugene.

Amtrak may finally be listening. In a recent letter to the Rail Passenger Assoc. of California, Richard Phelps, Amtrak vice president of transportation, said "Amtrak is already in the process of reviewing our current operation of the *Coast Starlight* as we are rapidly nearing the time when ridership and revenue start to ramp up significantly. We have started the process of re-calling our On Board Service crews in anticipation of an April (See **May 10**, page 4)



The crowd of over 170 attendees enjoy the Feb. 23 joint membership meeting at Portland's historic Multnomah Hotel. Photo by Jim Hamre



*From the desk of
the Government
Affairs Director
by
Lloyd H. Flem*

Where are the Feds?; Railroad Day and Train Day

Perceptions that All Aboard Washington members and other rail advocates in the Northwest and nationwide share, that the time for major increases in the role and investments in passenger rail is **NOW**, are beginning to take root with people beyond just Our Usual Suspects. The popular mass media are using the R word more, particularly in relation to concerns about the costs of motor fuels and human-induced climate change. Nationwide, state and local elected officials and, importantly, state-level and local voters are increasingly willing to approve taxes and fees to fund investments in urban and intercity corridor passenger trains. A strong majority of newspaper feature articles and editorials have become pro-passenger-rail. "Average citizens" now approach me with concerns about the USA's passenger rail backwardness compared with Europe and East Asia, as they also recite good reasons for the need for more passenger trains. The mildly contemptuous giggles about "train buffs" and "you like choo choos?" I might have heard a couple of decades ago are largely absent now.

What is still missing is a significant commitment by the Federal Government. Yes, thanks to a majority in Congress, Amtrak has been kept alive, albeit sometimes barely, and urban commuter and transit rail have done fairly well in recent Congresses. But few Congressfolk appear to have federal investments in passenger rail as a top-level priority. However Congress gets a passing grade compared to the several Administrations in place since I have been involved in rail advocacy. While I remain diligently non-partisan in my role as AAWA's Government and Corporate Affairs Director, candor dictates that in my view the George W. Bush Administration has been the least supportive of Amtrak and passenger rail of any in recent decades. Even now, while the Bush-appointed Amtrak Board has at least supported a stay-alive budget for Amtrak, direct Bush appointees at the Federal Railroad Administration and USDOT have again proposed budget requests that would effectively end most of the country's intercity pas-

senger rail service. (I firmly believe Joe Boardman, current FRA boss, would like to see responsible passenger rail investments, but in his current role, must read from a prepared anti-Amtrak script!) While the Administration proposals are probably non-starters, it shows where Bush people are required to be on these issues.

A valuable case for federal investments in both intercity and urban rail is continually being made by Paul Weyrich and William Lind of the arch-conservative Free Congress Foundation. Weyrich and Lind make compelling arguments for passenger rail as serving traditional conservative values. A recent paper by them properly posits the need for rail as a national defense strategy, as rail decreases our addiction to imported oil from often unstable and potentially unfriendly sources. For those of you who encounter anti-rail people who pose as conservatives, study the good works by Weyrich

What is still missing is a significant commitment by the Federal Government.

and Lind as a powerful counter.

With Congress, I believe a bipartisan majority favors an increased emphasis on intercity and urban passenger rail, for all the good reasons increasingly evident. The job of rail advocates is to continue to remind our US senators and representatives that our country will be well served by such rail investments. I recently was able to have a quick one-on-one with my 3rd District Congressman Brian Baird (D-Vancouver). I concurred with BB's position that an economic stimulus package would better have been in the form of federal infrastructure investments rather than simple tax rebates. The latter, from "borrowed money," might likely be spent on foreign-made consumer goods, with limited benefits to our overall economy and national well-being. I told Baird I felt we now had the elements of a "perfect storm" in behalf of passenger rail. The congressman preferred the term "perfect opportunity" for such investments!

Many of you have or soon will have a letter from my office requesting you to ask your US House member to support pro-passenger rail legislation. Please do so! Members of Congress do pay heed to their constituents most of the time, and I feel most are open now more than ever to making rail investment decisions.

Of the three presidential candidates, none has put rail or even national infrastructure of any kind as a headline topic

on the campaign trail. Obama did mention both intercity and urban passenger rail in a recent presentation. Both he and Clinton have voted "correctly" for rail in the Senate. McCain joins the two Democrats in having a record supportive of conservation and environmental protection, in contrast to that of the current President Bush. But like the votes made by green-supporting Rep. Dave Reichert (R-Auburn), McCain's green record has not to date been matched by any support for intercity passenger trains. Rail advocates who may support McCain on other grounds need to tie his record as a conservationist with rail in your efforts for him. Obama and Clinton supporters need to make certain they do not "forget" that passenger rail investments complement many of their other announced concerns.

So where are the Feds? We hope a new administration and Congress will not let this "perfect opportunity" for rail slip by again.



I, as well as AAWA board members Loren Herrigstad and Louis Musso, were again guests of the freight railroad industry for a Railroad Day in Washington, DC in mid-March. We were again under the auspices of Go21, the industry-funded group of citizens from across the nation who are not directly employed by rail freight operators or suppliers. Views below are mine; Loren and Louis may differ with me in degree.

While I essentially agree that our country's well-being is served by the support for the "three issues" the freight rail industry had us repeat for the Senatorial and Congressional offices, the freight rail industry interests would have been better served had we been encouraged to be more flexible in our pro-rail approach to Congress, and particularly encompass passenger rail as part of a unified pro-rail presentation. But the rigidity characteristic of the long-term corporate culture of the freight rail industry was all too evident in this year's Railroad Day. There seemed to be a lack of understanding that in a Congress dominated by mostly-urban Democrats, smart politics would suggest rail labor and passenger rail be major parts of a Railroad Day coalition. Didn't happen.

Of the three issues, asking for a reauthorization of tax credits for short lines was an easy sell. Granting similar tax credits to Class One railroads or other entities investing in rail capacity increases is also a good idea, but since it appears to help the few but very large (See **Flem**, page 5)



The View Down the Tracks

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with Jim Cusick

Light Rail, Commuter Rail, Amtrak, what's the difference?

A train is a train. Years ago a friend of mine, who wasn't as rail savvy as my readers are, and I were discussing the differences. Aside from becoming a well-informed individual after I helped her through the technicalities, she brought up a number of valid points.

When people ride the train, they don't really think about the technical nuances. To them, a train is just a train.

When we drive, we know the difference between a freeway, a toll road, an arterial and a neighborhood street. We put the key in the ignition, start the car and go on what is available.

For most people, a train is a big long thing with maybe a locomotive up front and a bunch of cars hooked together. While Sounder, Amtrak, Central Link or the South Lake Union Streetcar are unique to those of us in the know, to the general public they all should function the same.

You pay your money, and you take your ride.

There are a few problems with that perception.

Let's go back to how we can easily define to the lay person what the differences are.

Have you ever been at a social function where there was a substantial group of people who work in the same office, or maybe just in the same profession? Have you been the odd person out?

They all begin speaking in tongues.

That's what those of us involved with rail transportation become. A group of primates with our own hoots, grunts, and gestures that we understand, but is all but unintelligible to the outside world.

Yes, I'm also talking to you professionals, too.

Light Rail – Runs in the street (at some point) and stations usually at less than mile intervals.

Commuter Rail – Runs with the freight trains and distances in the single digits will generally separate the stations.

Amtrak – Also runs with the freight trains, but the station separations are in the tens of miles.

Each of these has a different cus-

tommer base, comfort level and, here's the biggie, **COST**. While someone can take *Cascades* train 516 back to the north end when they miss the last Sounder, they will have to fork over the extra fare, unless they happen to have that monthly pass.

It seems like a small thing, unless you're the one who's stuck at the station.

The other thing to consider is how you ride them.

Ah, the old days, when our local trains had the old style vestibules. Modern rail equipment still has vestibules, but not ones as much fun as the old days. The vestibules on modern equipment are both the entrance to the cars from the platform and also the space between the cars.

You remember the old style, the kind with the stairs at the ends of the car, where an enterprising commuter could run alongside the train he's late for, toss

While Sounder, Amtrak, Central Link or the South Lake Union Streetcar are unique to those of us in the know, to the general public they all should function the same.

up his briefcase, and hop on before too much speed built up.

Nowadays things aren't as much fun, due to the proliferation of lawyers, no doubt. Even though you can hop on Sounder at the last minute, when the doors shut, they are shut.

And who really wants to be running a mad dash for an Amtrak train, anyway. If trains are the civilized way to travel, then walk, don't run, to your seat, sit down, relax and enjoy the ride. And unlike airline travel, they don't make you take your shoes off before you get on the train; you can wait until you're seated to do that. Just remember to put your shoes on when you move about the train.

"Conductor, are we in the right car?"

"Yes Ma'am, that is correct. This is where you should be."

"There seems to be far too much legroom, are you sure this isn't first-class?"

All of you who have ridden Amtrak already know this, but almost every first time rider I've dealt with invariably says the same thing. They are amazed at how much legroom is available on the train. It seems we've been so conditioned by airline travel to accept flimsy feeling seats, packed head-to-lap, that the solidly built and roomy seating in a train is a novel experience.

By the way, the above statement was made by an acquaintance, a long-time airline employee, as she described her and her daughter's first ride on a train.

It wasn't long ago when we all knew someone who worked for the railroad, so train travel was something not so foreign. Nowadays it seems to be, so much so that another statement I have been hearing quite often as of late is "This will be my first train ride" or "I've never ridden the train before."

How do you travel on the train? It's not really that hard. In this day and age, we seem to have gotten used to getting to the airport two hours early just to get through security, after making sure we have planned the trip correctly, and arranged transportation to and from the airport. Simple, right?

The train isn't any more complicated. You can eliminate the extra hour for security, and if you have business downtown, you've solved the transportation issue. Sounds even simpler.

Trains in my back yard, no?

Let's be honest, most of you reading this want trains in your backyard. However, if you actually had them running behind your house before, you too would want them in your backyard. They are much less intrusive than an equivalent passenger capacity freeway, especially during the commute hours. It's even better when the nearest train station is within a half mile. I know, the studies specify a 1/8 mile radius to be effective, but when development is done correctly, people will walk that extra distance.

If the Eastside rail line is to be successful, the objections of the residents adjacent to the tracks must be answered. The objections I heard while on the I-405 Citizens Committee are valid, but not impossible to mitigate.

Objection 1 – Noise of train wheels over jointed rail.

Solution 1 – Welded rail.

Objection 2 – Sounding of horns at all the railroad crossings.

Solution 2 – Reduce or eliminate crossings until no horns need to be sounded.

Objection 3 – Noise and fumes from diesel locomotion.

Solution 3 – Electrify, or even use an earthen sound barrier and modern diesel propulsion.

Objection 4 – With electrification and overhead catenary, there are visual issues.

(See **Cusick**, page 6)

Rail Conference, from page 1 industry. In closing Blumenauer stated, "We need to fight to protect every inch of rail right-of-way in this country from being abandoned."



Hutchison

Our next speaker was Jonathan Hutchison, Amtrak's western director of government affairs. Hutchison reemphasized the Congressman's point that intercity rail is a part of the solution to our national transportation crisis. Passenger rail is more energy efficient than the auto (27% more energy used per passenger mile) or air (20% more energy used per passenger mile) modes. Freight trains are three times more efficient in hauling cargo than trucks. Rail is a much better user of the world's limited resources.

Amtrak will be fighting for survival again this year. The administration has again proposed \$800 mill. for 2009. Amtrak has requested \$1.67 bill., plus \$114 mill. to complete retroactive wage payments as part of the settlement with many of its unions as recommended by the administration's own Presidential Emergency Board. Amtrak needs to start rolling stock acquisition planning to enhance and replace the current fleet which is nearly stretched to its limits. As an example, Hutchison listed on a typical Friday morning in February what equipment was needed nationwide to run that day's service and what was available:

- Horizon cars: 59 needed; 47 available
- Amfleet cars: 95; 96
- California cab cars: 21; 22
- Locomotives: 161; 162

Just one derailment can put continuing operation of all services in jeopardy.

On time performance issues on many routes continue to threaten the viability of these trains. We continue to need partnerships between governments, Amtrak and the freight railroads that will result in benefits to both passenger and freight rail service. Amtrak can help leverage the public funding needed.

Hutchison said truncating the *Coast Starlight* service as a result of the Oregon Cascades mudslide was a tough decision, but one the company had to make to reduce operating costs. He reiterated that Amtrak is committed to restoring full through service from Seattle to Los Angeles as soon as Union Pacific has the tracks repaired and deems it safe for passenger train operation. (See page 1 article for more information.) Hutchison would not commit to once again opening the northbound *Starlight* to boarding passengers from Eugene north to Seattle. Amtrak will wait to see how the on time performance is after service resumes. (It had improved marked last fall when UP completed major track work projects in northern California.)

To return the *Pioneer* (Seattle-Portland-Boise-Denver-Chicago) and *North Coast Hiawatha* (Seattle-Billings-Bismarck-St. Paul-Chicago) services would require the political will from Congress and funding for equipment, stations and operations. Restoration of both services is to be studied if a provision in the Senate-passed Amtrak reauthorization (S. 294) remains in the House version and the bill is passed and signed by the president.

Hutchison concluded by noting that 2008 is shaping up to be another record year for Amtrak. Fiscal year-to-date Oct. 07-Jan. 08 ridership is up 11.2%; revenue is up 14.7%. The issue is not will people ride intercity passenger trains, but it is providing the service and capacity they want.



Melzer

Matt Melzer, NARP communications associate, was the next speaker. He ably filled in for NARP Pres. George Chilson, at home recovering from surgery. Melzer's presentation was titled "The Power of Trains: Securing America's Mobility for the Future."

He went through the history of NARP's position regarding the truncation of the *Coast Starlight*. NARP, along with the west coast state rail groups, opposed all Amtrak plans that have not included running a full service train from Los Angeles to Klamath Falls with a bus bridge to a train in Eugene. He noted that Amtrak said it was too far to run a daytime bus from Atlanta to New Orleans when the *Crescent* had been suspended between the two cities for multiple days a week for several months due to Norfolk Southern track work, but the company is running an overnight bus from Sacramento to Portland as a substitute for the *Starlight*. Atlanta-New Orleans: 500 miles; Sacramento-Portland: 572 miles.

Melzer outlined the ten recommendations of the National Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission (www.transportationfortomorrow.org), which issued its final report on Jan. 15, 2008. It calls for replacing over 100 separate federal surface transportation programs with ten comprehensive programs that are outcome (rather than modally) based:

- **Rebuilding America:** A National Asset Management Program.
- **Freight Transportation:** A Program to Enhance U.S. Global Competitiveness.
- **Congestion Relief:** A Program for Improved Metropolitan Mobility.
- **Saving Lives:** A National Safety Mobility Program.
- **Connecting America:** A National Access Program for Smaller Cities and Rural Areas.
- **Intercity Passenger Rail:** A Program to Serve High-Growth Corridors by Rail.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Transportation Investment Program to Support a Health Environment.
- **Energy Security:** A Program to Accelerate the Development of Environmentally-

Friendly Replacement Fuels.

- **Federal Lands:** A Program for Providing Public Access.
- **Research, Development, & Technology:** A Coherent Transportation Research Program for the Nation.

NARP is helping to develop grass roots Amtrak route support teams, based on the successful TEMPO team for the *Texas Eagle*, which turned 10 years old last September. TEMPO has helped develop marketing and publicity, manage capacity and increase ridership and revenues. A team for the *Sunset Limited* held its first meeting in January. Teams for both the *Empire Builder* and *Coast Starlight* are in the process of getting started. Melzer is facilitating the route support teams. He is also working on college campus and youth campaigns in order to get more young people involved in passenger rail advocacy.

The meeting concluded with reports from the state organizations. Michael Ackley and Barry Green reported that Montana ARP would be hosting a public meeting in Helena on Feb. 29 to continue to promote the return of passenger rail service across southern Montana.

Bob Krebs reported on events in Oregon. AORTA continues to work on ways to provide dedicated funding for the Portland-Eugene portion of the *Cascades*. The opening of light rail line along the transit mall next year will bring trains within a block of Portland Union Station. This line will go from downtown to Clackamas, a southeast suburb. Short line railroads in Oregon are in trouble. The Port of Tillamook RR has washouts to contend with. The Central Oregon and Pacific has shut down its line to Coos Bay because of deteriorating tunnels and is threatening to shut down through service over the Siskiyou Mountains. (Barry Green contributed to this report.)

May 10, from page 1

21st or April 22nd track restoration date by the Union Pacific. We also are evaluating the possibility of restoring service to Klamath Falls with a full service train, a bus bridge to Eugene, and a stub train between Eugene and Seattle. The economics of this option are under review as we have to have mechanical personnel at both Klamath Falls and Eugene, and we have to secure a bus vendor and place management personnel in Klamath Falls to help handle the bus/train transfer of passengers." At press time, UP indicated in an article in the Eugene Register-Guard that limited freight service could resume April 5, but would not commit to a date for full restoration of freight and Amtrak service.

The relaunched *Coast Starlight*, like Amtrak's relaunched *Empire Builder* (the premier national network train) will return it to its glory of the 1990s. The Pacific Parlour Cars and sleeping cars will be refurbished and there will be enhanced onboard services and amenities, new regional food and beverage options and expanded entertainment choices. However, china will not return to the dining car.

Flem, from page 2

Class One roads, it evokes less sympathy than help for the short line and regional railroads, which are seen to often assist less-affluent rural-small town areas and are, by definition, other than corporate giants. Finally, while I happen to agree that potential reregulation of the railroads is generally detrimental to our country's well-being economically and environmentally, the freight railroads appearance of corporate arrogance coupled with the-sky-will-fall-if-we-don't-get-our-way approach is less effective than other approaches, including cooperation with their real allies, would be. Also, the "three issues" did not include the real threat to freight as well as passenger rail of a proposed FRA "level boarding" rule which would be costly, vastly inefficient and would not assist the supposed beneficiaries of the rule, we of the physically-challenged community. Also ignored were the "hedge fund" investment vultures, whose policies, if they were to gain control of a railroad, would be quick profits and probable disposal of assets of these industries which require stable long-term capital investments with long-term, not overnight, earning potentials.

For some reason, the Go21 folks had failed to get appointments with our state's three members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (T&I), the most important House committee for rail issues! Having become somewhat an old DeeCee hand by now, I was able to set up appointments with the offices of Baird, Reichert, and Rick Larsen (D-Lake Stevens) as our state's Go21 squad literally approached the House office buildings. (OK, so cell phones occasionally have some value!)

In short, while pursuit of the "three issues" and only those three was relentless by Go21 staff and some in our Washington state Go21 squad, I was able at some of the meetings to sneak in some support for passenger rail issues and vary the presentation a bit in style to fit what I know to be the interests and political positions of some of the varied Congressional offices. Rep. Doc Hastings (R-Pasco) alone among our delegation met personally with us. Doc will not likely ever be a strong supporter of pas-

senger rail, but this most cordial congressman certainly understands the value of freight trains to his district and state.

In short, I had no opposition to offering strong support for freight rail. I just believe it would be in the direct interest of the freight rail industry if they would work with passenger rail interests, rail labor and other natural allies, and take a bit softer approach to those in positions of policy influence, those whom I believe either are now or could be easily persuaded to see the multiple benefits of a larger role for freight **AND** passenger rail for our country.

The day following Railroad Day was more satisfying. Loren and I enjoyed delightful meetings with transportation staffers for the very pro-passenger-rail Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) and Jon Tester (D-MT). We surely supported freight rail, but with a style and substance we believed had more affirmative impact than the issue orthodoxy of the previous day. Most cordial meetings followed with Joe McHugh, Amtrak's VP of government affairs and Matt Melzer, staffer with NARP.

We came away from the nation's capital reinforcing our belief that Washington state rail advocates are fortunate in having BNSF as "our" Class One freight railroad. While BNSF will seek every economic advantage they can, just as all big corporations do, they at least acknowledge the advantage in working cooperatively with Amtrak and understand that public-sector investments in their track and infrastructure are to their benefit as well as to the benefit of passenger trains. While the Association of American Railroads (the five US and two Canadian Class Ones, plus poor step-sister Amtrak) expresses support for passenger trains in our country, they want such to be on totally separate rights-of-way and still insist Amtrak is taking away needed track capacity without sufficient compensation. If this were the case, the AAR would have a legitimate gripe (although they willingly agreed to such with the 1971 creation of Amtrak), but opposing public investments such as the state of Washington and Sound Transit have made on our Northwest Corridor, which increases capacity for BNSF (and UP!) freight trains the 90% or so of the

time when neither Amtrak nor Sounder trains are present, represents old ideology, not contemporary reality.

Most passenger rail advocates would love to have new exclusive rights-of-way and a TGV-type high-speed system, as AAR suggests. But AAR does not hint as to how such an ultra-expensive system might be paid for in the current political atmosphere where there is opposition to paying for even safety improvements on an aging Interstate Highway system.

Loren's and my Railroad Day experience concluded with an unexpected visit with US Rep. Charlie Dent (R-PA) who sat with us from DeeCee to Wilmington, DE on Amtrak's Acela as we started our homeward trip. (Amtrak: Oly-Portland and DeeCee-Philly was flawless; Portland-Philly, using another mode was...not!) We had an extremely friendly and fruitful discussion with Dent on the "three issues," passenger rail, conservation and the need for more Congressional moderates from both parties; and on economic changes in his Allentown-Bethlehem district. Dent is a moderate R on the T&I committee who is friends with our state's Baird, Larsen and Reichert. Even on Acela, with its upscale business and government clientele, there is "something about a train" that promotes constructive grownup conversations that just do not happen on the shared misery of today's commercial airlines.

National Train Day, which will emphasize passenger rail, will occur 10 May. Washington state's celebration will be centered at King Street Station. Amtrak and NARP have asked All Aboard Washington to take a lead in putting together a successful event. Fortunately, Amtrak's point man is company veteran Dan Engstrom, who produced the excellent 75th Anniversary Empire Builder event at KSS a couple of years ago. Loren Herrigstad, Al Runte and I are working with Dan; and Loren and I with NARP to ensure an event which will bring affirmative public recognition to rail. While passenger trains were officially ignored during the Washington, DC Railroad Day, I will advocate that freight rail be involved in our Train Day. As the respected editor of the professional publication Railway Age repeats, "We are one industry."

All AAWA members are encouraged to be present at KSS on May 10th, help staff our booth, and serve as hosts for what we hope will be a large number of the "lay public" in attendance that day. See you on the tenth!

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

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All Aboard News

May 10: Join All Aboard Washington to celebrate National Train Day and the relaunch of the *Coast Starlight* at **Seattle's King St. Station**. These festivities will take place from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. We are working to provide our members with a tour of the station renovation project at about 2:30 p.m. so everyone will have an opportunity for lunch at one of the many restaurants in the King St. Station neighborhood beforehand. Tour details will be provided May 10.

June 14: All Aboard Washington meeting in **Kelso**. Meeting will take place from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (between the arrival of train 501 and departure of train 506). The meeting will be at the train station (lower level). A catered lunch will be provided. Pay at the door (cash or check only please).

For more details on either event contact Lloyd Flem (see page 5).

All Aboard Washington welcomed the following new members in February and March: Marilyn Mason-Plunkett, Bellevue; Lehr & Van Allen, Inc., Redmond; Louis Read, Burien; and Dave Prior, Kirkland.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include: Stuart Adams, Ron Schauer, Dan McFarling, Carl Fowler, Ron Sheck, Jim Cusick, Lloyd Flem, and Tony Trifiletti.

Many members help All Aboard Washington throughout the year, both financially and with their time and talent.



Another way to support All Aboard

Washington into the future is to consider a **bequest in your will** to our organization. Please consider doing so.

All Aboard Washington
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Return Service Requested

Cusick, from page 3

Solution 4 – In the Kenndale Neighborhood, there are already 50-foot high power poles supporting a trunk line and local service. Upgrading the right-of-way is an opportunity for improving those sight lines.

While residents have the right to not hear excessive noise, have the right to ask for less visual intrusion, and even have the right to not have a station, they don't have the right to deny others travel in the corridor. We'd love to work with them. Remember, widening I-405 is going to intrude even more.

Speaking of the I-405 corridor between Renton and Bellevue, the Sound Transit board meeting on March 6th was a very interesting one (www.soundtransit.org/x4976.xml). The presentations at that meeting centered on ST's plan to put something before the voters, possibly this November.

I was particularly interested in their analysis of...of course, the Eastside Rail line.

As they moved around the map and the conversations came over to the Eastside (about 25 minutes into the meeting) they spoke about ST Express routes on SR 167 and I-405 in the Renton area. At that time board member Julia Paterson expressed concern about service improvements because "that stretch of roadway is the most congested stretch in the state of Washington. Putting more express buses there means they will not be express. That stretch of road is near failure".

Board member and WSDOT secretary Paula Hammond agreed, and wondered how the HOV lanes can be managed better.

Board member Fred Butler then expressed interest in ST pursuing some sort of commuter rail service partnership in the BNSF corridor. To which Joni Earl, Sound Transit executive director, answered "May-

be, but Sound Transit isn't the lead agency and we'd have to wait for the Port of Seattle to finish up the deal."

Butler explained how he gets numerous emails that support a demonstration commuter rail project and painted a picture that many people see such a service as a "No Brainer" option in the next Sound Transit package.

Paterson then stated using the BNSF corridor would help alleviate the traffic jams on I-405. I would say that we all concur.

Board member Mary Alice Burliegh's suggestion that "enthusiasts" think about addressing the negative impacts of commuter rail on the neighboring properties is something I also agree with, except maybe for the fact that a rail proponent isn't merely an "enthusiast."

I suppose we should start calling the Nordstrom family foot-enthusiasts? They answered the need by supplying the product and they made a success out of it.

We know the customers on the Eastside want rail, now it's time to supply the product.



Photo by Jim Hamre

Government Affairs Director Lloyd Flem, third from left, led the first of two very well attended breakout sessions on passenger rail during Transportation Advocacy Day in Olympia on Jan. 29. After the morning training sessions, participants fanned out across Capitol Hill to visit with their state legislators on a wide spectrum of transportation issues.

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