



# WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

DECEMBER 2009/JANUARY 2010

www.AllAboardWashington.org

Publication of All Aboard Washington  
A Not-for-profit Consumer Organization  
*"Moving forward... On Rail."*

## Talgo's Josh Coran speaks at All Aboard Washington annual meeting

All Aboard Washington had its official annual meeting on Nov. 14 at F.X. McRory's Steak Chop and Oyster House, just two blocks from King St. Station. The 50 people gathered heard from our featured speaker Josh Coran, Talgo's manager of operations in the U.S. Coran briefly covered the history of the Talgo design. The first versions were light weight and low slung but did not have tilting capability to provide passenger comfort when traveling through curves at higher speeds. Testing in the U.S. in the 1950s on the Rock Island, Boston and Maine, and New Haven Railroads was unsuccessful due to maintenance and rough track issues. Talgo designs continued to evolve and improve in Spain.

Talgo trainsets now operate in many countries around the world in addition to the U.S. and Spain: Germany and many other European countries, Russia, China, Korea, Algeria and

Argentina, to name a few.

To maintain the company's high standards for reliability, Talgo now maintains or supervises maintenance of all of its equipment around the world. In Seattle, Amtrak maintenance personnel are supervised by Talgo managers. Having an on-board service technician on every trainset also enhanced reliability. The technician can often fix a small problem before it become large problem that may result in the equipment having to go out of service. And a passenger that needed to work or read and can quickly have a burned out reading light replace is a satisfied customer.

Over ten years after WSDOT and Amtrak bought five trainsets Talgo has sold two more trains to Wisconsin for use in the Milwaukee-Chicago corridor. AAWA hopes more orders will come Talgo's way as WSDOT has requested (See **Coran**, page 5)

## Northwest Senators question Pioneer Study

By Dan McFarling,  
Assoc. of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates

According to Assoc. of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates Pres. Donald Leap, Amtrak's recently released draft *Pioneer* Route Study is flawed. In an Oct. 1 letter to US Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), Leap states the study "takes a very narrow view of how this route can be restored."

The study underestimates ridership levels and overstates costs of restoring passenger train service between Portland, The Dalles, Pendleton, Baker City, Boise and points east. Leap's letter said AORTA is "excited" about the prospect, but concerned that inflated costs and pessimistic ridership numbers could derail the plans.

"The study dumps nearly every possible expense on the *Pioneer*," and appears designed to dissuade members of Congress from restoring the service. "As evidence: (1) The cost of new rolling stock should be a system-wide expense and equipment costs should be separated from operating costs. (2) Infrastructure expenses for new or extended sidings, crossovers, switches, signals, etc. are based on estimates by the host railroad Union Pacific. Costs associated with new passenger train services need to be evaluated by mutually trusted outside sources. Amtrak, the host railroad and the taxpayers need to know that passenger/freight cost sharing is done fairly."

Colorado Dept. of Transportation's Modal Programs Manager Tom Mauser points out that Union Pacific's cost estimate in Colorado includes \$15 million for track improvements that are not even on the proposed route! Mauser also questioned the projected \$470 million for capital projects on the Overland Route in Wyoming, an alignment that previously accommodated the (See **Pioneer**, page 4)



Around 500 people attended the dedication and opening of Stanwood's new Amtrak station on a blustery November 21 morning. The festivities at the city located between Everett and Mt. Vernon were timed with the arrival of the first *Cascades* train to stop, number 510, at just after 9:00 a.m. About 140 of the people at the event, including Sen. Mary Margaret Haugen (D-Camano Island), had boarded train 510 in Everett for the short ride to Stanwood. Following the train's arrival there was the traditional ribbon cutting ceremony followed by remarks by local and state officials. Speakers included Sen. Haugen, Rep. Judy Clibborn (D-Mercer Island and chairwoman of the House Transportation Committee), Stanwood Mayor Dianne White and WSDOT Secretary Paula Hammond. All four *Cascades* trains between Seattle and Vancouver, BC now stop in Stanwood. This is the city's first intercity passenger rail service since the start of Amtrak on May 1, 1971. Pictured on the left is train 510 arriving from Everett. On the right, Sen. Haugen (center of photo) speaking to the assembled crowd.

Left photo by Zack Willhoite, right photo by Jim Hamre



From the desk of the Executive Director by Lloyd H. Flem

Our Washington and ARRA Funds; Stanwood too; College Students On Board?; Thanks, Dedicated AAWA Members!

The Federal Rail Administration continues to say that the \$8 billion in ARRA ("stimulus") grants for High(er) Speed Rail Corridors, of which our Northwest Corridor is a prime example, will be awarded based upon merit. But I continue to worry that political clout will trump, to at least some degree, states such as our Washington, which has, perhaps more than any, fulfilled exactly the established criteria for receipt of such funding. I am not accusing the FRA of any undo bending to political power, but simply recognize that such power usually enters in whenever public monies are spread around. And since the initial grants, supposedly to have been announced weeks ago, have been delayed until "winter," my unease grows. (Editor: a Wisconsin DOT official has said that the high speed rail grants will be announced as part of the January 2010 State of the Union Address.)

Evidence: The Association of American railroads, the interest group of the Class Ones (BNSF, UP, etc) in a recent on-line news clip singled out California, Texas and Florida, as well as New York State, as really pushing for big chunks of the ARRA cash. I continue to fear that the sheer magnitude of electoral clout of those big states may replace states like Washington, which should receive a respectable portion of the rail "stimulus" requested by WSDOT. (WSDOT's rail stimulus requests can be viewed at www.wsdot.wa.gov/Funding/stimulus/passengerrail.htm.

Several prominent All Aboard Washington members, including your Executive Director, feel this is now our top priority and are continuing a concerted push to help our state get its deserved dollars, including our making a second trip the Nation's Capital, if need be! Those of you reading this need to also urge our Congresspeople to stump for our Washington back in the DeeCee Washington. Several of you are having

me draft some points for communication to our federal elected officials. Will do same for any and all of you. Do let me know if you'd like a bit of assistance!



Stanwood has now joined Leavenworth in inaugurating a new Amtrak stop in recent weeks. (See page one article and pictures.) Here I wish to applaud the good work of the rail people at WSDOT, with Kirk Fredricksen in particular having done the heavy lifting on the Stanwood project. But Saturday November 21's first train to Stanwood particularly belonged to Senator Mary Margaret Haugen (D-Camano Island). Her dedication to our passenger train program over many years came to fruition as scores of people alighted and boarded at the first Amtrak Cascades stop in her legislative

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district on that chilly late fall day.

A number of All Aboard Washington members were present and were pleased when Senator Haugen acknowledged our years of advocacy for the state's rail program. We were rewarded by the enthusiastic support for a larger transportation role for passenger trains from speeches by Mary Margaret and from WSDOT Secretary Paula Hammond. The senator also offered specific praise for the Talgo-built trains, which have served so well since the trains began running in our corridor over fifteen years ago.

Additions of station stops to the Amtrak system are rare, yet Washington, with Leavenworth opening in September, has added two in just a couple of months, developed and funded totally within our state. (This should also help convince the feds that we Washingtonians have and will continue to be willing to make rail investments, unlike some other states that are now attempting to crowd in line for the first serious federal money that has become available in many decades!)



For those of you who missed our annual meeting in Seattle, where Talgo's Josh Coran gave an excellent presentation on his firm's present and futures plans, I mentioned the truly good conference in Eugene on November 7 where



Antonio Perez, Talgo; Bruce Agnew, Cascadia Center; Ralph Munro, former Washington secretary of state; and Lloyd Flem discuss passenger rail issues with Sen. Mary Margaret Haugen after the Stanwood station festivities as other All Aboard Washington members look on. Photo by Warren Yee

hundreds of mostly college students from the West Coast gathered to study and to work for a more environmentally sound future. Several score attended a panel on

High(er) Speed Rail, with long-time Oregon rail advocate Fred Nussbaum and I as panelists. What inspired us was the genuine interest of these bright, enthusiastic young people. I urged them to become involved in organized rail advocacy. Two students have separately asked to work with us. All too many current pas-

senger train activists are old guys like me! We really need people under age 30, even under age 40, with the skills and contacts many of us who remember the Kennedy, and even Eisenhower and Truman Administrations, don't tend to have.

Welcome aboard, Facebook and Twitter generation!



It is very pleasing for me to note increasing numbers of All Aboard Washington members that are taking on rail advocacy responsibilities. Some of you are doing substantive "in the field" work, others putting in lots of time and effort on AAWA events and activities, and still others lending expertise to the structure, economic and "housekeeping" details an active organization must deal with. While the Northwest Corridor is our primary focus, I also applaud several AAWA people involved with advocating for a return of the Pioneer and North Coast Limited trains, and some detailed efforts to bring more passenger trains to eastern Washington and to parts of Montana. At this Thanksgiving season I thank all those of you that are so dedicated.



## The View Down the Tracks

=====

with Jim Cusick

### Whine, whine whine.

That's the life of a rail advocate. No trains, not enough trains, not enough stations, not enough stops, not enough parking, not enough light rail, not enough commuter rail, not enough intercity rail, nadda, nadda, nadda.

Plus, we always seem to be defending rail. Defending it against critics who cherry pick statistics and frame the argument for us. Defending its benefits with esoteric statistics and vague social benefits. You'd think nobody loves us...

Whine whine whine.

How depressing.

All I've got to say is:

Time to suck it up...

Stomach IN, Chest OUT!

We've gone over this

before, but time to step it up a notch. Time to go on the attack!

Time for a little bit of courage.

And we had perfect opportunity with the race for King County Executive.

We could have taken on Susan Hutchinson in her 'common sense' proposals for spending on mobility, and we all know how we were rolling our eyes when she made them.

Unfortunately, as far as this race was concerned, I don't live in King County, so I didn't play the 'outside agitator' by trying to take her on.

And since she lost the election, it's a moot point now.

However, rather than just arguing it as "us vs. the roadgangers," we should have simply asked her "What is the Plan?"

Even simpler, if she was vocalizing what most people generally feel, that we need to do something about congestion, we could have asked her "How does building a lane reduce congestion?"

Simply ask what the mechanics are.

**MAKE THEIR NUMBERS SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY!**

I still fight the perception that most people have that the cost of driving entails only the price of gas.

You all have been paying attention haven't you? When you do the math, you see that the argument for rail is that it **COSTS LESS** than roads.

Plain and simple.

Be Brave! I've armed you with the weapons, now go forth and fear no evil.

We can be thankful that her ideas on transportation were seen by the voting public as the most important reason to vote for someone else...Okay, maybe the general public votes on broader topics than the average All Aboard member, but...

### What Else Can We Be Thankful For?

Now, far be it for me to deny rail defendants the pleasure of their purgatory, but if we stop and look back at where we were, and where we are now, we actually do have something to be thankful for.

More Amtrak *Cascades* service between Seattle and Vancouver BC, a new stop in Stanwood, the *Empire Builder* now stops in Leavenworth.

Central Link will go all the way to the

***Now, far be it for me to deny rail defendants the pleasure of their purgatory, but if we stop and look back at where we were, and where we are now, we actually do have something to be thankful for.***

airport by Christmas.

The agreement between BNSF, the Port of Seattle, Sound Transit, and King County for the Eastside Woodinville Subdivision is finalized.

Amtrak has released the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act studies of the routes under consideration for being reinstated, such as the *Pioneer*, the *Sunset Limited* between New Orleans and Florida, and the *North Coast Hiawatha* amongst others.

While the *Pioneer* and the the *Sunset Limited* suffer from low ridership and high capital cost estimates, the *North Coast Hiawatha* shows the most promise, with firebox recovery percentages putting it in the upper quartile of Amtrak's long distance routes. Lest you think that the one billion dollars needed to restart this service is a show stopper, that was the price to rebuild one mile of I-90 over Mercer Island.

Personally, I think all the routes should be put in place, but we must rationalize it against the skewed thinking of our current unbalanced transportation planning. Now, about reinstating the Great Northern's *Cascadian*...

Well Santa...

### Here is My Wish List

With money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, more of Amtrak's railcars will be getting back in service, which means better reliability for

the schedules, since more spare cars will be available.

The *Cascades* service needs more trainsets, enough for eight round-trips between Portland and Seattle. Reaching that threshold will cause a big jump in ridership once people don't have to intensively plan around train times. If they miss one, then they have another option not too much later. In some corridors, there are no longer reserved seating trains. As unreserved, that means your ticket works on any train. The one downside – you're not guaranteed a seat.

And what about light rail? Where should it go in ST2?

Bellevue is now struggling with the routing in their downtown, and Sound Transit's preferred alignment is facing the usual cast of critics.

The most current change to ST's preferred alignment is submitted by Kevin Wallace, the newly elected Bellevue City Council member. His new proposal is called the "Vision Line." While I might not have picked the exact alignment ST chose, I can

agree with the same mix of street running and in exclusive right-of-way. It will be important to address auto traffic issues on NE 8<sup>th</sup>, possibly increase dwell time at stations and have the lights coordinated so auto traffic isn't adversely affected.

However, the Vision Line lacks the ridership potential of the current preferred alternative. I must say that from looking at the illustration, it has more negative ramifications for the neighborhood.

Unfortunately, the rhetoric I'm seeing coming from Bellevue has much the same tone as what happened with Tukwila. The compromise reached was not the best alternative.

I'm leaving it up to you Eastsiders to stick your nose into this one, since I plan to put mine into the north end; that is, Central Link to Lynnwood.

The alignment shown on the ballot measure was an elevated freeway alignment, and we all know that's NOT where you need to put it! However, it was stated that it was done that way only so a reasonable cost estimate could be calculated.

This is where I plan to get deeply involved. The north end faces a number of obstacles. One would think "Why not run it on the old interurban route?" The problem is that in a number of areas the old Interurban route has been sold and developed, or I-5 completely obliterates it. (See **Cusick**, page 5)

**Pioneer**, from page 1  
*Pioneer*.

While public investment in freight rail infrastructure can be in the public's interest, it is not appropriate to allow Class I freight haulers to independently determine what investments are required to improve passenger rail, according to AORTA Vice Pres. Jim Long.

AORTA's letter to Wyden pointed out that "some of the study's proposed schedules serve Oregon and key cities like Boise at unmarketable times. Long distance trains are critical for the success of Amtrak as they link regional corridors together, but a single train inevitably will pass through some communities in the middle of the night." This problem can be alleviated by a second train scheduled to serve those communities at more reasonable times. "A second train provides the frequency and choice that passengers need and increases the productivity of staffed stations where they exist."

"For example, as Portland to Boise has long been identified as an Amtrak corridor, now is the time to think about a second train providing day/evening service in each direction in combination with the *Pioneer*...[R]idership would be significantly more than just double. It would grow exponentially."

"The study does not show how feeder bus connections at key locations could enhance the ridership and utility of a restored *Pioneer*. Bus connections might be established by contracting with existing carriers."

Leap referred to Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo, who, according to the November 2009 issue of **Trains**, said "Amtrak and the states must shake off assumptions of the past and move forcefully into a new era of passenger rail...it's time to be bold."

Senator Wyden responded to the study by declaring that the issues of cost and ridership need to be more fully explored before Congress can make a decision. In a letter to Amtrak Pres. Joseph Boardman, Wyden said, "It is apparent that the *Pioneer* has the potential to greatly benefit the state of Oregon by providing an alternative means of passenger transportation...however, the current report does not fully explore several important issues, thus preventing Congress from making an educated decision about the line."

Wyden told Boardman that the projections for required infrastructure improvements on the Union Pacific corridor need to be obtained from "a trusted independent source."

Senator Mike Crapo (R-ID) has also written to Boardman questioning the cost figures cited in the report. He noted that projected ridership in the report is 30% lower than actual ridership before the *Pioneer* was discontinued 12 years ago. Senator Crapo said Idaho, Oregon and Utah have all experienced 41% growth in population along the route since 1997.

Another factor that would be expected to indicate higher ridership numbers is the dramatic reduction in intercity bus service over the route in the past decade.

"The passenger rail experts I have contacted say that there are many more creative and less expensive ways to start and operate the *Pioneer*," Crapo added. "The report needs to be reworked so that its assumptions can withstand scrutiny and comparison with the other fifteen long distance trains that Amtrak operates. The goal for the study should be to develop a blueprint to reinstate the *Pioneer*...at the lowest capital investment cost that supports safe and efficient operation and to quickly grow the ridership to a level that will bring a fare box recovery and the net cost per passenger mile to the median for Amtrak long-distance trains."

Crapo said the draft report contains too many "unanswered questions, broad assumptions and rough cost estimates" to stand as is and should be updated. He points to language from the report that suggests capital improvement figures are subject to "significant uncertainty."

"Idahoans favor reinstating the *Pioneer*...at a reasonable cost. I pledge to work with Amtrak to determine how to make this important intercity route feasible and sustainable and look forward to your responses to my questions and the completed study," Crapo's letter concluded.

In October 2008 Senator Wyden led a bipartisan group of members of Congress in urging then Amtrak Pres. Alex Kummant to expedite a study into reopening passenger service along the *Pioneer* route. Wyden was joined by Crapo, Representatives Mike Simpson (R-ID), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and Greg Walden (R-OR).

One possible source of funding to assist in the effort to bring passenger rail service back to eastern Oregon and southern Idaho is the federal Build America Bonds Act. The Act, introduced by Wyden, is a major transportation infrastructure initiative designed to create millions of jobs, generate billions in economic activity and save thousands of lives by improving transportation safety. According to Wyden, "Build America

Bonds would provide a one-time federal bonding program of \$50 billion in additional funding for all types of transportation including roads, bridges, rail, mass transit and ports. This funding would be in addition to the dollars states receive from the Federal Transportation Trust Fund."

(The *Pioneer* restoration study is available by going to Amtrak.com, clicking on Inside Amtrak at the bottom of the page, clicking on Reports & Documents on the left, and selecting the *Pioneer* Service Study link.)

In the next newsletter we will have a critique of Amtrak's *North Coast Hiawatha* restoration study. To view the study go to Amtrak.com, click on Inside Amtrak at the bottom of the page, click on Reports & Documents on the left, and select the *North Coast Hiawatha* Service Study link.

## The strength of our transportation system lies in networks

The following was posted on the Progressive Railroading blog by Kevin Brubaker, deputy director of the Environmental Policy and Law Center (eplc.org)

As America embarks on its first investment in passenger rail in decades, it is important to remember that the strength of our transportation system lies not in single corridors, but in networks. The less reliant we are on a single corridor or mode, the stronger our transportation system.

Thus, when critics of high speed rail point to the small portion of Americans who will use a particular train, they are missing the point.

Many components of America's transportation infrastructure with local and regional, if not national, significance carry only a small percentage of regional travelers or trips:

- America's busiest airport (Atlanta) handles only six percent of domestic boardings. Dallas, Denver and Los Angeles each handle less than three percent.
- Interstate 494 in Minnesota serves popular destinations such as the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, the Mall of America, and growing suburbs. Yet only seven percent of all trips made in the Twin Cities metro region utilize I-494.
- The Capital Beltway, the busy circumferential highway dividing Washington, D.C., from reality, carries less than 11 percent of area commuters. Replacing a single bridge along this road cost \$2.5 billion.

(See **Strength**, page 6)

**All Aboard Washington Officers**

Loren Herrigstad, Centralia..President .....360 736-5783 ..lbhrgstd@isomedia.com  
 Jim Hamre, Puyallup..Vice President .....253 848-2473 ..jimhamre@mindspring.com  
 Rocky Shay, Federal Way..Secretary.....253 925-2085 ..HarmonShay@aol.com  
 Harvey Bowen, Seattle..Treasurer.....206 322-2729 ..harveyb@allaboardwashington.org

Lloyd Flem, Olympia..  
 Executive Director.....360 943-8333 ..washarp@q.com  
 Office FAX.....360 943-0136  
 Address.....3704 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave SE, Olympia 98501

Jim Hamre, Puyallup..Newsletter Editor .....253 848-2473 ..jimhamre@mindspring.com  
 Warren Yee, Seattle..E-newsletter .....206 723-0259 ..washarp@earthlink.net  
 Zack Willhoite, Puyallup..Membership Director .....zackw@allaboardwashington.org

All are evening numbers, except Lloyd's, which is available 8:00 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  
 All Aboard Washington: AllAboardWashington.org  
 NARP: www.narprail.org  
 NARP Hotline: www.narprail.org/cms/index.php/hotline/  
 Amtrak: www.amtrak.com  
 Amtrak *Cascades*: www.amtrakcascades.com  
 Sound Transit: www.soundtransit.org

**Coran**, from page 1

ARRA stimulus funding to purchase additional tilting trainsets for the Northwest Corridor (though the purchase of new equipment will require a competitive bid process). Wisconsin does have options for two more trainsets if the long-proposed service between Milwaukee and Madison finally moves ahead.

Just this past spring, our existing trainsets received their final permanent equipment design waiver from the Federal Railroad Administration. It took ten years. Though testing has shown this generation of Talgo equipment to be at least as safe as conventional U.S. equipment, it does not achieve its crash-worthiness in the manner prescribed by decades-old FRA standards. Coran noted that in the U.S. the emphasis is on how the equipment survives a crash, where in Europe there is much more emphasis on crash avoidance. The U.S. has long had its 800,000 pound buff strength (end-to-end crushing of a rail car) standard. However, there is no consideration of what happens if the 800,000 pound crushing limit is reached: severe failure of the car. European passenger rail equipment (including the Talgos) incorporates energy absorbing crush zones into the design, much like modern automobiles.

Talgo's new Series VIII trainsets are compliant with FRA crashworthiness standards. The Obama Administration has made it clear to FRA that it is not to stand in the way of importing safe high-quality high speed rail equipment into the U.S. As our country moves to Positive Train Control on major corridors, including all lines hosting passenger train service, the U.S. will hopefully start moving more toward the European model of making crash avoidance a higher priority.

Wabtec Industries and Talgo have begun discussions on designing and building a new high speed passenger lo-

comotive. The *Cascades* need a locomotive specifically designed for the Talgo trainsets to take full advantage of increased speeds through curves. The existing EMD F59PHI locomotives put too much forces on the rails to allow the full amount of tilting that the trainsets are authorized for.

Coran was asked about the continuing refurbishment of the Talgo trainsets. He noted that the coaches have gone through an overhaul. New and improved seats were installed. They are covered in leather, which provides better durability than cloth. New carpeting and wall coverings have also been installed.

Next up is refurbishment of the Bistro food service cars. This will happen in 2010. Each car will be reconfigured to make it more user friendly for both the passengers and the food service crews.

Other improvements will include upgrade of the GPS system on the trains. The movie system may be removed, but that is still being studied. The monitors are wearing out, the system is old VCR technology and fewer people are watching the movies, as many passengers now carry on laptops and other personal movie devices. They would like to implement Wi-Fi on the trains but there are still coverage issues in some of the more rural segments of the runs.

Two resolutions were proposed at the meeting. They stated All Aboard Washington's complete support for restoration of both the *Pioneer* (Seattle-Portland-Boise-Salt Lake, with connections to the *California Zephyr*) and the *North Coast Hiawatha* (Seattle-Spokane-Missoula-Billings-Bismarck-Twin Cities-Chicago). Both resolutions were adopted on a unanimous voice vote of the members present at the meeting.

There was also an election to fill the five seats on the All Aboard Washington board of directors whose terms expire at

the end of 2009. There were five candidates for the five seats and all were elected on a unanimous voice vote.

Reelected to the board are:

- Harvey Bowen, Seattle
- Loren Herrigstad, Centralia
- Robert Lawrence, Mill Creek

New member of the board are:

- Kathy Davis, Des Moines
- Michael Skehan, Lummi Island

Congratulations to both the new members and the returning members of the All Aboard Washington board.

**Record day at King St. Station!**

Amtrak's Gay Banks Olson was interviewed on the KIRO 7 TV news on Thanksgiving Eve from King St. Station. She told the reporter that this was the busiest day at the station in Amtrak's history and that passenger boardings and arrivals surpassed the previous busiest day by about 500 people. This previous record was set one year ago on the day before Thanksgiving. Even with the 10 extra trips Amtrak added between Seattle and Portland for the Thanksgiving holiday, virtually all trains were sold out on Wednesday, Thursday morning and Sunday of the long holiday weekend. And almost all the trains were on time.

**Cusick**, from page 3

There are many excellent, non-freeway alignments. So now is the time to figure things out.

And then there is my old favorite, the Woodinville Subdivision.

So, Santa, my request is simple. Not for more trains, more railcars, more routes, more stations, more light rail, more commuter rail. We seem to be on the right track with that, what you can bring us is Gumption!

The **Boldness**, the *Initiative* to keep these ideas rolling forward!

I'm looking forward to the New Year!

All Aboard Washington  
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## All Aboard News

**January 28:** Transportation Education Day in Olympia with Transportation Choices Coalition and other balanced transportation groups. Gather at United Churches, 11<sup>th</sup> and Capitol Way starting about 9:00 a.m. before meeting our legislators. Travel on the *Cascades* and we'll provide transportation to downtown. Contact Lloyd Flem for more details.

**March 13:** Annual joint spring rail conference with Northwest NARP and the Assoc. of Oregon Rail Transit Advocates in **Seattle**. The luncheon and meeting will be at the Red Lion Hotel on Fifth Avenue. Our theme will be High Speed Rail for the Northwest. A registration flyer will be in the next newsletter. Mark the date on your calendar and plan to attend what will surely be a great meeting.

All Aboard Washington welcomed the following new member in October: Karen Keller of Lacey. Help AAWA boost our membership by giving friends and family an annual membership. Send their names and addresses, along with your check, to us and we'll take care of notifying the recipients of your generosity. Remember, all contributions to AAWA

are tax deductible as allowed by federal law.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include: Lloyd Flem, Warren Yee, Jim Cusick, Dan McFarling, Zack Willhoite, Mark Meyer and Bob Lawrence.

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### Strength, from page 4

- On a typical business day, only two percent of people entering Manhattan's Central Business District drive over the Brooklyn Bridge.
- And on the West Coast, trans-San

Francisco Bay trips through the Bay Bridge Corridor, across the San Mateo Howard Bridge and over the Dumbarton Bridge comprise only four percent of all regional trips.

Nobody would seriously suggest that any of these pieces of transportation infrastructure is "wasteful" because it serves such a small portion of its potential users. Let's not let critics go unchallenged in saying the same about rail investments.

### Sandpoint Station update

On Nov. 18, the Sandpoint, ID city council voted to enter into negotiations with BNSF Railway to purchase the Sandpoint Amtrak station, and to seek a commitment from Amtrak to continue using the station as a stop for the *Empire Builder*. Construction of a highway bypass crammed against the west side of the station and deterioration of the building had prompted Amtrak to consider moving its stop out of town. When local citizens learned of the plan, they were moved to action, led by Aric Spence of the Sandpoint Historic Preservation Commission. For more information visit [www.sandpointtrainstation.com](http://www.sandpointtrainstation.com).