

WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

JUNE-JULY 2005

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Publication of the Washington Association of Rail Passengers
A Not-for-profit Consumer Organization
"Moving forward... On Rail."

Amtrak submits its reform plan; requests \$1.82 bill. for '06 funding; Montana governor hosts town hall meetings to support *Empire Builder*

Amtrak revealed its Strategic Reform Initiatives and FY 06 Grant Request at the Senate Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine on Apr. 21. The plan was developed by the Amtrak board—now all appointed by Pres. Bush. Though it has provisions that have riled groups as diverse of rail labor and corporate executives at the Class I railroads, the plan is in stark contrast to the "reform" proposed by the administration (see the April/May 2005 **WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS**) that would provide zero funding for Amtrak and force the company into bankruptcy. Here are some highlights of the proposal:

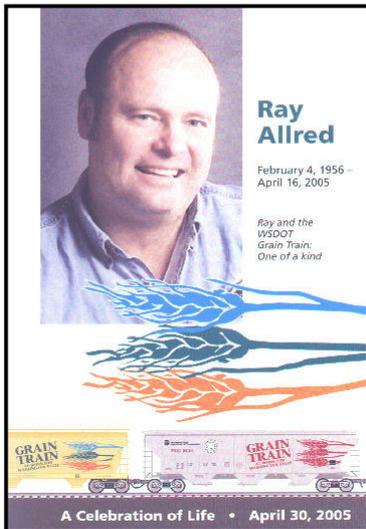
- \$1.82 bill. federal grant for 2006.
- National long distance trains would continue to be federally funded though the amount provided for operations and capitol would decline from \$537 mill. in 2006 to \$450 mill. in 2011. Amtrak is now developing a plan to improve the performance of the long distance trains. It will launch this effort with the *Empire Builder* in August. It will also develop performances metrics the trains will have to meet, starting in 2008. Routes that can't be improved to meet the performance measures will be shut down if states don't come forward with assistance.
- States will gradually assume 100% responsibility for corridor operating costs, including overhead costs (finance, human resources, government affairs, etc.) now borne fully by Amtrak. This will transition into place through 2011. However, for this process to start, the federal government must enact a capital match program for the states comparable to other modes (80/20) no later than 2008.
- The federal government would be responsible to bring the Northeast Corridor to a state of good repair. By 2011, commuter rail agencies using the NEC would pay their full share of costs for operations and annual capital needs. Amtrak would continue to own the NEC.
- Amtrak will undertake a number of customer service, outsourcing and work rule initiatives to lower operating costs.
- Amtrak operations would be opened up to competition.
- Congressional enactment of major labor and tort reforms are re- (See **Amtrak**, page 4)

Legislature passes balanced transportation funding package

As one of its final acts, the 2005 Legislature passed a tax and funding package, the Transportation Partnership Program, that builds on the Nickel Plan adopted two years ago. This 16-year plan is funded mostly by a 9.5 cent increase in the gas tax phased in over four years and new weigh fees of \$10-30 for autos and light trucks. The package provides partial funding for many major projects in the Puget Sound metro area such as the Alaskan Way viaduct, Evergreen Point bridge, I-405 and SR 167. The rest of the funding for these mega projects assumes passage of a regional transportation package that would include various taxes and probably also tolls.

Of special interest to rail and transit advocates is the funding allotted for modes of transportation other than highways. This package will provide more state funding for local transit than any in state history, including \$10.2 mill. in the 2005-07 biennium. Among passenger rail projects funded during the life of the plan are:

- Rebuild the three state-owned *Cascades* trainsets, funded at \$17 mill. in 2009.
- Complete King St. Station track and train platform improvements to allow eight trains in the station at one time, funded at \$15 mill. in 2006.
- Construct high speed crossovers on the BNSF mainline near Chehalis and Napavine to eventually support the 7th, 8th and 9th *Cascades* roundtrips, funded at \$7.4 mill. in 2014.
- Pt. Defiance bypass through south Tacoma and Lakewood (Phase 1), which would reduce running times by six minutes and is funded at \$45.9 mill. in 2009.
- Build a commuter rail station at (See **Legislature**, page 4)



Ray Allred, a passionate passenger and freight rail advocate with both WashARP and the WSDOT Rail Office, passed away suddenly and unexpectedly on April 16. All his family and friends are deeply saddened by the loss. See Lloyd Flem's column on page 2 for his tribute to Ray. The above cover of Ray's memorial service program was designed by Gerry Rasmussen.



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

Legislature 2005: victory!; The loss of friends; Now WashARPer, you gotta help

The most pleasant surprise from the recently completed 2005 legislative session was the last minute passage of the comprehensive multimodal transportation funding and budget package. Literally to the last minute it appeared the House would fail to fund additional needed transportation investments. However, 11th hour pressure, brought about by a wide variety of transportation advocates; the business, labor and green communities; and good government groups, helped convince sufficient numbers of both Democrats and Republicans from the House to cast, which is in many cases, a politically difficult but essential affirmative vote.

Governor Christine Gregoire also weighted in on behalf of the transportation package, persuading several traditional conservative Republicans to vote yes.

Particular thanks is owed to Senate Transportation chairwoman Mary Margaret Haugen (D-Camano Island) and ranking member Dan Swecker (R-Rochester), and to House Transportation chairman Ed Murray (D-Seattle) and ranking member Bev Woods (R-Kingston) for their strong advocacy of critically needed transportation investments despite the political risks. Special thanks also to conservative Republican Sen. Joyce Mulliken of Ephrata who correctly pointed out that the recent huge leaps in motor fuel costs benefit multi-national oil companies and often unfriendly foreign governments while the relatively modest increases in motor fuel taxes and weight fees will apply directly to more jobs, safety improvements and more efficient movement of goods and people throughout our state.

Of special interest to WashARPer members are the funds generated through vehicle weight fees that may be used for all modes of transportation including, of course, rail. It is important to note that the funding will continue to grow not just our successful and respected intercity passenger rail program but also the less known but locally vital freight rail

program which tends to benefit areas of the state where traffic congestion is far less an issue than the need for good jobs and economic development. This is exactly what these mostly shortline freight rail investments have brought and will bring into the future.

The only fly in the ointment is the proposed initiatives promoted by KVI and Tim Eyman which attempt to totally overturn this profoundly important legislative work. Coaches orders: if you care about the future of your state **DO NOT** sign these anti-rail and anti-transportation initiative petitions. Should they make it to the ballot please campaign and vote against them. The actual increase passed by the Legislature to the individual vehicle owner and driver would be small, around one percent of the total cost of vehicle ownership, an increase that's miniscule. In terms of the legislation itself, a very minor disappointment was that the start of another Amtrak *Cascades* trip between Seattle and Portland, originally scheduled for 1 July 2005, has been postponed one year. However, it would have been difficult, given on-going Sound Transit track investments between

(T)he funding will continue to grow not just our successful and respected intercity passenger rail program but also the less known but locally vital freight rail program...

Tacoma and Seattle, and other infrastructure projects south of Tacoma, for service to have been smoothly brought into operation quite as quickly as this July.



Since the last newsletter, we have lost three loyal WashARPer. WashARPer's most senior member, Mrs. Estella Wicks, age 97, of Centralia, passed away peacefully in early May. I was personally privileged to be close friends with Mrs. Wicks, her late husband, her daughter and, particularly, her son, Elliot K. Wicks PhD, now of Reston, Virginia. I got to speak at Mrs. Wicks' memorial service on 15 May and emphasized her strong support of passenger rail service. Her daughter-in-law Kathy told of meeting her then future mother-in-law at Grand Central Terminal in New York City following Mrs. Wicks' cross-country train trip which preceded Elliot and Kathy's wedding. She remained intellectually bright and curious until weeks before her passing.

A more shocking loss was that of Duane Carley. Duane, in his 70s, was long devoted, both professionally and personally, to the growth and success of

rail in our country. He had a long and distinguished career as a railroader, working for eastern Washington shortline railroads as late as 2004. Delightful about Duane was not only his comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the rail mode, but his enthusiastic devotion to promoting and administering its growing success. Our condolences and best wishes to his widow Betty, whom we hope is able to keep helping to push for those things her late husband so brilliantly supported.

The most devastating loss to my family and I, WashARPer and the professional rail community was the totally unexpected death of Ray Allred on 16 April. As a rail advocate and as a freight rail specialist at WSDOT, Big Ray is simply irreplaceable. I was privileged to organize and administer, with considerable help, Ray's memorial service at Olympia's Westminster Presbyterian Church on 30 April. WashARPer, the DOT Rail Office and many others whom Ray had touched shared their thoughts on the immense contributions to rail advocacy and to the many successes of the state's freight rail program as a result of his great profes-

sional knowledge and matchless relentless enthusiasm for his work. Leading Ray's service was nationally known railroad artist J. Craig Thorpe, who is also an ordained Presbyterian

minister and a WashARPer board member. Tenor soloist was WashARPer Rich DeGarmo.

Projects for which Ray had major responsibilities include the state grain train program, state acquisition of the Palouse River and Coulee City RR, improvements to the Toppenish, Simcoe and Western RR to serve the Yakama sawmill at White Swan, the Port of Grays Harbor grain export loop track, Tacoma Rail's Morton line restoration and the Winlock glass plant spur track. All of these are vital for economic development and for preservation and growth of family wage jobs in these more economically depressed rural areas of our state.

Those at the service were moved by Tacoma Rail Superintendent Dennis Dean's announcement that the railroad will rename Fredrickson Jct. to Ray Allred Jct., an honor for a true railroad man. The WashARPer message, prepared by Chuck Mott, was beautifully presented (with additional thoughts of his own) by Dale Menchhofer. Also inspiring was the Amtrak decision to honor Ray with a tradi- (See **Flem**, page 5)



The View Down the Tracks

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with Jim Cusick

Extra (Train)!
Extra (Train)!
Read all about it!

Boy has this been a busy two months! I think I need to find more inside sources willing to give me the dirt on upcoming rail service upgrades. However, I surmised that something was up by the clues I was uncovering on the Internet. I suppose since I don't tell Sound Transit, WSDOT or anyone else all the secrets I know (yeah right), they don't have to inform me all the time. Finally, for us in the north end, we have another Sounder train that started running June 6. It will be interesting to see how this changes ridership, since the departure times will fit commuter's schedules a bit better. Plus, having at least two Sounder trains will make potential riders feel a little more secure that if they miss one train, they still have the other one to catch. That reminds me, I have to let my friends know.

Along with that, there is the RailPlus program. This means the homebound commuter actually has 3 options. The two Sounder trains at 4:33 and 5:13 p.m., plus the *Cascades* 516 leaving at 5:30. That means north end Sounder patrons are catching up to the south end with almost the same service. Hmmm, another case of trying to keep up with the Joneses. I think the south end riders should demand more service [Editor note: We have!].

SR 522 and ST Phase 2

And I thought I was the only unabashed rail cheerleader on the Bothell Highway. I've been watching the ST Board meetings for Phase 2, and I've been impressed by ST board member and Kenmore councilman Jack Crawford's support of the high capacity transit (HCT) option for SR 522. A letter writer to the local Bothell newspaper from Duvall demanded the WSDOT face facts and build a freeway on SR 522 because he wants an uncongested commute. I'll make a deal with him. If I have to put up with a zillion commuters going through my town, maybe they can take a conveyance that would keep my neighborhood more livable – LIGHT RAIL. Jack, you keep Kenmore focused, and I'll work on the Bothell city council.

This brings up a major point about the way a rail system is viewed. In general it has been perceived that to make a rail corridor valuable it must have high end to end ridership. However, that's not the way we view the road system. In fact, many people are surprised to learn that the percentage of people who take I-405 from end to end is only 1%. Many trips start in the middle and exit at another point not very far from the entry point. Also, major roadways feed into the freeway, such as SR 9, SR 522, and SR 527.

The current view Sound Transit is taking is to have any HCT on SR 522 end at the Bothell UW/Cascadia campus. This is the wrong place to end it. What should be happening is that any terminus should be at an area that would be easily accessible and convenient for commuters in areas like Duvall, Snohomish, Monroe, Silver Lake and other places.

With that in mind, this brings me to my favorite subject, what else but...

Eastside Commuter Rail

It seems so simple doesn't it? Here is a continuous transportation corridor, stretching from Tukwila all the way to

If this opportunity for an Eastside rail corridor is passed up, then we will have proven how short-sighted we can be in this region.

Snohomish, with tracks already in place, there to be acquired. For those of you who have followed my column, you know this issue has been on the table for a while.

Well, King County Executive Ron Sims didn't bother to inform me of his plans for this corridor, or for that matter the Spirit of Washington Dinner Train owner, Eric Temple either.

Just to recap, in 1992 a study was conducted of the potential for an Eastside commuter rail service. That study involved the Woodinville Subdivision (a.k.a. the "Spirit of Washington Dinner Train" route) from south Kirkland to Renton. It essentially replaced that segment of then Metro Route 340, which started at Aurora Village, around through Bothell, Kirkland, Bellevue, Renton, Tukwila and Burien. The ridership results were low, especially when compared with the upgrade costs of the line. However, as a final part of the report, with a direct connection to the Tacoma-Seattle Sounder service, ridership rose dramatically. The report recommended further study of this segment if Eastside commuter rail is pursued.

During the time I was on the I-405 Corridor Program Citizens Committee, I asked for further study of this option. However, I asked for this study to include service from north of Woodinville, and with a bit of insistence, specifically what ridership would be with that direct connection to the south end.

However, detailed cost estimates and this particular option's cost/benefit analysis were never performed. Why? Because one of the tenets of the program was that any municipality had veto power and Renton used it. (Early in the process, Kemper Freeman's "Reduce Congestion Now" proposal – which had 700 lane miles of freeway, along with 700 lane miles of arterial improvements for the whole Puget Sound Region – was removed from consideration and study because a few cities objected. I never did find out who specifically objected, but I sure remember the meeting when that was announced.)

At a later date, the City of Renton and the Kennydale Neighborhood Association (KNA) submitted a letter to the program requesting that any consideration of the Woodinville subdivision for corridor improvement not be included in the I-405 Environmental Impact Statement. End of Eastside Commuter Rail study (again).

However, rather than just cry "NIMBY!" I think it would be useful to understand the objections of those in the Kennydale area. During the program I spoke with Kim Browne, who represented the KNA, and made the observation that the option that was chosen still managed a good number of property takes in the neighborhood. I made the comment that they already had the freeway in their backyard, so what if they used the Woodinville sub instead of the 4 extra lanes. She then made a convincing argument. The Kennydale neighborhood has two backyards to deal with. Dealing with the devil you know is better than dealing with the one you don't know.

So here's my idea for some solutions to this problem. There are eight grade crossings in that area, and each train that passes through there sounds its horn for each one. Also, there are many properties where the view from the train is right into the back windows of those houses. While the view beyond the houses is superb from the train, there is a legitimate concern for privacy when the frequency of train riders increases. At one meeting another KNA representative made the statement that sight lines were important (See **Cusick**, page 5)



At the May 14 WashARP meeting in Tacoma, our featured speaker was Tom Till, left, of the Discovery Institute. The panel,



above, featured, from the left, Ken Uznanski, WSDOT Rail Office; DJ Mitchell, BNSF assistant vice president for passenger operations; Ed Barnes, state Transportation Commission; and Lloyd Flem.

Tom Till's address outlined a long list of problems with the Amtrak model over the 34 years of the company's existence. Some of the issues he cited include:

- modeling Amtrak after the private railroads' passenger service.
- rail union rules that have changed little over the years.
- conflicts in Amtrak's charter on what it should do (make a profit vs. run trains to serve the public).
- cannot properly fund passenger rail within the current federal budget process.
- poor management and lack of transparency and accountability.

Till noted, "Congress will do Amtrak reform even though it's their fault reform is needed." He said we need to get beyond the era of Amtrak being a toy of politicians and talked about the need for better governance and competition. He suggests the long distance trains be turned into luxury excursions operated by private companies with a couple of coaches added for real passengers. Many rail advocates dismiss this idea and its comparison to the Alaska RR, whose services do not operate overnight.

Ken Uznanski said the states have taken the lead in passenger rail corridor development, but continue to wait for a federal partnership funded at 80/20 as with other modes. Market demands are there in some places, including the Northwest Corridor, to eventually get to operational self sufficiency. Uznanski stated Washington state is willing to discuss covering full operating costs if an 80/20 federal/state partnership is implemented. Both Amtrak and BNSF have been strong partners in the Northwest. The local Amtrak people are an important resource that we don't want to lose.

Uznanski noted the Legislature just reaffirmed that investing in passenger and freight rail is important. The state will invest \$460 mill. in passenger rail over the next 10 years.

He said the long distance trains are vital

to rural areas and link the corridors together into a national system. Multistate compacts are unworkable; the long distance trains must remain the responsibility of the federal government.

DJ Mitchell said that Till was more right than wrong, but BNSF supports the American Assoc. of Railroads principle that Amtrak will be the sole operator of intercity passenger trains on freight tracks. He stated that we're doing things right in the Northwest with the partnership of BNSF, WSDOT, Sound Transit and Amtrak making infrastructure improvements that will allow dozens of additional intercity and commuter passenger trains while maintaining and enhancing freight rail service. He said, "Everyone benefits from a healthy freight railroad system." Mitchell also thinks there needs to be more review of regulatory requirements and liability and insurance issues.

Ed Barnes noted the turmoil in both the airline and trucking industries and stated we need to greatly expand our nation's rail infrastructure. We need to continue to eliminate highway/rail grade crossings to keep both freight and passenger trains moving. Barnes said that while structural changes are needed in the way Amtrak operates, the Bush Administration reform plan is a mistake.

Lloyd Flem stated rail needs to play a bigger role in our transportation system. Rail is important to making communities more livable and spurring economic development. He noted that virtually all modern democracies support rail at much higher levels than the U.S. It is nonsense that "only passenger rail is subsidized."

Amtrak, from page 1

quested. Amtrak would move new employees from railroad retirement to social security with the possible addition of a 401(k) plan and allow labor contracts to terminate when they expire rather than the old contract continuing in force until a new deal is reached. Punitive damages should be limited in some personal injury lawsuits.

Though there are certainly good parts to the plan for rail advocates, there are parts that are troubling to many groups. Amtrak says the plan must be viewed in the whole but it is certain that a number of provisions will have difficulty in Congress, even with supporters of passenger rail service. To view the plan go to www.amtrak.com, click on Press and Media, then Other Reports.

On June 1 and 2, Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer (D) and Lt. Gov. John Bohlinger (R) hosted a whistle stop tour across Montana's Hi-Line aboard the *Empire Builder*. Town hall meetings were held in Glasgow (with 200 attendees), Havre (300) and Whitefish (100). Brief events were also held while the train was stopped at Malta (100) and Shelby (100) and East Glacier (200). Sen. Max Baucus (D) and Rep.

Denny Rehberg (R) attended some events. Both, plus Sen. Conrad Burns (R), had representatives at all meetings. Also present were a number of state legislators and mayors, Amtrak board Chairman David Laney, NARP Pres. George Chilson and Asst. Director Dave Johnson.

The events were well received by the citizens who universally expressed support for the *Builder* and for Amtrak. They substantiated the importance of the train to the communities and people it serves.

Here are a few quotes from the various events:

Gov. Schweitzer: "We're here to say that Amtrak has worked. It's a critical part of our transportation system, and how dare you suggest that we would zero Amtrak out. If (Mineta) would look at places like North Dakota, Montana and Idaho, those places all voted for his boss. And this is the thanks we get from this administration?"

David Laney: "I'll be frank with you. We're at risk. We don't want to be the ones responsible for the disappearance of passenger rail in this country. I guarantee we'll all regret it."

Rep. Rehberg: "Without subsidies we wouldn't have the west. We could not survive as a state. Not only do we not agree with the president, we're going to stick it in his ear."

George Chilson: "We need to reframe the debate. It's time to stop talking about what we've got. It's time to start talking about expanding passenger rail service. It's time to push back. Those who want to cut passenger service know the cost of everything and the value of nothing. Mineta is trying to divide the country by region, or create conflict between Americans in urban and rural areas."

Legislature, from page 1

Stanwood to support temporary service north of Everett during construction of I-5 HOV lanes in Snohomish County, funded at \$5.0 mill. in 2007. Scope and benefits of this project have yet to be defined.

- Build an interim Sounder station at Mukilteo until the permanent facility can be constructed, funded at \$1.5 mill. in 2006.
- Construct additional sidings at the Swift Customs Facility at the Blaine border crossing to reduce congestion and speed movement of both passenger and freight trains, funded at \$3.0 in 2006.

There are also numerous projects to improve shortline freight railroads throughout the state and to continue adding highway/rail grade separations in areas such as the Green River Valley, Kennewick and Yakima.

As more details on these projects become available we will provide the information in the newsletter. These projects are in addition to those funded by the 2003 Nickel Package.

See Lloyd Flem's column for his take on the political and economic aspects of this plan.

For more information, go to www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/Funding/2005/default.htm.

This is the last summer for the **Lewis and Clark Explorer** rail excursion between Portland and Astoria. This very popular trip operates Friday-Monday through Oct. 3. Visit www.lcbo.net/train.go.html for details and ticketing.

Flem, from page 2

tional multi-mile whistle salute as Ray, taking his final earthly trip on the southbound *Coast Starlight* to his Sacramento family home, passed friends and family gathered for a salute at Centennial Station. That station now has growing in Ray's honor a beautiful and sturdy Austrian pine overlooking the BNSF mainline. A plaque will soon be in placing reading: "Ray Allred—All American in football, rail-roading and friendship."

Special thanks to Teresa Graham, my wife Darleen and many others who helped in honoring Ray and his parents and brother as we said goodbye to our dear friend. The memory of Ray's



On May 2, family and friends salute Ray Allred at Olympia-Lacey's Centennial Station as he makes his final journey home to Sacramento aboard the *Coast Starlight*. The flags were lowered in tribute to Ray.

Photo by Zack Willhoite

friendship and spirit will continue to guide and inspire my rail work for many years to come.



Given my temporary physical limitations, I'm again asking for WashARP members to do some of the public work (that you should probably be doing anyway!). For example: letters, phone calls, emails, **VISITS** with your state legislators. In your contacts, thank them for the passage of the transportation package, granting that many, for a variety of reasons, may have voted no. Remember

praise and push!

On the federal level, we need to continue communications with our Congressional delegation. They must hear from us on the need for the preservation and growth of intercity passenger rail service and long term investments in rail infrastructure. A special note of thanks to Sen. Patty Murray, who has been a stalwart supporter of intercity passenger rail, might be in order.

In recent days many of you have offered to me not only your cards and best wishes but also offers of assistance in performing some of the routine rail advocacy chores. Thank you so much and I will be taking you up on your kind offers! [Editor's note: Lloyd had major neck surgery in mid-May. While his recuperation will take some time, he's thinking about "The Cause" all the time. He dictated this month's report from his hospital bed and it was ably keyboarded by Zack Willhoite into his laptop.]

Cusick, from page 3

to the residents and that was why her position was to not have a light rail line on that right-of-way. I visited the area, though, and noticed that there already is a high-voltage trunk line running along Lake Washington Boulevard.

At one of the open houses in Kenydale, a resident was discussing this issue with a staff worker. Of course my ears perked up, and I strolled over and decided to help. The discussion follows:

Her: How can you run a train on that line? The rails are all bumpy, and they make that klickety-clack noise all the time.

Me: Well, nowadays, they have continuous welded rail and they can fix the roadbed, and by making sure the tracks are well maintained, it makes it much quieter (objection #1 solved).

Her: Well, they're always blowing the horn, there are a lot of crossings there.

Me: Good point, I've thought about

that. My idea has been to take out the crossings and replace them with one overpass where Lake Washington Boulevard is at a point high enough for a bridge, and then connect the individual roads that had crossings with one frontage road on that side of the tracks (objection #2 solved).

I then went on to discuss the positives and negatives of the two rail choices. Commuter rail would be less frequent, with no overhead wires, (good for the neighborhood), but diesel locomotives tend to be noisier. However, even though light rail had overhead wires, the good side is that they are very quiet, but they would operate with greater frequency; about every 10 minutes or so there would be a train.

Her answer to that last statement was "Well, then I would ride it!" I have to admit I was quite surprised at her positive response. That seems to be the thing people are looking for in their rail systems: reliable, frequent service.

That rail line has the same demographics as the rail line the Utah Transit Authority purchased from Union Pacific in the Salt Lake valley to create the first segment of the highly successful TRAX light rail system.

We have the opportunity now to start, at relatively low cost, the same type of system, and I applaud Ron Sims efforts to retain this corridor. However, the **RAILS MUST REMAIN**. I also expect my county executive, Aaron Reardon, to take care of the Snohomish County portion of the rail line. Intercepting commuters from Silver Lake, Monroe and Snohomish in Snohomish is the way to deal with future growth, not building a freeway through my or anyone else's neighborhood.

If this opportunity for an Eastside rail corridor is passed up, then we will have proven how short-sighted we can be in this region. I've seen signs that at least the Sound Transit board has a long-range vision. It's the one that's actually working. Let's keep that ball rolling!

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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: www.washarp.org
- 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

July 9: WashARP meeting at 12:45 p.m. at **Andy's Diner**, 2963 4th Ave. S., **Seattle** ((just north of Spokane St. and on Metro routes 23 and 174).

July 21: Commuter Rail Group meeting at 6:30 p.m. at **Andy's Diner**, 2963 4th Ave. S., **Seattle** (transit information above)

August 13: WashARP meeting at noon at **Jim Hamre's home**, 13307 104th Ave. Ct. E. on Puyallup's South Hill. Bring a potluck item. Hamburgers and beverages will be provided. Call or email for more information. See p. 5.

WashARP welcomed the following new members in March and April: Alex Lukshin, Juneau, AK; Arnold Thayer, Elida, OH; Wally Fisher, Olympia; Martin Young, Seattle; C. R. Richardson, Olympia; Margaret Bland, Lacey; Robert Lamont, Lacey; Bill Kelley, Lacey; and the Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce.

Note the new masthead for our newsletter. The new WashARP logo was designed by Brandon Swalley. The typeface for the newsletter name is called "Empire Builder." It was developed by Benn Coifman. Visit www.gnrhs.org/eb_font.htm for more on this font.

WashARP members contributing to this newsletter include Zack Willhoite, Lloyd Flem, Jim Cusick, Mark Meyer, Tony Trifiletti, Craig Thorpe, Stuart Adams, Bob Krebs and Warren Yee.



Photo by Donald M. Stewart/NARP

At the April NARP board meeting in Washington, DC, Stuart Adams, center, WashARP board member and former NARP board member, presents to Amtrak President David Gunn, right, a signed J. Craig Thorpe giclee (zhee-CLAY, a high quality digital reproduction on canvas) of his painting of the eastbound *Empire Builder* meeting a BNSF freight at Essex, MT. NARP President George Chilson looks on. The original work was commissioned by Larry and Lynda Vielleux, owners of the wonderful Izaak Walton Inn at Essex (www.izaakwaltoninn.com). WashARP Chairman Chuck Mott donated the giclee painting and several smaller versions that were presented to other speakers at the meeting.

Speaking to the NARP board, Gunn stated that he is proud of what Amtrak and its employees have accomplished in the last three years. Amtrak has returned to a railroad style organization with seven divisions, each with a superintendent, master mechanic and chief civil engineer. Expenses are flat and the number of employees has been reduced while Amtrak works to grow revenue. The deficit per train mile is decreasing. He outlined the ongoing massive capital investment program. Hundreds of cars and locomotives are being overhauled and major infrastructure improvements are under way in the Northeast

Corridor.

He outlined the Amtrak board's reform plan which was released just the day before he spoke to us. He called the administration's reform plan a "bullet in the back of the head" and said it is impracticable, unfunded and create chaos. He noted the Bush-appointed board (with except of DOT Secretary Mineta) fully supported the plan Amtrak submitted to Congress and has requested \$1.82 bill. in funding for 2006 in contract to the administration's request of zero.

NARP presented its annual Golden Spike award to Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and to Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA). When Blumenauer spoke at the NARP Region 8 meeting in Portland on Mar. 19, he said Amtrak exists today because the American people have stood up for passenger rail service and have stopped Congress and successive administrations from killing it. He noted the Bush Administration has tried to starve Amtrak for four years but is now "putting its foot on the air hose" with its zero dollars request.

Blumenauer said the strength and security of our country depends on giving people the choices they want in transportation, including intercity passenger rail. We have paid a horrible price for our need for oil and must reduce the need for it. He reminded us that all forms of transportation of heavily subsidized by the taxpayers. The airline industry, despite hundreds of billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidy, had a net profit of zero over the last 50 years. But since the Sept. 11 attacks, it is now billions in the hole. He called airport and airline security problems another plus for rail.

He ordered rail advocate to "turn up the heat" on Congress. There is bipartisan support in both houses for passenger rail service and the members of Congress need to hear from their constituents.

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