



# WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

JUNE/JULY 2010

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

## Pt. Defiance Bypass project: WSDOT will now conduct a full Environmental Assessment

WSDOT and the Federal Railroad Administration will now conduct a full project level Environmental Assessment (EA) of the Pt. Defiance Bypass project. The project will reroute Amtrak service away from the scenic run along Commencement Bay and the Tacoma Narrows in favor of the Northern Pacific Railway's original route into Tacoma from Portland. In 2006, a different agency, the Federal Highway Administration, had not required WSDOT to conduct an EA. Criticism by the cities of Lakewood and DuPont over the way WSDOT has proceeded with the project led FRA to order the EA. However, the cities had not previously raised objections during the four years WSDOT has been working on the project. They should have been aware of the scope as DOT has provided ongoing information to the cities and the public.

The \$91 million project is being partially funded by federal stimulus money (part of the \$590 mill. the state is re-

ceiving for high speed rail improvements). This allows the timetable for completion to be moved up from 2019 to 2014.



In March, Sound Transit's contractor is working the rail reconstruction project at the future South Tacoma Sounder Station, near South 60<sup>th</sup> St. Amtrak service will eventually share this route with Sounder.  
*Photo by Jim Hamre*

ceiving for high speed rail improvements). This allows the timetable for completion to be moved up from 2019 to 2014.

"While we are fortunate to have been awarded Recovery Act Funding

to expand Amtrak *Cascades* passenger rail service between Seattle and Portland, it is important that we achieve that goal in cooperation with the cities and local communities along the corridor," said WSDOT Secretary Paula Hammond. "We will all benefit from a deliberate, thorough and transparent process."

WSDOT will create an advisory team to provide input and review the development of the EA. Team members will include representatives from WSDOT, Sound Transit, Pierce County, Joint Base Lewis-McCord, Lakewood and DuPont. Additional public comment will also be solicited during the process.

This is the same route that will be used by Sound Transit's Sounder extension from Tacoma's Freighthouse Square to Lakewood. Sound Transit has already begun reconstruction of parts of the line and is expected to start construction of the D St. to M St. connecting track this summer. That project has not been without controversy either, as Tacoma Dome neighborhood merchants are displeased with ST's design, which includes a berm west of D St. and a bridge over Pacific Ave.

WSDOT's project will build on Sound Transit's work and will provide the needed additional capacity to operate expanded *Cascades* service.

Most people are not happy about losing the scenic Pt. Defiance route for a route that runs through urban neighborhoods and along I-5 through Joint Base Lewis-McCord. Unfortunately, the saving of six minutes in running time with the reroute had previously received all the headlines (and ridicule). The time savings is only a

small part of the reason WSDOT and Amtrak are pursuing this. BNSF has made it clear that further frequency increases of Amtrak's *Cascades* service will not be allowed without moving off the water level route between Tacoma and Nisqually. The reroute is also intended to help improve service reliability and on-time performance (which currently hovers below 60%; the current goal is 80% and the future goal is 90% on-time).

WSDOT held a public open house at Clover Park Technical College on May 17. Brian Bundridge, reporter for [seattletranistblog.com](http://seattletranistblog.com), was at the open house when it started at 4:00 p.m., when many of the public also arrived. (AAWA's Zack Willhoite and Jim Hamre arrived about 5:30, when the crowd has thinned considerably.)

Brian reports that in talking with several people attending the open house, the two big concerns are safety, with trains travelling up to 79 mph on a route where the local freight switching operations do not exceed 10 mph, and noise from train horns.

All grade crossings will be upgraded with state-of-the-art active crossing protection with center medians or curbs to discourage drivers from going around the lowered gates. Nearby traffic signals will be tied into the grade crossing signals to ensure motorists illegally stopping on the tracks have the ability to clear before the train arrives. The crossing protection circuits will be designed to determine train speed so that the same amount of warning time will be provided before the arrival of a train, whether it is travelling at 20 mph or 79 mph.

This same sophisticated grade crossing protection system is currently installed throughout Puyallup, Sumner, Auburn and Kent. Amtrak trains have been passing through the downtowns and residential neighborhoods of these four cities at 79 mph for several years (See **Bypass**, page 4)



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

### **“Waiting on a Train”; Train Day in Our Washington; FRA and APTA; Green Festival-Seattle**

Over the years, I have recommended two books I consider important reading for those serious about American transportation policies and how they have tended to disadvantage rail in favor of roads. The first, by Hart and Spivak, professional engineers, is “The Elephant in the Bedroom” (New Paradigm Books, 1993), which details the degree to which the driving of private motor vehicles is subsidized, in that high-value urban land and municipal services are, in effect, given to motorists and the trucking industry. The second, by Stephen Goddard, is “Getting There” (Basic Books, 1994), which reads like a good novel, and shows how government transportation policies at all levels favored roads and punished rail during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

I now add a third good read, “Waiting on a Train” by James McCommons (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2009). McCommons spent a year riding Amtrak trains across the USA. His book has received good reviews from the highest levels of the library profession and from respected rail journalist Don Phillips, among others.

Jim’s book is not a cheer or puff piece for Amtrak. Based upon his having ridden most of America’s intercity passenger trains, as well as praise, he has some justified concerns about some of Amtrak’s overall approach to rail service and some specific service shortcomings. The book was completed after the 2009 \$8 billion in ARRA (“stimulus”) funding for intercity rail was approved by Congress, but before the funding allocations were made (January 26 of this year) to individual states and groups of states, which of course included our state’s \$590 million.

Based upon his many meetings with rail historians, railroad executives, elected officials, regulators, lobbyists, state DOT rail people and passenger-rail advocates (including me, via phone call and a most pleasant hour plus at Centennial Station), Jim had arrived at the same conclusions many of us had concerning the ARRA funds. They should be

awarded based upon merit, rather than just on political clout. I like his list, in that it was near identical to mine! California, (parts of) the Midwest, North Carolina and...Washington! Of course, those were among the primary recipients of the ARRA monies.

The chapter (Chapter 2) on the Pacific Northwest is full of praise for the rail investments our state has made, the quality of the Talgo trains, the general success of the Amtrak *Cascades* and the well-crafted plans for future growth of our corridor. My rather long-term bragging that our *Cascades* trains are a “national model” of state-level excellence was thus independently echoed by McCommons, a college professor from northern Michigan.

While hopeful that the USA was awakening to the need for much more in-

***[McCommons] had arrived at the same conclusions many of us had concerning the ARRA funds. They should be awarded based upon merit, rather than just on political clout. I like his list, in that it was near identical to mine!***

vestment in passenger train service, his final paragraph was rather sobering. “America is a third-world country when it comes to passenger railroads. Someday, maybe I’ll be nostalgic for these old trains (referring to a less-than perfect trip on the Cardinal). Then again, maybe not. I know this: If the country wants a robust, well-functioning train system, it will have to pay for it. There’s no way around that.”

Let us continue to work for a willingness to pay for it. And I recommend Jim’s book.



Amtrak’s official participation in National Train Day was limited to four of its biggest stations: Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Chicago and Washington, DC. But Pacific Northwest Amtrak officials assisted Portland in having a very-well-attended event. And Amtrak station agents cooperated with AAWA and local Train Day organizers is producing more modest celebrations at several places within our Washington.

Special kudos to Karen Keller, who put together the most comprehensive event in our state at Olympia-Lacey’s Centennial Station, and the City of Centralia’s Carol Hamilton, who organized a well-attended Train Day at that city’s venerable 1912 NP station. AAWA members actively assisted at Centennial. I took the short train trip to Centralia where

I worked our booth. Other events where AAWA members essentially put together Train Day tables, met and talked with train riders and station visitors included Bellingham, Edmonds, Everett, Leavenworth and Seattle.

All agree that we should be involved in even bigger and more comprehensive National Train Day events next year. With Washington having received \$590 million, substantially due to the merits of our well-supported rail program, it would have seemed timely for larger Train Day events than happened. But sincere thanks to those dedicated AAWA members and small-town folks who made this year’s activities good nonetheless.



The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), as further evidence they have been Congressionally mandated to move

beyond regulation of railroads to a position of working in behalf of the mode, has scheduled a series of five outreach meetings across the country as part of a process to develop the first ever National Rail Plan (NRP). Fortunately, one of those meetings will be held in Portland, OR on June 4. I have been accepted as one

of the representatives of the organized rail advocate community and will be attending. We have been informed that roundtable discussion will be the mode of input.

Joseph C. Szabo, FRA Administrator, writes, in the invitation to participate, “This is a critical time for America’s economy and transportation system. Through the development of NRP, we can collaborate to develop a national rail policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and a strategy for its successful implementation. We look forward to your participation in this effort and value your input as we identify and refine key issues and discuss strategies.”

There will be several Oregon and Washington rail advocates present, as well as other major rail stakeholders. I eagerly await this important meeting.

From June 7-9, AAWA President Loren Herrigstad and I will be attending the American Public Transit Association (APTA obviously includes Canadian members) Conference in Vancouver, BC. Other AAWA members attending, albeit wearing other than AAWA hats, are Ralph Munro and Bruce Agnew. Bruce is strongly involved in the organization of the Conference and his Cascadia Center is among the sponsors. Key legislators (See **Flem**, page 4)



## The View Down the Tracks

=====

with Jim Cusick

### Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous

What is culture, and how does it relate to travel?

A quick trip to the dictionary for a definition!

- 1) The process of cultivating living material in nutrient media. Hmmm, nope.
- 2) The enlightenment and excellence of taste acquired by intellectual and aesthetic training.

I suppose from our point of view that would describe train riders. Although I might be just the type of guy to hop in my Imperium Condensator, wearing my thongs and cutoffs (shirt required), and go shopping for fine things at the fine establishments on the Eastside, this definition is not what I'm talking about today.

3) A: The integrated pattern of human knowledge.

B: The customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious or social group.  
<popular culture> <southern culture>  
**THAT'S IT !!**

That's the definition we're looking for!

What got me thinking about this is a reference to trains being an "alternative" form of transportation, as if it's a different cultural lifestyle.

We do live in the "Car Culture," after all. The media tells me that every day, along with hundreds of ads from their major sponsors, the auto industry. An editorial bias...Naaaahh!

Although if you want to see how the "car culture" is ingrained in our society, dig up a copy of the Disney cartoon featuring Goofy called "Motor Mania." This cartoon was created 60 years ago, but it appears nothing has changed, except for the styles of the cars.

But what has interested me is how each transportation mode fosters its own culture.

Automobiles have various incarnations of "religion" associated with them. Car clubs, restorers, owner's perception of their societal value based on the car they drive.

Flying used to be the hot topic, for positive reasons. Remember the "Jet Set"?

Riding the train has always been the comfortable, refined way to travel. Time to think, to relax, and be able to constructively process the problems we deal with.

But instead of listing the various manifestations of the different modes' cultures, let's look at things a bit differently.

Instead, let's compare activities that could be performed in each one and see how they would fit within each mode's culture. For sake of these comparisons, let's assume we are dealing with a single traveler on a trip and how they interact with the other members of their "culture."

Let's start by stepping just outside of each mode and see how things differ when you aren't in "the transport vehicle."

This is actually the most critical and can prove most dangerous if not treated

### ***But what has interested me is how each transportation mode fosters its own culture.***

with respect.

For instance, if you found yourself a pedestrian in the realm of the AUTO, you would survive a walk on the roadway, providing you were following the correct pedestrian rules (walking against traffic).

But be a pedestrian anywhere outside the terminal of a commercial airport and you would certainly be visited by security.

On railroad tracks, this is certainly just as dangerous, but we have this odd mental block that says "it's okay to take a romantic walk on the tracks."

Operating one mode on another would be an interesting exercise.

Taking a plane down onto a roadway or a rail bed makes the news.

However, I have yet to see a train leave its domain to travel on the other's turf, unless the road was built right around the track with street running in mind.

However, taking a car onto the rail roadbed happens every day. Not usually down a railroad right-of-way, but over numerous crossings.

Drivers will respect the controlled intersection by obeying the traffic lights, but only around railroad crossing is it culturally acceptable to go around the lowered crossing gates.

If you find yourself in a discussion with someone who thinks that's okay, ask them if someone has told them (or better yet, if you're a passenger in their car, you tell them) at a traffic light to "Just go ahead, run the red light, no one is looking....C'mon, are you chicken?"

Same type of situation, but a different thought process. Why is that?

Tell them to take a drive out on the runway at SeaTac. Now that would be sure to make the news!

Around the railroad, you can't just get in your "private train" and go for a ride. However, you can, with just a bit of training, operate a two ton motor vehicle at high speeds, no problem.

You can get a private pilot license, but that requires extensive training, and you normally don't just hop in and go flying without some repercussions from the FAA. You file a flight plan (or if you're smart, you do), you follow specific altitude requirements based on direction, location and a host of other parameters. And if it starts raining or you find yourself in the fog, you can't just turn on the fog lights or the windshield wipers. You have to have more extensive training to fly with instruments only.

Taking the train just requires showing up and letting the train crew handle the rest.

Showing up...yep, what should be simple can sometimes turn complex.

Arrive for trip at the last minute for a train, you might not be able to check your baggage and you run the risk of down-right missing the train. Remember, a train does need to keep a schedule.

Late for a plane? It seems pointless to rush like a madman, since you'd be just the guy to raise eyebrows at the security line. "Hmm, sweaty...Check. Anxious look on his face...check. Let's pass this wand over him. Real careful and slow."

In your car, no problem, just run down, "check" your baggage into the trunk or back seat, and away you go! If you need to make up time...no problem, that's what horns and radar detectors are for!

One advantage is you can take bigger bags on the train than what's allowed as carry-on for the plane, and you can check three bags **no charge** on Amtrak. Plus, you don't have to keep the fluid levels in those bottles at 3 ounces or less.

Throw anything you want into your car! Heck you don't even have to put it in a travel bag!

For traveling shorter distances, commuter airlines are still a bit hamstrung by security, but I've heard of airlines working out quicker ways for short puddle-jump flights.

Get in your car and go fast to get to the freeway just so you can go slow.

On the train, presuming you get there on schedule, you can relax.

On the train, you can even socialize if you'd like. Long distance trains have (See **Cusick**, page 4)

**Bypass**, from page 1

without incident. If people take responsibility for their own actions and obey existing laws the tragic incident that the cities of Lakewood and DuPont fear will never happen.

To address the noise issue, Sound Transit and WSDOT will install wayside horns at all crossings near residential areas. Wayside horns are a part of the crossing protection system and are set to only be audible near the grade crossing. The horns activate with the crossing protection system and eliminate the need for the train engineer to have to sound the locomotive horn (which broadcasts out over a much wider area).

On June 7, the state Utilities and Transportation Commission will hold a public hearing on WSDOT's January request to modify various grade crossings in Lakewood and DuPont. The public is invited to provide verbal comments directly to the judge assigned to this petition. The hearing will begin at 6:30 p.m. at Pierce College Ft. Steilacoom in the Health Education Center, 9401 Farwest Dr. SW.

*(To read Brian Bundridge's full report of the May 17 public open house visit seattle transitblog.com and scroll down through the Recent Posts or search on Point Defiance Bypass.)*

**Flem**, from page 2

and other elected officials from Oregon and Washington will be in attendance. A couple of us plan to ride with those officials on the *Cascades* up to Vancouver, giving them a chance, in our company, to enjoy a portion of our "national model" passenger trains on the way. This gathering will bring together transit and rail leaders from throughout North America and the mix of those present will allow a sharing of ideas and energy in what is becoming a better era for the rail mode and for other environmentally- and economically-sound transportation on our continent.



Early June will be busy! Between the FRA meeting and the APTA Conference, on June 5-6, AAWA, for the first time, will have an active presence at Green Festival – Seattle. This Festival will give us a matchless opportunity to share information about passenger trains **and** All Aboard Washington to, not only the thousands of attendees, but to the many commercial and non-profit participants. These folks by definition favor resource conservation and "green" production and consumption, but may not have considered the importance of rail,

passenger and freight, as the safest and environmentally best motorized means of moving people and goods. (Ok, in fairness, waterborne commerce is also very fuel-efficient and per-ton-mile or passenger-mile clean.)

Hopefully many of you will plan to attend, stop at the AAWA table and help spread the good word about rail to the crowds attending. It is at the Washington State Convention Center, 800 Convention Place, Level Four, Seattle. Times are Saturday June 5, 10AM-7PM; Sunday June 7, 11AM-6PM. Strongly suggest you access the Convention Center by train and/or transit. Sounder service to Seattle is available both days because the Mariners have afternoon games. Trains return north and south 35 minutes after the last out. Motor vehicle parking will likely be scarce, costly and ungreen!

**Cusick**, from page 3

sightseeing cars where you can meet other travelers. You can meet others in the dining car, over a meal, since on the train you sit four to a table.

Getting up and strolling around the plane is a bit tedious, and they do recommend staying in your seat and belted in case they hit CAT. That's Clear Air Turbulence. You can socialize with someone next to you, assuming that's what they want.

In the car...well you can socialize with others, but that requires some form of hand gesture, a wave or whatnot.

Sometimes culture can be region specific, such as certain hand gestures have different connotations in different parts of the country.

For instance, you can tell another driver in New York City that you think they are #1, and they will understand and usually gesture back the same way, letting you know that "No, I think **you** are #1!" Thank you very much.

This communication allows a quick exchange and then one can proceed on with visiting other travelers.

However, this gesture in other parts of the country will allow you to stop and have discussions on genealogy, family lineage and other practices.

Look out the window of the train and you notice lots of people like to wave at the train.

While it's difficult to see people waving from the plane (in the old days when you could walk right up to the gate), I certainly wouldn't want to be able to see someone waving to me from another plane in flight!

If no one wants to socialize with you,

then you can always take a nap. Well, if you're in a car, that nap might be permanent. Take a nap and the train keeps going, right where it's supposed to go, no problem. You can do it in a plane, too, although not as comfortably as a train.

Or you can listen to music. On the plane, due to the loudness of the engines, you need noise-cancelling headphones. You'll find out that the train is so quiet, the noise cancellation is an extraneous feature, and you will also notice you don't need the volume up as high. But the big advantage of the car is no headphones necessary! You can even sing along!

But if you really don't want to socialize at all on the train or the plane:

Just forget to take your Beano! That would make you popular, I'm sure, although I've never heard of a plane being forced to land because of it. Just remember, the train is already on the ground, so it just has to stop.

This is where the car is king.

For those who like close socialization, the car doesn't provide that capability, unless you invite someone in. Assuming the feeling is mutual, the train can provide closeness, but on a plane, the culture is obviously that to really get to know your fellow travelers, you need to have them on your lap, with their head on your chest...separated by some aluminum webbing and ½ inch of foam. "No sir, your seat does not recline any further so stop pushing it back into my knees, please. And no, I don't think your after-shave is sexy!"

Surfing the net while driving your car would be that one step of insanity beyond even texting with earphones on. Now you do that on a plane, no problem, headphones and Wi-Fi.

Can you surf the net on the train? On the Acela, and in the Metropolitan Lounges in certain stations on the Northeast Corridor you can. But what about us out west? Why YES, you can be connected in the Parlour Car on the Coast Starlight.

Although I would ask...Why?

Why you would have to be "connected" to the virtual world, when you can connect to the **REAL WORLD** on the train?

**June 12**, from page 6

To read more about DMUs, go to [www.usrailcar.com](http://www.usrailcar.com).

Senator Haugen has been a key ally of passenger rail advocates for many years. AAWA has worked very closely with her in developing Washington's successful Amtrak Cascades service, in particular.

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All are evening numbers, except Lloyd's, which is available 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily.

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 Washington, DC 20515  
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 NARP: www.narprail.org  
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 Amtrak: www.amtrak.com  
 Amtrak Cascades: www.amtrakcascades.com  
 Sound Transit: www.soundtransit.org

Here is the National Train Day program from Portland, OR. Thousands of people enjoyed the Train Day festivities at Portland Union Station, with over 20 groups and organizations participating. Below, kids young and old line up to climb into the cab of Southern Pacific locomotive 4449, owned by the city of Portland. Behind the famous locomotive rest the *Empire Builder* and a *Cascades* Talgo trainset.

*Photo by Jim Hamre*



Several hundred people enjoyed National Train Day at the Centralia Station. Above, Executive Director Lloyd Flem staffs the AAWA table with its full complement of literature. Below, Carol Hamilton, administrative assistant to the Centralia city manager, provided the goodies for the people dropping by for Train Day.

*Two photos by Kim Gilbertson*



The Assoc. of American Railroads recently announced that the nation's freight railroads in 2009 averaged 480 ton-miles per gallon of diesel fuel. Freight rail fuel efficiency is up 104% since 1980. In 2009 railroads generated 67% more ton-miles than in 1980 while using less total fuel. AAR Pres. Edward Hamberger noted, "If just 10% of the long-haul freight currently moving on our crowded highways was moved by rail, annual fuel savings would exceed 1 billion gallons." Railroads are four times more fuel efficient than trucks, according to a federal government report.

Below, even Bozeman, MT, a city without intercity passenger rail service since Amtrak axed the *North Coast Hiawatha* in 1979, hosted about 300 people for Nation Train Day. NARP member

*Photo by Rufus Cone*



Chuck McMillan staffed a table with NARP literature. People could write letters on the spot to Montana's governor, Congressman and senators urging support for a restored *Hiawatha*. Several Montana NARP members met with Gov. Brian Schweitzer (D) on May 3. With media present, the group discussed expansion of long distance passenger rail service in the west. Schweitzer is chairman of the Western Governors Assoc. and plans to bring up this issue at their June meeting in Whitefish, MT.



*Photo by Warren Yee*

Amtrak announced the appointment of District Superintendent Kurt Laird as General Superintendent of the Pacific Northwest Division, effective May 14. "This newly created position will strengthen our relationship with Washington and Oregon, states that have been ardent supporters of passenger rail and where there are tremendous opportunities for growth," said Pres. Joe Boardman. According to Amtrak, the creation of this position reflects its commitment to being more responsive to its state and commuter partners and to the communities Amtrak serves. Kudos to Kurt!

All Aboard Washington took its Seattle National Train Day outreach outside for the arrival of the Sounder specials from Tacoma and Everett. The special event service was running for the Seattle Sounders FC soccer match at Qwest Field that day. Soccer fans were greeted as they came off the Weller St. pedestrian bridge over the station tracks. AAWA members above include Harvey Bowen and Pat McIntosh.

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## All Aboard News

**June 12:** All Aboard Washington meeting in **Mt. Vernon, 10:30-2:00.** Location: Il Granaio Restaurant, adjacent to Skagit Station. An Italian buffet will be served. **Cost is \$22; cash or check only.** See adjacent article.

**July 10:** All Aboard Washington meeting planned for Tukwila, at a hotel adjacent to the Sounder/Amtrak station. Further details forthcoming.

**August 14:** All Aboard Washington meeting at **noon** at **Jim Hamre's home**, 13307 104<sup>th</sup> Ave. Ct. E. on Puyallup's South Hill. Bring a potluck item. Hamburgers, hot dogs and beverages provided. Call or email Jim for more information. See p. 5.

All Aboard Washington welcomed the following new members in April and May: Dawn Stieler, Everett and Matthew Buchanan, Vancouver, BC.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include: Barry Green, Lloyd Flem, Jim Cusick, C. B. Hall, Ron Sheck, Warren Yee and Zack Willhoite.

### June 12 AAWA Meeting: DMUs, Mary Margaret Haugen!

*By C. B. Hall*

On Saturday June 12, from 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., All Aboard Washington (AAWA) will sponsor a public meeting in Mount Vernon featuring Mike Pracht of Ohio's US Railcar, who will discuss and present a PowerPoint on DMUs (diesel multiple units), widely viewed as the right choice for burgeoning regional and commuter rail systems around the country. Our second speaker, State Senate Transportation Committee chair Mary Margaret Haugen (D-Camano Island), will update us on Washington's passenger rail program and other public transportation issues.

The meeting will take place at Il Granaio Restaurant, immediately adjacent to Mount Vernon's Skagit Station. Both Amtrak and Greyhound serve the station with mid-morning arrivals from the Seattle area. Cost for the program, including a Milanese luncheon buffet, is \$22, cash or check, payable at the door. Space is limited; kindly RSVP to C.B. Hall at kaannos@centurytel.net or AAWA Executive Director Lloyd Flem (see page 5 for contact information).

A light self-powered railcar, the DMU eliminates the need for a locomotive and uses only about half the fuel a locomotive hauled train consumes. The current design of US Railcar's DMU allows it to cruise at up to 90 mph, and potential design modifications would raise the top speed to 125 mph.

In a recent analysis of high-speed rail, Hall concluded that today's diesel locomotive hauled Amtrak trains, running at substantially increased speeds in HSR applications, would in fact raise a corridor transportation system's carbon emissions under three different scenarios (primarily because of the greater aerodynamic drag at increased speeds); a DMU would however lower overall emissions from the baseline level in all the same scenarios.

Commuter systems in Oregon, Florida and many other places use DMUs, which are also under discussion for the Bellingham-Everett, Auburn-Maple Valley and BNSF Eastside routes in our own Puget Sound region. Because its light weight allows for rapid acceleration and deceleration, the vehicle has been touted for routes with many stops, and could also provide a second-tier, local service in the Portland-Seattle corridor, for example. (See **June 12**, page 4)