



WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

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www.AllAboardWashington.org

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

Toppenish meeting builds support for restored passenger trains to the Yakima Valley

Seventy-five All Aboard Washington members and citizens of the Yakima Valley attended our meeting in Toppenish on May 14 to show their support for returning passenger rail service from Seattle to central Washington and beyond.

Our hosts at the Northern Pacific Railway Museum were Lance Hoyt, Toppenish City Manager, and Roger O'Dell, President of the Yakima Valley Rail and Steam Museum Assoc. Hoyt stated the city supports service restoration and outlined community benefits that will be realized.

O'Dell told everyone that the economic benefits from passenger rail service are a key point. We all must do a good job to study and support efforts to make this a success.

Executive Director Lloyd Flem explained what AAWA is and our role to help in this effort but noted that it won't happen without the strong support of local leaders and citizens. Flem then introduced our keynote speaker, Sen. Curtis King (R-Yakima), chairman of the State Senate Transportation Committee.

King started his remarks by noting that Lloyd keeps coming back to you until you say "Yes!" Freight and passenger trains are



Sen. Curtis King

important now and will become an even bigger asset in the future. He noted his first train trip as a kindergartener was from Yakima to Toppenish.

Both the Senate and House transportation committees fully support all forms of transportation. King outlined the rail projects included in the transportation package adopted by the Legislature last year. He called out the Legislative Rail Caucus, co-chaired by Rep. Luis Moscoso (D-Bothell) and Rep. Matt Manweller (R-Ellensburg), for its work in seeking solutions that benefit the state.

King noted the west side has the population and gets much of the funding. However, passenger rail service "would be an absolutely great value to our valley," he said. And the economic benefits flow two ways – people going both directions to visit, for medical appointments, play tourist, attend sporting events, and more. Plus there is the issue of growing congestion on I-90 over Snoqualmie Pass.

The opportunities are many but there are challenges: funding operations and the infrastructure upgrades that would be needed, and negotiating a contract with BNSF.

King stated that service from Seattle to the Yakima Valley and beyond must be efficient and cost effective, and passengers must ride it. We will have to determine what the revenue will be and how the costs are covered.

He concluded by saying we have the passion. But we need patience and must work together.
(See **Toppenish**, page 4)



Seventy-five people attended the All Aboard Washington meeting in Toppenish on May 14 to support efforts to return passenger rail service to the Yakima Valley and beyond.
Photos by Zack Willhoite

Vermont's Amtrak Service

By Carl Fowler

(Vermont is considerably smaller than Washington in both population and size. However, we can learn from Vermont's implementation of state supported Amtrak service as All Aboard Washington and the citizens of more rural central and eastern Washington push for east-west service across our state. Fowler, a former resident of Washington, launched his rail tour company in Tacoma and served on the board AAWA's predecessor organization.)

The little state of Vermont has one of the most interesting state-supported Amtrak networks. Two routes provide service within the state. The *Vermonter* operates from St. Albans, near the Canadian border, south to New York City and Washington, D.C. The *Ethan Allen* provides service from Rutland to Albany and New York City. Today both trains run with multi-state support, but for most of their history Vermont alone supported the majority of the costs.

A little history: One of the first services to be restored early in the Amtrak era in 1972 was a cross-border run from New York to Montreal. Both New York and New England competed. It would be a fully Amtrak supported train and ultimately New England prevailed. The 1972-1995 *Montrealer* was an overnight train, serving the Northeast Corridor before continuing via Vermont to Montreal.

Initially it was very successful, even featuring a winter thru sleeper from Montreal to Miami, via the *Silver Star* south of Washington. Sadly, deteriorating track conditions led to an extended "bustitution," starting in 1984, which undermined ridership. But this marked the beginning of Vermont's strong state support for the line.

Legally, Amtrak has the authority to condemn routes of freight railroads that refused to maintain tracks to passenger standards. The refusal of Guilford Railroads to fix deteriorated track between Windsor, VT and Springfield, MA led to the only time to date when Amtrak exercised this authority. With a \$5 mill. appropriation, obtained primarily with the bi-partisan support of the Vermont Congressional delegation for purchase and repair, Amtrak bought the line, (See **Vermont**, page 5)



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

O Canada! Good Time in Toppenish; Post Toppenish Positives

Our Canadian readers should not be adversely concerned that I've borrowed the title of their beautiful, moving national anthem to open this column. I am bringing good news here about intercity passenger trains in our Great Neighbor to the north.

A bit of background: When Americans mention the continued major investments in and high priority of high-speed and conventional intercity passenger rail, we inevitably use Western Europe and East Asia as examples. We have not said, "Let's be like Canada." The one major industrialized democracy that has lagged behind peer nations as much, even more than the USA in intercity passenger rail is Canada. While

Canadian metro areas have generally fine urban rail systems (visit Vancouver!), VIA Rail Canada has suffered in recent decades. Whereas Amtrak, from its inception, was granted advantages when running on the property of the Class One railroads in our country, VIA has had no such protections. The two big Canadian Class Ones, Canadian Pacific and Canadian National, have brutalized the operation of VIA on the two freight giants' tracks in ways Class Ones in the US are simply not legally able to do.

In addition, Canadian respondents have told me that, until recently at least, transportation bureaucrats in Ottawa have not been favorably disposed to intercity passenger rail, even though intercity rail brought about the uniting of Canada as a country to a greater degree than did the railroads in the USA.

But change is in the air! The respected professional monthly RAILWAY AGE has as its April cover and feature story, "VIA's Grand Vision." The visionary is VIA President/CEO Yves Desjardins-Siciliano. Though an appointee of the Conservative government, Desjardins-Siciliano has a [plan](#) that would simultaneously achieve economic, environmental and social goals by building a conventional, but quick (110 MPH) electrified line from Montreal to Toronto via Ottawa – and

later to Windsor – the Canadian equivalent of the US's Northeast Corridor. His plan has found even more favor with the new Liberal government of Justin Trudeau. (Yes, his father, Pierre Trudeau, was prime minister in 1977 when VIA was established.)

Important that the Trudeau II plan does not propose to invest in the very costly true-high-speed trains. Frequency and reliability of operation are the goals. The aim is eighteen on time round trips daily, rather than the current six, often delayed by CN freight. New and improved track on mostly existing right-of-way would keep infrastructure costs relatively modest. The Trudeau government is serious about air pollution and negative climate change. In this key Eastern Canada corridor private motor vehicles are the major cause of air pollution.

While the grade is steep and the curves are tight and red blocks remain, AAWA feels we are making excellent progress on the initial steps toward an eventual restoration of intercity passenger trains on the Stampede Pass route serving the Yakima Valley.

Safe and efficient electrified passenger rail lines would be powered by clean hydro power from Quebec and would have the impact of removing millions of private motor vehicles from the crowded, sometimes dangerous highways.

The funding for this major intercity rail project would come, in part, from Canadian public pension monies that are invested now in infrastructure projects elsewhere. It is hoped the vastly improved VIA Rail service will be operational in just four years for C\$4 billion, as opposed to ten or more years at C\$10-20 billion for the true high speed rail proposals that have not had broad public approval.

This will certainly be good for our friends in that densely populated and vitally important Eastern Canada corridor. But what about VIA Rail in other parts of Canada, including our Cascadian partners in British Columbia? While there is nothing specific about "our trains" in the RAILWAY AGE article, the apparent benefits of this Montreal-Toronto plan coupled with the forward-looking Mr Desjardins-Siciliano and a very supportive Canadian federal government bodes well for investments and improvements elsewhere in Canada, including in the economic dynamo that is Greater Vancouver and its relations with its fellow

big and booming cities to the south on Puget Sound and where the Willamette meets the Columbia.



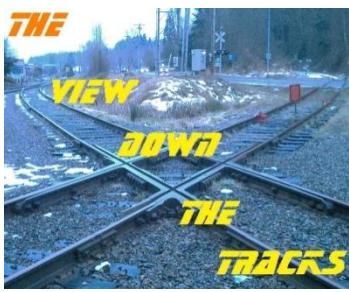
While the grade is steep and the curves are tight and red blocks remain, AAWA feels we are making excellent progress on the initial steps toward an eventual restoration of intercity passenger trains on the Stampede Pass (original Northern Pacific) route serving the Yakima Valley. Those AAWA members most active in working this issue feel we are a full year ahead of where we thought we might be in getting support for the restoration.

The May 14 AAWA meeting in Toppenish exemplified this progress. Except for our Annual AAWA or regional NARP meetings, we rarely have more than forty present. We had seventy-five in attendance in Toppenish, about sixty of whom were from east of the Cascades, mostly from the Yakima Valley. Senate Transportation Committee Chair Curtis King (R-Yakima) was the keynoter, three panels of community and business leaders from

different parts of the Yakima Valley gave varied reasons on why they felt resuming intercity passenger train service would be of economic advantage to their communities. The founding co-chairs of the Legislative Rail Caucus offered their strong affirmations to restoration of passenger trains to and through the Yakima Valley, Rep Luis Moscoso (D-Bothell) in person, and Rep Matt Manweller (R-Ellensburg) by letter.

AAWA Board Secretary Harmon 'Rocky' Shay summarized the passenger train options available to the Yakima Valley before the Amtrak era and during the 1971-1981 decade with Amtrak service, before the *Empire Builder* was moved to the northerly Great Northern route. Former AAWA President Loren Herrigstad had pictures of stations and infrastructure and offered potential future development in the corridor for consideration.

AAWA Board member Louis Musso of Cle Elum suggested a "working group" of up to a dozen dedicated people, public and private sector, who would continue the long pull required to bring back the trains. I echoed Louis and said nay-sayers may try to discourage our efforts. Wearing my "Old Coach" hat, I praised the excellent "team" we have (See **Flem**, page 4)



WITH
JIM
CUSICK

Are We There Yet?

As the Puget Sound region grows in population, we are confronted with that age old question: How do we get from here to there?

To some, the problem is that we're living wrong. If we just lived and worked in the same location, then mobility would be a moot point.

I suppose if we all worked in one of those company towns, lifting 16 tons and whatnot, then it would be Nirvana for those believers.

What we need is Teen Spirit. The younger generation is showing us that mobility is not defined only by automotive access.

Owning a set of wheels is not the rite of passage it once was. For others, it seems mobility issues are to be focused only on the currently dense areas, and that the infidels who seek suburban salvation do not deserve that salvation through infrastructure improvements, even if it is rail based.

Better Buses For All!

The problem is, making it a suburban vs. urban argument ignores the fact that we need **ALL** of it. Both a robust local bus/streetcar (exclusive right-of-way) network, and a feeder commuter rail system from the suburban to the urban areas.

And the discussion continues.

We are growing, but are we growing up when it comes to trains?

As it has been said to me: "It's time for us to put on our Big Boy Pants."

But that statement wasn't directed at the question of our region accepting rail; it has been repeated on the Internet in various forms on various forums as to why we don't behave like Europe does, especially as it pertains to places like King Street Station.

Why can't I just go there?

We want to be like Europe, and go to our trains without restrictions.

It seems Amtrak does not want us to do that if you read the [STREETSBLOG/CHICAGO](#) article titled "[Amtrak's Boarding Procedure Brings the Stress of Airports to Trains](#)"

To quote:

"Amtrak's airline-style boarding procedures, which [gained internet infamy at busy Penn Station](#) in New York City, have already

been critiqued multiple times. In Europe, you don't find pre-boarding ticket checks on any international intercity train line except Eurostar (between London and Paris, for border control purposes). By importing the security theater of air travel, Amtrak loses a key advantage — the lower-stress experience of train travel."



Passengers at Berlin, Germany, Hauptbahnhof (Central Train Station) don't have to wait in "boarding lounges" for their arriving trains.

Now I look at that picture and it's quite obvious what the difference is between Europe and the United States.

Along with the complaints of Amtrak's boarding procedures, is that of Sounder passengers not being able to exit their King Street Station platform at track level to the west. This route would traverse Tracks #2 (Sounder southbound trains), and #3 (Amtrak's through and long distance trains). These are active tracks, with train movements occurring during the times people want cross.

I searched online for a picture that would distinctly demonstrated the difference, but each picture had a Sounder train occupying Track 2, so I will have to make do with a picture of the Edmonds platform to demonstrate.

I took the below picture when they were testing the new Series 8 Talgo trainsets that ODOT purchased. Can you see the difference?



It's quite obvious that if the fence was not there (and the fence is not a complete deterrent) the tracks are very accessible. You can just walk right onto them. And people do walk right onto them.

In the Berlin picture, the jump down to track level and the leap back up to the other platform makes going around the preferred

route.

Part of "putting on our big boy pants" is the realization of what behavior around train tracks means.

It is not like the movies, where you lean against the train blowing kisses while the train departs, and run alongside the train as it picks up speed.

It means understanding that being even a fraction of an inch in the same place as the train is exactly the wrong place to be. It's why there is a yellow line on the platform. Even then, it doesn't guarantee that if your feet are on the line, your body not within that zone. A young person in Auburn was killed several years ago when he leaned too far over just as an Amtrak train approached.

It means not running out to put pennies on the tracks when a train is approaching. (Besides, the pennies get lost in the ballast.)

It means not standing on the tracks with your guitar while your friend takes a picture of you.

It means not watching your preteen child walk down the center of the tracks as if it were some abandoned right-of-way.

It means not being a bad example by being on the tracks when you are the adult, and your child is practicing safe behavior and pleading with you to not step over the yellow line.

It means even if you think you are able-bodied enough to quickly get across the tracks and leap the fence ... you certainly don't try it when you are "three sheets to the wind."

It means that the tracks are not a good place to walk your dog.

It means the tracks are not the place to drive your car.

Suicides are certainly an issue. In my former home town of Edmonds, on the day after a train pedestrian fatality happened at the Edmonds station, I spoke with the person who had to respond to [the incident that delayed and detoured the Edmonds-Kingston ferry](#). His description of events (not the gruesome details, but the "environmental" issues) was difficult to listen to.

This story is a lot sadder and a bit darker than what is reported, but we'll leave it at that to respect the privacy of the families involved. And we will put away the "Darwinism at work" aspect for now. These incidents are never taken lightly.

But that incident isn't the end of the story, since while we were in the middle of the conversation, the freight train that was rolling by towards Seattle began making a sound distinctive of a train going into full emergency braking. We went out onto the (See **Cusick**, page 4)

Flem, from page 2

to play this important game and defeat the nay-sayers!

President Karen Keller concluded the meeting with a respectful statement about the recently deceased Jim Fredrickson, the Northwest's honored NP historian and photographer. Karen thanked our hosts, whose efforts were demonstrated by the success of the meeting.

While Toppenish in general and the NP Railway Museum volunteers specifically did a superb job for this meeting, special kudos to Jerry Boekholder and Roger and Mary O'Dell. If the energy and commitment of those three and the others who attended the meeting can continue, this long, steep, curvy track, with red blocks often imposed, can be overcome and we'll be riding intercity trains in the Yakima Valley again.



More positives occurred in the days following our Toppenish meeting. First, I received a second phone call from a key Yakima Herald reporter, who had numerous questions about the next steps in efforts to restore intercity passenger rail service to the Stampede Pass route. While I was able to describe a general path for the efforts, requested specifics and details will be forthcoming in the weeks and months ahead. But this strong interest by the Yakima Valley's major newspaper is a good sign.

Another good sign was the call from Raquel Crowley, staffer in Central Washington for US Sen. Patty Murray (D-Bothell). Ms Crowley, a long-time Yakima Valley resident, had heard of our May 14 meeting and is, on behalf of the senator, very interested in the potential return of passenger trains to serve the route through Central Washington. Ms Crowley mentioned having ridden trains in the Valley and seemed well-informed about the potential for the passenger rail choice for our state's citizens. She also mentioned the senator's support for federal funding for transportation in Washington State.

I recalled to her that Patty Murray received NARP's 2003 Golden Spike Award, which honors work to advance the cause of a robust national rail system.

I told her of the Legislative Rail Caucus and the LRC's Co-Chairs Matt Manweller and Luis Moscoso, both of whom she knows. I emphasized the bi-partisan nature of the Rail Caucus and specifically, of support for restoration of the Valley trains. Raquel Crowley wants to be kept informed and be involved with efforts to restore service, a prospect she strongly favors.

Cusick, from page 3

platform and saw a large cloud of dust at the Dayton St. crossing (south of the Edmonds train station)

"Again?" we're thinking.

Some investigation led to the conclusion that two people tried to run across the tracks at the last second, trying to beat the train. No witnesses came forward to say what happened while the train was stopped. The engineer in radio contact with the station employee said he was certain he had hit the two women who tried to beat the train.

Once it was determined that indeed no one was hurt, they proceeded southbound.

Later, a witness did come into the station to report that the "Senior' Thelma & Louise" left their husbands on the one side of the tracks and crossed at the last second, and that was why the train stopped. It seems said trespassers disappeared like leaves in the wind.

According to [Operation Lifesaver there were around 400 rail related pedestrian fatalities nationwide in 2015.](#)

When USA Today [reported on the Amtrak #188 derailment, they quoted the number of Amtrak related fatalities for the year 2014.](#) They concluded (correctly) that travelling onboard the train is one of the safest ways to travel.

Of the 119 Amtrak related deaths in 2014, 108 involved trespassers – people on the tracks.

That means at least twice a week Amtrak alone has to deal with these incidents.

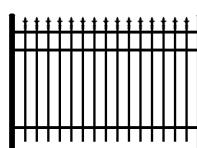
Yes, I believe it is time for the region to grow.

It needs to grow up and accept the challenges of cooperatively working to solve the transportation problems we are faced with.

Where is "There?"

This doesn't mean trains and people can't coexist, especially where proper separation is maintained. Although I have to admit chain link fences are notorious in their inability to positively keep people separated from wherever they aren't supposed to be.

The nature of a "wall with little toeholds" on it allows easy climbing access, and the fences themselves are easily breached and bent which is why I'm partial to the wrought



iron bar style. It is the perfect way to separate pedestrians and trains, especially when a track and a trail parallel each other.

And just think, that is all Kirkland and Renton need to have between the trail and commuter rail on the Woodinville Subdivi-

sion on the east side of Lake Washington if they want their money's worth from Sound Transit's ST3 proposal. [Both cities are complaining that Sound Transit is not spending enough on them, but they will have to pay Sound Transit taxes.](#)

Really???

When both the City of Renton and Kirkland have pretty much said ... Well ... Not In OUR Back Yard. The City of Renton, along with the residents of the Kennydale Neighborhood Association, saying no in 2001, and Kirkland, who rejects any rail use of the Woodinville Sub right-of-way. And then there's the well-funded Save Our Trail group that has even Kirkland's bus rapid transit solution is in their legal sights.

Okay, where in your FRONT yard do you think the money should be spent?

And if you think you're going to convince anyone an Interstate exit ramp is your gateway for the region ... well then I think the problem runs a lot deeper .

Growing up begins when you learn to recognize what you need to change.

Toppenish, from page 1

Rep. Moscoso stated he also supports east-west service. He noted we're fortunate to have Sen. King on the Senate Transportation Committee and that we have leaders that get things done.

Steve Hayden, leader of Friends of the Ellensburg Depot, read a letter from Rep. Manweller that stated he is looking forward to working with other legislators to make this project happen.

Three panels were presented that represented Toppenish and the Lower Yakima Valley, the City of Yakima and vicinity, and Ellensburg and Kittitas County.

Highlights of comments:

- Toppenish: The city has three museums and its collection of 76 murals on the walls of buildings all around town that attract tourists. A train would increase tourism, especially in the winter when people are less likely to drive over Snoqualmie Pass.

- Yakima: we must educate the public on the potential; the service will grow. Kudos to AAWA to help convert interest into action.

- Kittitas: the Suncadia Resort and Central Washington University would both draw train passengers. Restoration of the Ellensburg Depot is nearing completion.

Louis Musso, AAWA board member from Cle Elum, asked and received unanimous support for the new train service. He volunteered to lead a working group of local supporters to determine the next steps to restore passenger rail service to the Yakima Valley.

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All Aboard News

June 11: All Aboard Washington's Seattle Rails Exploration Day. Lunch and social time from 11 a.m. to about 2 p.m. at **FX McCory's, 419 Occidental Ave S, Seattle**, three blocks from King St. Station. Optional activities continue after lunch. Harvey Bowen will have a handout with information on current, former, and maybe future rail transportation in Seattle with guidance on how to use or explore them. After lunch, groups or individuals may go their separate ways. Suggested activities include:

- Riding the Seattle Streetcar First Hill Line to Capitol Hill, then take Link to the new station at Husky Stadium, and back to the International District Chinatown Station, one block from King Street Station. For a longer ride on Link continue south to the airport and return.
- Walking the route of the currently out-of-service George Benson Waterfront Streetcar (operated 1982-2005). Harvey will lead this tour and use it as an opportunity to assess how much of the Jackson Street to Pier 70 line remains. This will be an approximately 4 mile walk, or participants could walk one way and use transit to return to

the King Street Station area.

July 9: All Aboard Washington board meeting from 11:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m. at **Basil's Kitchen, Embassy Suites Hotel, 15920 W. Valley Hwy, Tukwila**, adjacent to the Sounder/ Amtrak Station. Use the Amtrak Cascades to and from the meeting. We use the short meeting format to allow members traveling from the south to use train 507 to return home.

August 13: All Aboard Washington picnic meeting from 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m. at **Rainier Vista Community Park, 5475 45th Ave SE** (corner of 45th SE and Ruddell Road), **Lacey**. We'll provide the burgers, hot dogs and condiments. You are invited to bring a potluck item. It's a time for fun and good discussion. Use the Cascades or Coast Starlight to and from the meeting. Car shuttles will be provided from the Olympia-Lacey Amtrak Station. Contact Lloyd Flem (info on page 5) if you need transportation from the station to the park.

All Aboard Washington recently welcomed the following new members: **Daniel Hodun**, Bremerton; **Gary Wirt**, Yakima; **John Bowen**, Ellensburg; **Dennis Cramer**, White Salmon; and **Marilee Titus**, Lakewood; and **Johnathan Smith**, Yakima.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include Carl Fowler, Harvey Bowen, Karen Keller, Zack Willhoite, Bob Lawrence, Kirk Fredrickson, Jim Cusick, and Lloyd Flem.

Jim Fredrickson, a career telegrapher, dispatcher and transportation assistant for Northern Pacific and Burlington Northern Railroads; a friend to many; and a long time All Aboard Washington member passed away April 15, 2016 at 89. Among his many passions were Northwest railroad history and photography. Read Carl Fowler's moving tribute to Jim on the All Aboard Washington website.



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