

## Eyman's I-976 Threatens Future of Amtrak Cascades, Sound Transit 3 *by Patrick Carnahan*

As a relatively young voter, I am beginning to learn about the various challenges that transit advocates encounter in Washington. One unfortunate obstacle we could face in 2019 is I-976, written by none other than our favorite Tim Eyman. Active since the late 1990s, he has a history of proposing amendments with the intent of disrupting Washington's budding alternative transportation network, especially Sound Transit. His latest effort aims once again to cap car tabs at \$30 annually. The services impacted by this initiative include Amtrak Cascades and all of the Sound Transit 3 projects. But I-976 goes beyond simply dampening the state's abilities to pay for vital transportation services; it also includes sections that outlaw city-approved transit benefit districts, taking away municipal funding for sidewalks, local transit, and, yes, even road maintenance and improvements. In short, this is a blatant attempt to destroy not only transit, but local control over what residents can choose to pay for, all in the name of 'accountability.'

We know that the conservation of our environment, vitality of our economy, and safety of our lives depends on having more and better options for getting around. We are well aware of rail's role in connecting communities in ways that make good use of our limited resources. And we are responsible enough to have passed project after project of mass transit on local and regional scales. Though Eyman brands himself as a selfless patriot with concern for the people, his history of violating campaign finance laws brings into question his commitment to transparency and accountability. Despite the major setbacks Eyman imposed on our ferry system and Sound Transit, we Washingtonians continue to vote in favor of funding viable alternatives to absolute car-dependency and should be concerned by this potential attack on our right to self-determine our future. We at All Aboard Washington cannot in  
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## RPA Begins Fundraising for Jim Hamre Memorial Scholarship

*by Charlie Hamilton*

Attendees of the Rail Passenger Association's RailNation 2018 fall meeting gathered at Brightline's MiamiCentral Station for a benefit reception in support of the Jim Hamre Scholarship Fund. RPA President and CEO Jim Mathews reminded the audience of Hamre's commitment to education and safety.

The Scholarship Fund was named in the honor of longtime All Aboard Washington board member and Rail Passengers Association volunteer leader Jim Hamre, who tragically lost his life in the December 2017 rail accident near DuPont, Washington.

The goal of the initial phase is to raise \$100,000 of what will ultimately be a \$1 million fund, providing scholarships to young adults who are seeking an education and career in railroad engineering and safety.

Donation checks, made payable to the 'Jim Hamre Scholarship Fund', may be sent to the Rail Passengers Association at:

**1200 G Street NW  
Suite 240  
Washington, DC 20005**

## Give AAWA A Lift *by Harvey Bowen*

We have a new way that you can support All Aboard Washington and passenger rail service – ironically enough, with an automobile. AAWA has partnered with Vehicle Donation to Any Charity (V-DAC: <https://www.v-dac.com/>) to enable donations of automobiles to AAWA. Rest assured we're not going to operate them (we won't even see them), but we will see some of the money they bring at auction or as scrap.

I owned a 1998 Chevrolet Prizm that, though running, had received a terminal diagnosis from a mechanic. It was going to cost too much to repair and wasn't safe to drive. Happily for both me and AAWA, I set up an account with V-DAC and was able to test the donation process myself, which went very smoothly. As a donor, I filled out a form and sent my title to V-DAC. After they received it, we scheduled a time for them to pick up the Prizm with a tow truck. About a month later, I received a tax receipt showing how I could take a tax deduction for the fair market value of my car, which I got from Kelly Blue Book (KBB). All the work as a donor took me about an hour, and I'm rid of a car without having to pay for it to be hauled. Since I was also managing the AAWA end of the transaction, I know that we received over \$50 for the Prizm, which was better than I expected and above the low end of the KBB scale.

*To donate your vehicle on the internet, go to <https://www.v-dac.com/> and follow the instructions; or call toll-free (877) 999-8322.*

## Time to Renew! *by Charlie Hamilton*

Renewal notices will be coming soon — thanks for your patience! But you don't need to wait. To renew online, simply visit:

<https://aawa.us/renew/>

You'll need the email address that we have on file for you. While you're there, you can take a quick peek at the new website that is under construction, which we will discuss in further in our next issue. Thank you for your continued support and have a joyful holiday season!

## How Will the Nov 6th General Election Affect AAWA? *by Luis Moscoso*

In talking with Senator Judy Warnick (R), I learned that she is looking to call a Legislative Rail Caucus meeting early in the 2019 Session to rebuild that caucus and work with All Aboard Washington on our mutual interests. Lloyd Flem informs me that Rep. Andrew Barkis (R) from the 2nd Legislative District uses Amtrak Cascades and is very interested in joining the Rail Caucus, perhaps replacing Rep. Manweller as House Co-Chair with Rep. Mia Gregerson (D), 33rd LD. The Legislative Rail Caucus will have to recruit two new Co-Chairs next year.

By Nov. 27th, all 39 of Washington's County Canvassing Boards had to certify and transmit their election results to the Secretary of State, except in the 42nd and 26th LD races that will require a hand recount because those races are too close to call. But those recounts won't likely be done by Dec. 6th, the last day for the Secretary of State to verify the General Election results. At this time Democrats hold a 28-21 majority in the Senate and a 57-42 edge in the House, pending final certification later this year.

I will have a complete breakdown of the election results in our next newsletter and how our membership can help promote our agenda in the next Legislative Biennium, 2019/2020.



## Help Build the Builder for Future Generations *by Charlie Hamilton*

Do you live along the Empire Builder's route? Have you been interested in its historical significance? Are you ready to help support its future? Check out the new Empire Builder Advocates website at:

<https://www.ebtrain.net/>

This site features news, history, and information about the Empire Builder and the towns that it serves. It provides links to passenger rail groups along the line, and local advocates are always being sought to help preserve the Empire Builder's service to the Northern United States. Click the 'Contact Us' link on the website and find out what you can do to become involved.



## Sparing the Chief *by Patrick Carnahan*

In our last issue, Lloyd Flem discussed the concerns of passenger rail advocates regarding the future of the Southwest Chief. Thankfully, our fears were relieved in early August when the Senate passed a minibus bill that guaranteed over \$2.5 billion in funding, including provisions for the Chief. And in October, further questioning from the Senate yielded a public commitment by Amtrak to maintain the Southwest Chief through Fiscal Year 2019. Though we all await the coming Amtrak reauthorization in Fiscal Year 2020, we should celebrate the power of our advocacy efforts in preserving this valuable part of the Amtrak national network. Kudos to our partners in Congress who have worked with us to keep the Chief rolling!

For the latest news on the Southwest Chief, keep an eye on RPA's website, found at:

<https://www.railpassengers.org/>

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**I-976 Threatens Future of Amtrak Cascades, Sound Transit 3** *from page 1*  
good conscience support Initiative 976, a law that kills so much of the progress we have made in the past two decades simply to cheapen our irresponsible addiction to cars.

Want to join us in the fight against I-976? We will announce our formal action plan soon. In the meantime, you can learn more about I-976 by visiting our partners at:

<https://www.no976.org>



## RailNation 2018 Miami – A Cross-Country Adventure *by Patrick Carnahan*

I knew I was in for a treat when I was invited to attend my first RPA conference, but I was still blown away by just how much of a hoot it really was! As a fairly new member of both AAWA and RPA, I am so glad I was able to meet so many amazing people and learn so much from both the presentations and the experiences the conference offered.

When I began planning for the trip, I wanted to take the train as much as possible within my relatively limited budget. A combination of flying to Newark, NJ via United Airlines, a ride on the Silver Meteor from there to Miami, and an Alaska Airlines flight back to Seattle from Fort Lauderdale ended up being the magic mix, allowing me to spend my first night sleeping aboard a long-distance train while also experiencing the commuter and metro networks of both the New York and Miami areas.

Arriving at EWR, I used the AirTrain to transfer to the nearby Newark Liberty Airport Station. I wanted to purchase a transit card, which, unfortunately, was not an option. At the suggestion of a staff member, I hopped on the New Jersey Transit train with a round-trip ticket to New York Penn station and back, bought with the intention of seeing some friends in the city. After dropping off my luggage at the nearby Hilton and having dinner with my roommate (thanks Charlie!), I continued to New York Penn. For those of you who haven't been into Penn Station yet, trust me: it's just as confusing and terrible as everyone says it is.

While in New York, I made use of the subway to get to the World Trade Center and Columbus Circle. Trackwork was underway at nearly every station I visited, and a few lines were even closed. This led to a frustrating situation where I boarded a train in the wrong direction, got out at a station where I had to cross over, and then was not allowed to freely reenter by the station staff because it was 41 minutes since I had last entered the system. After my various meetings, it was around 3:00 AM and I would have to wait for more than an hour for the next NJ Transit train. Instead, I took PATH from the World Trade Center Oculus back to Newark Penn. For those concerned with both cost and frequency, PATH is a much better deal than the other services, although getting to EWR will require an extra transfer to NJ Transit until PATH is extended in the coming years. Boarding the Silver Meteor at Newark Penn Station the next afternoon, I was anticipating so many firsts: my first ride along the (continued on the next page)

**RailNation 2018 Miami** *from page 2*

Northeast Corridor, my first visit to Washington, DC, and my first night sleeping on a train. Becoming acquainted with my roommate was easy: it's small enough to be manageable, but large enough to comfortably seat (and sleep) two. I was quickly reassured by the friendly interactions with staff that this would be an unforgettable travelling experience. After unpacking my bags, I enjoyed some conversation and the scenery as we passed through Trenton, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Arriving at Washington Union Station for a locomotive change, I briefly walked into the mall and was impressed by the beauty of its interior architecture.



As we crossed the Potomac and settled down for an enjoyable dinner, I began to discover the social nuances of riding the long-haul train. You fall into a routine of who you dine with. Some rooms are more popular hangout spaces than others. It's important to glance around corners as you walk between the cars. And you really get to know the staff throughout the ride. Sleeping is another matter entirely. Having a roomette is far more comfortable than sitting in an airplane seat for hours on end, yet the amount and quality of sleep you get depends strongly on the conditions of the tracks you use. The Meteor, using CSX tracks through the Carolinas and Georgia, gives riders a few sharp jolts during the night, which I was personally not prepared for. My experienced friends informed me that far worse sections of track exist in other parts of the country. Perhaps we should ask our legislators to ride a few sleeper trains so they can learn which tracks to invest in.

I awoke to sunrise shortly after crossing the Florida/Georgia state line. Breakfast and lunch were both delicious, and the hours flew by thanks to more great conversation and planning with friends. Despite the rough patches at night, the Meteor had such a fun atmosphere to it, and I felt so much more relaxed than if I had flown the whole way. Upon arrival in Miami, I was wishing it could've been just a bit longer. In fact, I already began thinking of the next adventures

I could do by train. From then on, I knew I would want to use Amtrak for as many long-distance trips as I could afford.



Though it's certainly not as convenient as the MIA Airport Station, the current Miami Station is acceptable for the time being, with Tri-Rail and Metrorail Green Line stations being just a few blocks away. It may be a bit too far for those who require a wheelchair or cannot walk for more than ten minutes, but it is close enough for most to justify a quick jaunt. With a clear view of the downtown Miami skyline, the Green Line station serves as a convenient connection point for Tri-Rail riders who commute from further north. For those who wish to make their travelling experience simple (or even those who just like to collect transit cards, as I do), South Florida offers the almost-contactless Easy Card, compatible with both Metrorail and Tri-Rail. On Metrorail, it uses a system quite similar to Vancouver's SkyTrain, even so far as sharing what appears to be the same type of fare gates. On Tri-Rail, it works more like Sounder, where you tap a station-bound card reader upon entry and exit while having the card ready to present to fare checkers. I boarded a Miami-bound Green Line train for Government Center.

Upon arrival, we were able to see the outlines of Brightline's MiamiCentral Station, though its true scale would become clearer the next day as we walked around town. We transferred to Metromover, a free people-mover-type train that loops around quite a bit of downtown Miami and the Brickell financial district. It was a quick ride to Knight Center Station, named for the building complex in which our hotel was located. After checking into my room, I went out to eat my very first Cuban meal.

The next day was filled with awesome memories. A morning tour of some excellent eateries allowed me to socialize with RPA members from all across the country. After the tour, one of the arguable highlights of RailNation began as we approached MiamiCentral, this time with a much better perspective of its fifty-foot high platforms and enormous six-block span. Entering the buildi-

ng, RPA was given a brief tour of the station and some historical background on the Brightline project.

We also planned to ride a train bound for West Palm Beach but were disappointed to hear that the incoming train we were supposed to ride was sideswiped by a car disobeying the at-grade crossing signs. Even further, a passenger in first-class lost their patience and jumped through an emergency escape window, necessitating the cancellation of a few afternoon runs and cutting our round-trip ride short at Fort Lauderdale. Despite these unavoidable setbacks, our entire experience at Brightline was fantastic. All of the details have been considered, from the moment you enter the station to the moment you get off the train. MiamiCentral's waiting area is comfortable with enough options to help pass the time quickly, station platforms are easily accessible with escalators and elevators, and train doors are level with the platform.



Once aboard, train interiors are impressively modern, and even the 'Smart' economy section offers plenty of comfort and convenience for any rider. Seats are plush, tray tables are big and sturdy enough to set down an entire laptop computer, and there are enough power outlets and USB ports for almost everyone's needs. Expansive, clean windows offer excellent views of passing scenery, though retractable sunshades are available if desired. Bicycle hooks are an appealing inclusion for long-distance commuters. Luggage racks anticipate the future needs of airport travelers to be served by Orlando International Airport extension and a potential infill station at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. There is even a comfortable bench seat outside of the restroom with a wood-topped trash receptacle beside it. The return trip was even better; though we still sat in Smart class, we were given complementary snacks and wine as a consolation for the delay and shortened trip. A free upgrade to SmartPlus, if you will, regardless of where you sit, you get your money's worth with a ride on Brightline. (continued on the **next page**)

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## All Aboard Events

Our upcoming event dates are set, but some final times and locations are still being determined. Please check the website for updates.

**Sat, December 8<sup>th</sup>:** AAWA Annual Holiday Meeting at the River's Edge Restaurant in **Tumwater**, from 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM.

**Sat, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019:** Business meeting in **Centralia**.

**Sat, March 16<sup>th</sup>:** AORTA Eastern Oregon Rail Summit from noon – 4:00 PM in **La Grande**.

**Sun, March 31<sup>st</sup> – Wed, April 3<sup>rd</sup>:** RPA Spring Meeting in **Washington, DC**. See railpassengers.org for more details.

**Sat, April 13<sup>th</sup>:** Business meeting in **Seattle**.

**Sat, May 18<sup>th</sup>:** RPA Northwest Division Meeting in **Cut Bank, MT**.

### **RailNation 2018 Miami** *from page 3*

Over the next several days, RailNation facilitated several informative and productive discussions on a wide range of transit topics. Highlights include first/last mile solutions in the Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit (SMART) Plan, Brightline's business model of using real estate to help pay for infrastructure, the secret ingredients to the Capital Corridor's outstanding performance. Among the speakers were Patrick Goddard, President of Brightline; Stephen Gardner, Amtrak's Executive Vice President; Joe Boardman, former Amtrak president; and Gene Skoropowski, a former executive of both Brightline and the Capitol Corridor. Before I knew it, Sunday morning's business



session was finished, and I was saying goodbye to so many amazing people with whom I simply couldn't wait to meet again.

As a first-time RPA attendee, I was surprised by the number of outstanding professionals who took time out of their busy schedules to hear from us passenger rail advocates and share some of their expertise with us. Not only did I gather tons of useful information, but I made so many wonderful friends from all across the world. Whether you are new to the transit world, a passionate young person looking at a career in the rail industry, a seasoned advocate looking to make a difference, or just a fan of trains, RPA meetings like this are a fantastic environment in which to make new friends, learn about industry opportunities, and become more involved in the future of America's passenger rail network. I hope this summary of my journey to RailNation 2018 in Miami will inspire you to consider attending RPA's Day on the Hill in March/April, the Northwest regional meeting in May, and RailNation California 2019 in October.



*All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include Charlie Hamilton, Harvey Bowen, Luis Moscoso, and Karen Keller.*



## **One Year Later: Remembering Jim and Zack** *by Karen Keller*

December 18th, 2017 was to be a day of celebration. When someone on Facebook posted a WSDOT camera shot of train cars tilting off the bridge at Mounts Road, I thought it had been Photoshopped and replied, "That is not funny." Mercifully, the post was quickly removed.

Along with several other volunteers, I had planned to work at one of the stations along the Cascades line, handing out commemorative lanyards to passengers. I'd planned to ride #502 to volunteer at the new Tacoma Station.

I'd join Jim Hamre and Zack Wilhoite, who had grabbed tickets to Kelso on the first southbound and were planning to transfer to #502 for the northbound return. When the news became crystal clear that a tragedy was unfolding, I drove out to Centennial Station and hunkered down with several other volunteers. We were speechless, helpless, and heart-broken. We had friends aboard #501, both passengers and employees. All we could do was pray for their safety.

We miss our dear friends Zack and Jim very much. They were amazing people. I was shaken enough that it took me a few months to get back on a train, but now I'm riding frequently again. It's still very safe, enjoyable, and economical transportation, and we anticipate that the changes based on the National Transportation Safety Board hearings will increase safety for passengers and employees. Jim and Zack would want us to carry on promoting intercity passenger rail, and we do that happily in their memory.