



WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

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

US House, Senate committee reject DOT position, show strong support for passenger rail; near unanimous support from Wash. House delegation

It was a tense beginning to the funding process when the US House Appropriations subcommittee with Amtrak jurisdiction approved a fiscal 2006 transportation bill on June 15 with only \$550 mill. for the national passenger railroad. This represented a 55% cut from 2005. The subcommittee claimed "80% of Amtrak passengers would still receive service," because it stated \$550 mill. would continue most corridor

lease can only serve to further lower public respect for Congress."

On June 21, the full Appropriations Committee turned aside several attempts to increase Amtrak funding and forwarded the bill to the full House with the killer \$550 mill. intact. Amendments on the floor were assured.

The transportation bill went to the House on June 29 and, in a major victory for passenger rail, Amtrak's 2006 funding was raised to \$1.176 bill. This is nearly the amount approved for this year. The amendment, offered by Reps. Steve LaTourette (R-OH) and James Oberstar (D-MN), was approved on a voice vote.

There were also two big, recorded pro-passenger-rail votes. An amendment to strike language prohibiting 18 routes, including all long distance trains, from operating was approved 269-152. This amendment was offered by Reps. Corrine Brown (D-FL), Nick Rahall (D-WV) and Robert Menendez (D-NJ). It won 73 Republican votes.

A third amendment, offered by Rep. Mark Kennedy (R-MN), would have diverted \$100 mill. from Amtrak to homeless housing. It was easily turned aside on 59-362 vote. LaTourette said the amendment was a "wolf in sheep's clothing" and its main purpose was to hurt Amtrak. Kennedy has not supported homeless issues in the past.

Eight of our nine Washington House members correctly supported the Brown amendment and opposed the Kennedy amendment. They were Doc Hastings (R-Pasco), Cathy McMorris (R-Spokane), Norm Dicks (D-Belfair), Jay Inslee (D-Bainbridge Island), Rick Larsen (D-Everett), Brian Baird (D-Vancouver), Jim McDermott (D-Seattle) and Adam Smith (D-Tacoma). The lone (See **Support**, page 4)

Mount Vernon Intermodal Station problems resolved

By C.B. Hall

Mount Vernon's splendid new Skagit Station is serving rail travelers with a fuller range of amenities, now that snafus that hindered the station's usage since its dedication last August have largely been resolved. On June 1, the station's owner, the city of Mount Vernon, conveyed title for the facility to Skagit Transit (SKAT). Dale O'Brien, SKAT's executive director, informs WashARP that the long-awaited Amtrak ticketing machine should be in place by mid-August. An outdoor train-status monitor has already been installed, and a second one is awaiting installation inside.



Sens. Patty Murray (D-Seattle) and Conrad Burns (R-MT) are two of the Senate's strongest advocates for a national passenger rail system.

operations. In reality, most of that amount would be consumed by debt service and mandatory railroad retirement payments. There would be no intercity passenger rail service at \$550 mill. Bipartisan outrage to the funding level was quick. "There will be 31 states who lose all passenger rail service completely," Rep. John Olver (D-MA) told the Associated Press. Rep. Denny Rehberg (R-MT) told the Great Falls Tribune, "I'm going to fight these Amtrak cuts in the full committee. If I have to, I'll take our fight for the *Empire Builder* to the floor of the House."

NARP Executive Director Ross Capon said, "The subcommittee's action is particularly unfortunate when Americans are showing increased interest in more transportation choices, especially rail. The transparently misleading statements in the subcommittee's re-



Amtrak *Cascades* train 513 pauses July 9 to board passengers at Skagit Station on its trip from Bellingham to Seattle.

Photo by Jim Hamre

SKAT, which is headquartered at the intermodal station, has personnel on hand to keep the Amtrak waiting room open for all four of the daily Amtrak *Cascades* arrivals on weekdays, and three of the four arrivals on Saturdays and Sundays. Only the southbound weekend evening trains from Vancouver, BC arrive to a closed station.

In addition to Amtrak and SKAT, the handsome brick structure serves Greyhound too. The station also houses a spacious meeting room and the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce.

Following last August's dedication, problems developed because full-sized (See **Mount Vernon**, page 4)



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

Good News from DeeCee; Concerns in Olympia; Your Passenger Rail Ombudsman

As late as the summer solstice rail advocates feared that this year at last, given the rapidly growing federal deficits, another Amtrak-hostile Administration, and Congressional concerns about everything from Culture wars to Mideast wars, Amtrak could easily be left to starve. I had happily underestimated the dedication to passenger trains from a large bi-partisan group of Congress people, urged on by we who pled, in an era of congested highways and chaotic airports, that the US alone among industrialized democracies not abandon rail, the safest, most energy efficient means of intercity transportation extant.

Rail advocates nationwide contacted their US House members in the days before the 29 June vote. I'm sure many of you did so on your own time and dime. I am dedicated but also compensated. I wish to single out Whatcom County WashARPer C.B. Hall, who spent many hours calling WashARP members from two Congressional districts, asking you to remind your representative of the need to preserve intercity passenger rail in our country.

We can be pleased that eight of our nine-person House delegation made pro-Amtrak votes, including 4th and 5th District Republicans Doc Hastings (Pasco) and Cathy McMorris (Spokane). WashARP Board members from District 8 plan to meet with Rep. Dave Reichert (R-Bellevue), the lone negative vote, during the upcoming Congressional recess in an effort to persuade the distinguished former King County Sheriff to join his colleagues in supporting intercity rail. As Reichert has actively supported federal funding for trolleys in part of his Eastside district, WashARP feels he will listen to our case for intercity rail as well.

Following the House victories, I phoned the DeeCee offices of Representatives Steve LaTourette (R-OH) and James Oberstar (D-MN), the House floor leaders for Amtrak funding, and also Denny Rehberg (R-MT) and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), westerners who gave strong pro-rail passenger speeches. In phoning, or in person when I am in the nation's capital, I have found staff people of these other states are pleased and surprised when a resident of

Washington state acknowledges and praises their boss. I also phoned the Pasco office of Doc Hastings and the Spokane office of Cathy McMorris, applauding their affirmative votes.

While the game is not yet won, the 18-4 pro-Amtrak vote in a key Senate committee on 28 July bodes very well. It's important that key support from both Republicans and Democrats came from all corners of our country, including from Alaska's Ted Stevens (R) and Hawaii's Daniel Inouye (D)! As Amtrak will not directly serve the 49th and 50th states, it is refreshing to see the two senators' concern for the entire nation.

The House bill and particularly that of the Senate committee properly insist upon Amtrak reform. Despite affirmative changes already instituted by Amtrak Pres. David L. Gunn and the additional reforms mandated by Congress, Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta has recommended the President veto the legislation because Congress did not accept the Administration's "reform," which most informed ob-

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servers believe would bring about the end of most intercity rail passenger service in this country. I cannot see Bush spending political capital on vetoing what most in DeeCee feel is a minor issue, and is contrary to the wishes of a clear majority in Congress.

While the news from Washington on the Potomac is quite good, we have some concerns in Olympia. The politically-courageous passage of a transportation funding package by the 2005 Legislature is under fire in the form of Initiative 912, which has ample signatures to get on the November ballot. I-912 would roll back the motor fuel tax funding portion of the package. While this "gas tax" by law cannot be used for rail or transit service, the vehicle weight fee portion of the funding, not included in I-912, which can and would be used for rail investments, would be threatened from two angles should I-912 pass. Tim Eyman and his minions have promised to write a second initiative overturning the weight fees, and, lacking the gas tax, some road construction interests would surely go after the monies now earmarked for rail and transit.

WashARP applauds the recent Legislature's increased attention to freight rail, which fully acknowledged that the state has a legitimate interest in, including in the Class I mainlines, and it's more than just that of a degree of operational regulation. In an effort to follow the legislation,

WSDOT has instituted an internal reorganization where much of the freight rail work is being moved from the Rail Office to the Freight Strategy & Policy Office. The Rail Office will continue to administer the successful nationally-praised passenger rail program and will give freight rail technical assistance to FSPO. We trust the two Offices will work closely and cooperatively, and the talented and dedicated staff people assigned to the two Offices will continue to successfully move forward the cause of rail transportation in our state, as the populace and Legislature have increasingly demanded.

My primary role as WashARP's executive director has nearly always been to advance the cause of passenger (and freight) rail at all levels. As previously written here, an important secondary role is to serve as a representative or ombudsman from rail passengers and users to rail providers. Again, if WashARP members or other rail advocates have concerns or compliments about rail service, pass them on to me. In the past near-twenty years, this office has enjoyed affirmative relationships with those offering rail service. Our praises and concerns are listened to.

For two years we have been concerned about the early closures of the Bistro car on the Amtrak Cascades. For example, those boarding in Olympia on northbound 500 have barely had time to purchase drinks or snacks before the Bistro closes, sometimes as early as the Narrows Bridge, more than an hour before arrival in Seattle. Diligent efforts by Seattle-based Amtrak people and the WSDOT Rail Office have persuaded DeeCee-based Amtrak functionaries to grant use of "point-of sale" computer technologies which will both make sale procedures more quick and efficient and will bring inventory control out of the 19th Century, allowing longer stay-open times. While POS is a good step forward, several of you have reported no change yet in Bistro closing times. But both WSDOT Rail and lead Northwest Amtrak personnel are working with technical and human resources to bring about the needed time-open extension. I will continue to pursue this issue.

Longer Bistro hours and more efficient service is not only good for Cascades passengers, it brings in more money from the sale of high-margin food and beverages. I understand, unlike food service on some Amtrak trains which are said to lose money, our Bistro cars do not. But added Bistro revenue can bring the Cascades closer to the operational financial break-even point, a condition desired by both the many friends and few foes of our passenger (See Flem, page 5)



The View Down the Tracks

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with Jim Cusick

The Peoples Monorail

I remember the first car I had to buy on my own. I had to go to a signature loan outfit. That car is now a collector car, and I still have the original paperwork. 32% APR. WOW! Well, it was my first loan, I had no credit history, and all that the loan outfit had was my good looks and a steady job for collateral (it was an old car, even at that time).

The high final cost of the monorail made me reminisce about this loan. The Seattle Monorail Project backed itself into the corner by the way it set up the financing options, but the actual cost of the physical product is in line with most elevated rail projects of that capacity, light, heavy, or otherwise.

Just as with Sound Transit, the SMP has been bitten by the public perception of the budget vs. year-of-expenditure Sound Bite. Yes, it's a bad financing plan. However sensationalizing this cost as SKYROCKETING from around \$2 bill. to \$11 bill. is misleading. Unfortunately, those involved with the monorail promised pie-in-the-sky solutions and couldn't deliver. As I overheard some ST staff people discussing amongst themselves once concerning the SMP, "Promise Less, Deliver More!"

There is one solid message the citizens of Seattle are sending with all the votes. It's Mass Transit Stupid! Not wider avenues and streets, but a fast, reliable and grade separated system. Whether it's monorail or light rail, they want a system that if anything will at least "go around it all." As they regroup, maybe the answer lies in a modification of the plan. Not a total modification, but enough to tilt the balance on the cost/benefit scale.

The People in your neighborhood.

Almost a year ago, I retired from my profession as a computer programmer. Alas, not as a Microsoft Millionaire, but in response to the direction the profession had taken. An old joke in the IT business was that if architects built buildings the way IT designed systems, the first time someone slammed the front door, the building would collapse. The ultimate BSOD! For the time being, I've gone to

*Blue Screen of Death, a derisive term used when your Microsoft Windows operating system crashes.

work back in an old field – auto parts of all things. Any of you who think I've become a turncoat can relax. If anything, I've become more convinced that the direction the automotive industry is going is the reason alternate transportation modes need to be vigorously pursued.

Now I'm not speaking from the typical environmental and social perspective, I'm speaking from the gearhead perspective. I'm not one to shy away from any work on my vehicles, and with the new On Board Diagnostics (OBDII) system in cars, it's actually can be easier. Simply put, the problem is Planned Obsolescence. Automobiles aren't built with long term economical maintenance in mind as they used to be. Problems such as cheap materials, parts not robust enough to do even what used to be basic machining, availability of replacement parts, proprietary parts. Modern cars do go much longer without the usual basic maintenance we were used to, such as tune

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ups, cooling system flushes, transmission maintenance, those chores have given way to the unfortunate process of having to replace complete assemblies when the life of the item has reached what used to be a "rebuild phase," if not the complete vehicle. Cars have become throwaway items after 10 years. Ah yes, the market at work.

However, my move to the automotive industry, and in particular, to the place of business I work at, really solves one of the big commute problems facing the region. In fact, there are those who think that there is no need for any infrastructure improvements, if everyone just lived near work. Well, I've done that. I now work 7 minutes away, on the other side of my hometown.

What has been the most enjoyable part of this is the people I've been meeting. It's something you should try. I've run into a lot of old acquaintances, not only social, but also those transportation related. I've run into other former I-405 Citizens Committee members from both sides of the modal fence, council members, the mayor, business owners, my kid's DARE officer, city staff, people from RAIL, even the guy from the library recognized me. I suggest a stint in a local business as a way to reconnect with your community.

However, the most interesting discussion I've had to partake in at work is the

one concerning...

The Peoples Gas tax

So here I am, surrounded by "automotive" types, and when the discussion of the 9-cent increase occurs, along with Initiative 912, I've run into a curious situation. I've found myself defending the gas tax, of all things. Well, actually, I've been one to defend the reasons why the gas tax was implemented, and have tried to educate those who question it.

The most common objection that everyone has is that they don't understand where the money goes. Mostly they figure WSDOT is wasting it. Now I'm not one to say that government is a model of efficiency, but when I worked on TRAINS for one of my programming contracts, I was impressed by the thoroughness and quality of the projects and processes I worked with. Go ahead and audit the DOT. They should pass with no problem. TRAINS, by the way, is the financial system they are using.

However, how does the public know what to think when all they have is the normal media outlets to rely on, and you know how I feel about that.

They could rely on me.

Riiiiight! I've tried. I even have copies of Mileposts and Milestones at work. "How can you believe that?" "Um, it's a report to the governor, so it can't be accused of having any 'spin' for public consumption." "Well, they're all in cahoots, anyway." Sheesh...

Let's think about that for a minute. Even if there was some sort of conspiracy within Washington State, what happens when they go after Federal dollars? If 49 other states are looking to get a hold of that same money they would be sure to have their numbers look good, so no one state could be that out of line with their cost estimates. If your costs were out of line, it would surely be made evident in the realm of the competition for the Federal dollars.

After much discussion, I eventually threw up my hands and said "You guys are entrepreneurs, if you think they can't do it right, maybe you can figure out how to build and operate highways. Why, you could charge a TOLL!"

The DOT has a lot of outreach to do to fight Initiative 912.

If the gas tax is repealed, we will balkanize the transportation of the state, and the ones that will suffer are the rural communities. The Puget Sound region will start to pass it's own regional packages and what will start to look quite economical is Sound Move – Phase II. (See **Cusick**, page 4)

Empire Builder receives new look in August

Amtrak is relaunching the *Empire Builder* in its ongoing efforts to boost revenue on the long distance network. Beginning this month, *Builder* passengers will experience refurbished equipment, new amenities and improved on-board service.

First class passenger will be offered wine and cheese tasting featuring wines from our state and cheese from Wisconsin and Minnesota. Upon boarding, passengers will be presented with a glass of wine or cider and a gift package containing a sample assortment of health and beauty, consumables and entertainment products.



Tom and Kristi Hamre prepare to board the westbound *Empire Builder* on a late July evening at Essex, MT.

Photo by John, Izaak Walton Inn

Dining car menus will be enhanced with entrées reminiscent of the Great Northern RY.

Coach passengers will be offered at-seat meal service and the opportunity to play board games in the lounge car. The upstairs snack bar will be staffed during peak seasons.

The Trails and Rails interpretive guide program will expand to cover Chicago-St. Paul and Williston-Browning, complementing the program currently offered between Seattle and Glacier Park.

The interiors of the sleeping cars have received extensive renovations and feature a new blue and white color scheme and Blossom Cherry wood grain laminates. Blue hues also adorn cushions, carpets and drapery. The bedrooms have newly designed toilet and shower units. The same color scheme provides a much brighter room in the new public area toilets. The public shower has been redesigned and has a larger changing area that includes a large seat and vanity with mirror and a seat in the shower area.

In the lounge car, one end has been changed to create improved seat groupings. These small seat groups have new drink tables positioned between them. Dining tables have been added to the other end. The interiors of the coach and dining cars have also been refurbished.

The *Empire Builder* enhancements are the model for improving the rest of the long distance trains. Reasons for choosing the *Builder* include its good on-time performance and the fact it is the most popular train in the country.

Amtrak will celebrate the new *Empire Builder* with public events at Seattle, Portland and Chicago on Aug. 21st, and Whitefish and Minot on Aug. 22nd. The Seattle event, at King St. Station, will be from 3:00 pm to 4:45 pm.

Support, from page 1

disappointment for passenger rail advocates was Rep. Dave Reichert (R-Bellevue) who voted against Brown and for Kennedy.

In his impassioned floor speech in support of Amtrak, Rep. Rehberg (R-MT) said, "The distance of my district spans the distance from Washington, D.C. to Chicago. Rail in Montana is not an essential service, it's a critical service. In many cases we have good bus service; it just doesn't happen to be in the area where Amtrak is. We have good air service; unfortunately, it just doesn't happen to be in the area where the rail is. So in our particular case, having a large geographical area with very little population, it becomes a critical service to provide not only (for) our products, but our passengers as well." Rehberg also said of his breaking ranks with the White House and his own party leadership. "This is not about being a Republican or a Democrat, this is about doing what's right for Montana."

Amtrak Pres. David Gunn said, "We are grateful for the action taken today by the House of Representatives to increase the level of Amtrak funding in the Transportation Appropriations Bill. This sends a strong message that many in Congress believe that we need to maintain a national passenger rail system while we also have the opportunity to debate the recently released package of strategic reform initiatives and improve our nation's rail passenger service."

Predictably, Norman Mineta, US DOT secretary, panned the House action, saying its actions encouraged "wasteful spending and inefficient operations."

Then it was the Senate's turn to take up legislation for funding Amtrak. On July 19, the Appropriations subcommittee handing transportation approved \$1.4 bill. for Amtrak in 2006. Sen. Patty Murray (D-Seattle) was one of several senators instrumental in getting funding to this level. Two days later the full Appropriations Committee added another \$50 mill. and passed the bill. As Sen. Murray noted, the \$1.45 bill. is between the \$1.4-1.5 bill. DOT Inspector General Kenneth Mead said was the minimum need for Amtrak in 2006.

NARP's Ross Capon expressed concern about language in the Senate bill that threatens Amtrak's ability to continue providing on-board food, and possibly sleeping cars. "Congress should not be dictating Amtrak menus. Amtrak experience running bare-bones long distance trains...has not been good. Creating a network of third-class trains would drive away riders and hurt the bottom line."

Said Sen. Conrad Burns (R-MT), "Food

and beverages, as well as sleeper cars, are essential components of long-distance train travel. I agree that Amtrak needs to be more aggressive in contracting for food and beverage service, but I also believe we need to keep those amenities available."

The full Senate will take up the transportation bill after the August recess. The message to Congress during August is to support the \$1.45 bill. Senate funding level and remove the language to micromanage Amtrak train operations.

Mount Vernon, from page 1

buses had trouble negotiating turns entering and leaving the station area, and thus could not use the facility at all. Rents being sought by the city for Amtrak and intercity bus access to the station ran into stiff resistance from the transportation providers.

The resulting stalemate was resolved when SKAT, at O'Brien's initiative, offered to take over the property from the city. The city agreed to the plan and then fixed the design problems affecting bus access before handing the keys to SKAT. "We've got the station pretty well up and running for what it was built for," O'Brien says.

Cusick, from page 3

I'll have to arm wrestle those People

Construction on Central Link is proceeding quite well. Ajax Parking no longer exists, and what will be the site of the future Tukwila station and Park & Ride is now the staging area for the Tukwila segment. Once the supports are in place the "walking crane" that will install the rail bed will start here and work its way to the Boeing Access Road. While most of the construction on Martin Luther King Way is utility relocation right now, a portion of the roadbed is taking shape just south of the McClellan St. station where the elevated portion meets M. L. King Way. For some real examples of progress, drive by the E-3 Busway and the Link maintenance base. The false work supporting the cast in place elevated sections has been removed. If you stand next to the Forest Street off ramp, and look over at the elevated section that will soon span Airport Way, you can see that two elevated rail tracks has the same footprint of a single lane freeway ramp.

During another tour of the Downtown transit tunnel construction some of the conversation with the participants, which included some Bellevue City Council members, showed that there is still some trepidation in the political community about bringing light rail to the Eastside.

That's fine, they can shun it. I'd be happy to fight for light rail to my neck of the woods, SR 522.

Of course, I have the feeling that if I-912 passes, and the only visible successes will be that of Sound Transit's rail systems, then we'll all be fighting to get light rail to our neighborhoods.

I can only wish.

The Future of Rail Transport

By Dick Burkhart

The future of rail transport, both passenger and freight, is brighter than many people realize. The current \$2-plus a gallon gas prices for our SUVs are a bare hint of things to come. What's going to happen when gas hits \$5 to \$10 a gallon? Seems ludicrous now, but I predict that this will become reality within a decade. As gas guzzlers become dinosaurs and more people move from suburbs to cities and town centers, rail will be hard pressed to keep up with the demand.

If you haven't heard about it already, what I'm talking about goes by the rubric "Peak Oil." The latest prediction by renowned petroleum geologist Colin Campbell is that world oil production will peak in 2008, plus or minus a few years. Campbell says that most of the world's "easy oil" has already been developed.

However prices are likely to temporarily subside or stabilize in 2005 and 2006 due to a number of substantial oil fields coming on line all at once. After that, many fewer prospects are in the pipeline - it takes over a half decade to develop a new discovery. Then there will be an increasing gap between demand and supply due to sharply declining production from many current oil fields.

Oil usage is now at least 4 times the rate of discovery. In fact world discovery peaked in 1965. Oil production has already peaked in most countries. The US peak was in 1971, leading to the first oil shock, and the recent peak of North Sea oil has already hurt Britain. Strong doubts have arisen that countries like Saudi Arabia have the reserves that

they claim. Caspian Sea oil is coming in less than expected. New discoveries off West Africa and other regions are modest in comparison to earlier discoveries and won't make up for the decline of current oil fields.

The implications of soaring oil prices for the suburban American way of life are grim. Think not just cars, trucks, and airplanes, but plastics, and all the oil used in food production and a vast array of products. A silver lining is that a damper on oil will put the brakes on global warming, at least if the world doesn't revert to a dirty coal economy. Unfortunately there are already signs of this happening, with cancelled natural gas fired generators being replaced by coal-fired generators.



A Deutsche Bahn (German Rail) ICE train on its run from Berlin to Hannover. Most of Europe and Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China recognize the importance of high speed rail as an integral part of their transportation networks and invest accordingly.

The US is woefully unprepared for the coming inflation and eventual economic decline. Reactionary politics and resource wars could get much worse. Europe is poised to compete for world cultural and economic leadership, with the Euro already challenging the dollar. But a ray of hope comes from Al Gore and others who are calling for a new Apollo Project – a decade of extraordinary investment aimed at energy independence.

Unfortunately some experts say that the world has already overshot its carrying capacity and that we'll experience a nasty world-wide collapse of industrial civilization within a few decades if we continue with "business as usual." The development of a sustainable world economy and smaller population will be a difficult task under even the best of circumstances. But it is possible, and rail transport can play a key role.

To learn more, go to the website "Oil

Depletion: Overview, Links, & Resources" (quasar.physik.unibas.ch/~fisker/401/oil/). Watch the video "The End of Suburbia" (www.endofsuburbia.com). Read the books "The Party's Over" or "Power Down" by Richard Heinberg, or "Limits to Growth" by Meadows, et al.

Dick Burkhart is a WashARP member and transit advocate living in Seattle. The views expressed are his own.

Flem, from page 2

While BNSF Railway considers it good business to run Amtrak trains using its tracks on time (with significant bonuses going directly to the BNSF bottom line), UP has not displayed that attitude. While it is hoped some new leadership at UP will bring about a more constructive attitude, the *Coast Starlight*, *Sunset Limited* and even our *Cascades* which originate on UP tracks in Eugene have suffered. However, added good news from the above-mentioned Senate committee bill is the stipulation the Surface Transportation Board address on-time performance with the freight railroads. While the "carrot" of bonuses has helped BNSF to keep Amtrak trains on schedule, perhaps a "stick" administered by the STB might persuade the other big Western railroad to try harder. We'll keep on this.

Finally, some kudos:

- To the Oregon Legislature for passing funding to keep the two Amtrak trains which serve the Willamette valley in operation. Consistent efforts by Oregon rail advocates helped ensure the positive vote once again.
- To the people and elected officials of Montana, led by their US Senators and single House member, who demonstrated to the world their need for and support of their *Empire Builder*. Montanans showed everyone the Big Sky State, a geographic and demographic antithesis of the Northeast Corridor, also values and requires intercity passenger rail service.

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Amtrak *Cascades*: www.amtrakcascades.com
Sound Transit: www.soundtransit.org

WashARP News

September 10: 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).

September 15: Commuter Rail Group meeting at **6:30 p.m.** at **Andy's Diner**, 2963 4th Ave. S., **Seattle** (transit information above).

October 8: WashARP meeting at approximately **noon** in **Bellingham**. Details and speakers are still being finalized. Northwest Washington members will be mailed details in Sept. Or you can contact Lloyd Flem (see p. 5) or C.B. Hall at kaannos@netzero.net or 360-592-5023.

WashARP welcomed the following new members in June and July: Dale van Pelt, Seattle; Jo Childers, Seattle; Karl Otterstrom, Seattle; Joyce Jinka, Seattle; Graeme Sackrison, Lacey; George Barner, Olympia; Steve Glover, Renton; Charles Henry, Seattle.

WashARP members contributing to this newsletter include C.B. Hall, Stuart Adams, Dick Burkhardt, Lloyd Flem, Jim Cusick, Tony Trifiletti and Warren Yee

WashARP board member Stuart Adams was recognized by the University Lions Club in June for his rail advocacy over the years and for his work as a volunteer on-board guide for the *Coast Starlight* between Seattle and Portland. Stuart travel 11,000 miles on Amtrak last year and had already logged 10,000 miles by June of this year.

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Rail Passengers
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Return Service Requested



Photo by Jim Hamre

June 11 meeting at Gustav's Restaurant in Leavenworth. He is the driving force behind getting an *Empire Builder* stop for the Bavarian-themed city nestled in the east slopes of the Cascades west of Wenatchee.

Eaton noted that Leavenworth started as a railroad town, but now the BNSF mainline bypasses the city to the Northeast. Passenger rail service is important to many communities such as along Montana's highline, he said. And, with an Amtrak stop, Leavenworth would see a substantial benefit to its tourist-based economy. The city of 2000 hosts about 2 mill. visitors each year.

Amtrak's Liz O'Donohue is shepherding the project through the company. Kurt Laird, Northwest superintendent for Amtrak is very supportive of the proposal.

The stop would provide an easy weekend getaway for Westside residents and allow Leavenworth residents to make day trips to the Seattle area. However, the potential for the station stop would lie east on the *Builder's* route. The city is poised to launch an advertised campaign across Montana once the new stop is inaugurated. Eaton noted that out-of-state tourist spending in Whitefish, MT (the busiest Amtrak stop in the Big Sky State) attributable to the *Empire Builder* is \$5.7

Rob Eaton, left, Leavenworth city councilman, was the featured speaker at WashARP's

mill a year. The tourist spending impact in Vancouver, BC from Amtrak's *Cascades* service is \$11 mill. a year. The first year estimate for station arrivals and departures (just from the Puget Sound area) is 5000.

Eaton said that Sen. Patty Murray (D-Seattle) is very supportive of the project and has a staff person assigned to it.

The city is taking a slow approach to the station project so that concerns of Amtrak and BNSF can be addressed as they come up. The first joint meeting between the city, Amtrak and BNSF was held in early April. The city presented its draft design for the station and platform. It would have an Alpine theme and would have heating and lighting. The proposal had the platform and station on the north side of the mainline, but BNSF wants the facility on the south side, adjacent to the existing siding. This would allow excursion trains for events the such as Christmas tree lighting to be parked at the station during the day. Now the train has to be moved to Wenatchee for storage. While this will make the station more useful it increases the cost as access to the site will be across private land instead of the county right-of-way.

The cost is about \$500,000. The city and Port of Chelan will contribute and they are looking for \$100,000 from the federal government.

The hotels will run shuttle buses to meet the trains. The Audubon Society has proposed building a walking trail from the center of Leavenworth to the station, a distance of 0.7 miles.

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