

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."

Amtrak board fires President David Gunn Political firestorm results amid Congress approving 2006 Amtrak funding and the Senate's 93-6 vote of confidence in Amtrak

On Nov. 9, in a move that surprised and shocked virtually everyone involved in rail transportation, the Amtrak board "released" David Gunn as president and CEO. The board appointed David Hughes as acting president and CEO. Hughes had been Amtrak's chief engineer.

The reaction was almost universally swift and negative from Congress, state partners, passenger rail advocates and the media.

Gunn had begun to clash with the board, which currently has three vacancies (with no pending nominations from the president to fill these slots), two recess appointees whose terms expire when Congress adjourns for the year (and who lack any experience in transportation), one Senate-approved appointee (board Chairman David Laney), and the Secretary of Transportation (Norm Mineta). In Sept., the board secretly voted to explore setting up a separate Northeast Corridor subsidiary and look at the possibility of spinning off the NEC to the private sector or the states. Gunn opposes this separation.

Laney, who has previously voiced strong support for Gunn, said, "David Gunn has helped Amtrak make important operational improvements over the past three years. Amtrak's future now requires a different type of leader who will aggressively tackle the company's financial, management and operational challenges. The need to bring fundamental change to Amtrak is greater and more urgent than ever before. The Board approved a strategic plan in April that provides a blueprint for a stronger and more sustainable Amtrak. Now we need a leader with vision and experience to get the job done." (Doesn't this describe David Gunn?)

In an interview with *Railway*

Age, Gunn said, "The Board members came in this morning (Nov. 9) and asked me to resign. I refused, so they fired me. I feel at least that I did the right, honorable thing. I wasn't going to abandon our people." He said that the Bush Administration's people want to implement their plan, "which is destroying Amtrak." "I stood in their way. That's why they fired me."

Some feel this is part of the Administration's continuing efforts to shift most of the costs of a national passenger rail network to the states, while continuing to pour tens of billions of dollars into highways and air service. In Laney's previous comments, including those made in Montana during Gov. Brian Schweitzer's June whistle stop tour in support of the *Empire Builder*, he endorsed a national system with both federal and state support.

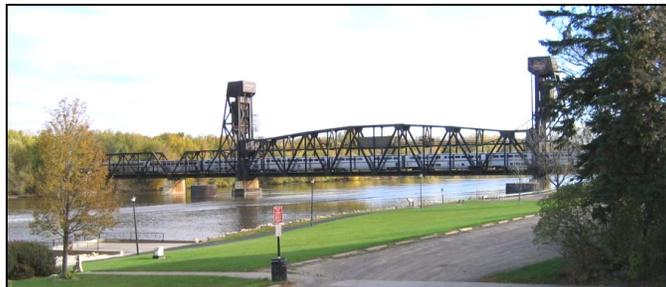
On Nov. 15, the Railroads Subcommittee of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held a hearing on "Current Governance Issues at Amtrak." Committee members were upset that Laney was the only member of the board to show up. Minetta, as usual, sent his representative, Jeffery Rosen. Rep.

Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) referred to "the FEMA-tization of Amtrak." Rep. Micheal Castle (R-DE), appearing as a witness, said he would introduce legislation to expand the seven member board to nine and require it to be bipartisan. He criticized the Administration for not offering nominations for all board positions.

Congress approved \$1.315 bill. in 2006 funding for Amtrak on Nov. 18. The amount split the difference between what the Senate and House previously approved. It's less than the \$1.8 bill. requested by Amtrak and certainly more than the zero funding proposed by the Administration. Sen. Patty Murray (D-Shoreline) said the bill "categorically rejects [the Administration's bankruptcy] approach and preserves all current rail routes so a meaningful debate on reform can continue without the threat of a crisis."

There are concerns with some language in the bill, including the low amount designated for operations, a limit on Amtrak's ability to manage fares to maximize revenue, a requirement to substantially expand Amtrak's money losing perishable express business, and a block on use of federal funds to "subsidize the net losses of food and beverage service and sleeping car service" if the Inspector General cannot certify Amtrak has achieved operational savings by July 1, 2006.

On Nov. 4, the Senate voted 93-6 in favor of attaching S.1516, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (the Lott-Lautenberg Amtrak reauthorization), to the huge budget reconciliation. S.1516 authorizes \$11.4 billion for Amtrak over the next six years. The House passed its version of the budget reconciliation on Nov. 18 without the reauthorization. Differences in the two versions will be worked out during Congress' December session. Rail advocates continue to work to get the Amtrak reauthorization into the final version.



Amtrak's eastbound *Empire Builder* crosses the Mississippi River at Hasting, MN on a beautiful Oct. 2005 day. Amtrak is already seeing dividends from the relaunched *Builder*, with its refurbished equipment and enhanced amenities. Though the "new" train only started in August, September sleeping car ridership surged ahead 33% over 2004. WashARP members traveling to the Twin Cities in late Oct. for the NARP board meeting found the *Builder's* three sleeping cars virtually sold out. Many Amtrak routes experienced double digit ridership gains over the summer and that trend continues into the fall. *Photo by Zack Willhoite*



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

Gunnshots in DeeCee; "Run Amtrak Like a Business"; Ombudsman Efforts; Farwell to "Buck"

While violent crime is said to have decreased a bit in recent years in our Nation's Capital, Gunn violence of a different kind, the sudden recent firing of the immensely popular and successful Amtrak President David Gunn, was felt by rail advocates, Congress, transportation professionals, and editorialists around the country. I join the overwhelming majority of Americans who know and care about rail in lamenting the firing. There are, however, a couple of respected pro-rail voices who supported the release of David Gunn. Their view is that it would be in the interest of American passenger rail service to have the Northeast Corridor infrastructure, at least for administrative and accounting purposes, to be separate from the remainder of Amtrak. I and many other pro-Gunn observers believe such administrative separation disserves a careful look. Mr. Gunn, a traditional old-school railroader, was adamant that NEC infrastructure and operations remain fully integrated. In addition, while the masses who opposed and the handful who supported the firing concede Gunn was a master at turning around failing rail systems (the New York City subway pre- and post-Gunn's leadership is the classic success story), but that another Amtrak president just might be more oriented to future growth for Amtrak after the turnaround and stability is complete. No other reasons than those given for Gunn's release have credibility. Even if a replacement for Mr. Gunn could be justified someday, the timing and means of the ouster were handled miserably by the Amtrak Board.

Following the firing, I was among the few rail diehards who stayed up all night watching on C-Span the delayed US House Railroad subcommittee grill two of the existing four (there should be seven) board members, all George W. Bush appointees, who showed up for the hearing. The missing two board members' absence gave cause to those who believe the current board consists only of this Administration's political supporters with little interest in or support for passenger

rail. Board Chairman David Laney, though also a friend of the President, had been head of the Texas Transportation Commission, and conducted himself fairly well under withering questions from the very-pro-Gunn House committee. Laney has also at times shown independence from the Administration's Amtrak zero budget proposal and the utterly insufficient federal role for intercity rail Secretary of Transportation Mineta has offered.

The House hearing was fascinating! As implied, it was a bi-partisan love-in for David Gunn and direct, sometimes hostile questioning of Laney and Mineta (who has never attended an Amtrak board meeting) designee Jeffery Rosen, a lead attorney for the USDOT. Where Laney attempted to give straight answers, Rosen, well...the kindest thing I can say is he tried to avoid answering simple direct questions. In this particular C-Span melodrama, Mr. Rosen played the slippery villain role well!

Republican committee members and

I join the overwhelming majority of Americans who know and care about rail in lamenting the firing [of Amtrak President David Gunn].

other Republican congressmen testifying were more decorous than were some of the Democrats, but all but one were obviously pro-Gunn and opposed to the firing. The one who favored the release of Gunn, the always Amtrak-hostile Rep. John Mica (R-FL) didn't really help Laney and Rosen much, as he ignored even their efforts to answer his questions and appeared to be playing strictly to the TV cameras. A totally different viewpoint emerged from fellow Floridian, Rep. Corrine Brown (D), who bore in on Laney and particularly Rosen with a pro-Amtrak vengeance that to Amtrak supporters, is good theater.

I agree with NARP that rail advocates who respected David Gunn and the great progress he was making in turning Amtrak around, should temper any outrage over the firing and work with Laney, whom we hope has an affirmative vision for a national passenger rail future. We hope Laney pays attention to the states, especially those like CA, WA, OR, IL, NC and ME, which have invested serious state bucks in intercity passenger rail. Laney needs to heed Congress, key Amtrak employees and others with rail and transportation expertise, and ignore the musings of the think tank savants who feel passenger rail is totally unneeded in the US because THEY CAN FLY faster

from, say, Boston to LA, or Chicago to Seattle. (By that logic, we should not have automobiles either. A helicopter from Everett to Seattle is faster than driving!)

On the bright side: The Senate will now only confirm future board members with some knowledge and interest in rail and transportation. They could include successful corporate execs but from other interests and backgrounds too. And a new Amtrak president better be strongly qualified to lead Amtrak now and in the future. A difficult role, especially when following David Gunn.

Senator Trent Lott (R-MS) introduced an Amtrak reauthorization bill supported 93-6 by the Senate. I will support the 93 unless and until the Administration comes up with a plan and funding that would be better for passenger rail for America's future. So far little or nothing of consequence has emerged from Mineta or others in the administration. I'll wait, but in the interim continue urging our Congressional delegation to keep on the Amtrak track until The Better Plan surfaces.



Congress is showing increased support for rail investment. This is good. However, a couple of details in the recently adopted Amtrak budget are troubling. One "condition" in the funding bill resulted from Amtrak's having offered some ultra-low fares on trips from the Northeast to Florida. These low fares got some folks (regional airlines?) upset, causing one or more members of Congress to propose a "law" that Amtrak could not offer any fare less than 50% of the highest regular fare for a given trip. This is exactly what airlines do in order to fill otherwise empty seats, maximizing revenue per flight. Congressional Amtrak foes and some friends have repeatedly insisted the Amtrak execs "run Amtrak like a business." Now Amtrak's efforts to increase revenue by filling otherwise empty seats is being forbidden!

First, on principle, this prohibition should not exist. But assuming there might be a bit of legitimacy in some cases, should Congress be able to micromanage corridor trains in California and our Amtrak *Cascades* where the states have bought the trains and pay those operating costs not covered by fares and other train income? Washington has a very successful Schools on Trains program where school kids and their parent-teacher chaperones pay lower fares to occupy space otherwise (See **Flem**, page 6)



The View Down the Tracks

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with Jim Cusick

What's that in the lane?

Now that I-912 has been rejected, what will happen to the area roads? Now that the Monorail's 5th vote has ended in failure, what can be done for Seattle's mobility problems? Now what?

Remember that the package the legislature put in place requires that for any of the Puget Sound projects to go forward, the people in the region must vote for a local package to collect the money from the state. In their arguments I-912 proponents were very vocal about being the "victims" of the "Tax and Spend" politicians and then finished with a statement saying that we need more roads. Well, if they're arguing for more concise information about what gets spent where, and what the benefits are, I'm game!

After all, those of you who know me and follow my column know that there is plenty of information and planning out there. In my columns I've relayed information that was ignored by the local media, and told you details that were only a small part of the information readily available to the public for the I-405 Corridor. The same goes for SR 520. I am also one to admit I spoke up in agreement with Kemper Freeman. While this caused fellow committee member (and Transportation Choices executive director) Peter Hurlley to look at me like I had grown another head, it made sense after I explained. What Mr. Freeman said was that we shouldn't stop just at determining the cost of only I-405, but do the same for all the other freeways in the region.

Great idea! I wholeheartedly agree! After we have determined how much it really will cost, and know exactly what the benefits are when we solve our mobility problems with only roads, most will agree that the best solution is rail.

So here is my list of what can be done about the region's roads. There are a few simple, but not necessarily cheap solutions.

1) Eliminate all left-hand entrance and exit ramps. I don't care how cheap it was to build, it was a stupid idea. Putting slow, merging traffic into the fastest lane makes no sense. Billions could be spent redesigning this one problem, and should be.

- 2) Change any old-style cloverleaf interchange (e.g. I-405/SR 167) to a modern free flowing multi-level interchange. Guess what, the problem with the S-curves was never the curves themselves, but the fact that the major north-south route out of the valley is SR 167 and I-405. That interchange was designed the way it is because Renton was just an exit on the road built to bypass I-5 congestion (I-405). That's not what it turned out to be.
- 3) Create better entrance and exit ramps that allow freer flowing merging and exiting.
- 4) Eliminate the HOV lanes

What's that on the tracks?

No I haven't lost my mind. Part of the costs of the road improvements to the region's freeways is in the HOV area. For instance, on the I-405 corridor, of the \$7-8 Billion (budget) dollars, \$4-5 billion was to go to the 2 additional general purpose lanes, and approximately \$3 billion was

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going to HOV/transit improvements. A good portion of that was to be for direct HOV-to-HOV connections at all the major interchanges. I agree with former NJ governor Christine Todd Whitman, that HOV lanes are just another excuse to build more roads. So, why should I agree with a Republican governor who converted the HOV lanes in her state to GP lanes? What does NJ have that we don't have? It's laced with passenger rail. Not just the Amtrak NEC, but Metro-North, NJ Transit, PATCO, PATH, & SEPTA.

So, as a trade-off for giving up the HOV lanes, my proposal is simple. Just build rail with the money that we would have voted for in the regional package. Supplant the HOV portion of the RTID with Sound Transit 2+. In case you're interested, the plus (+) includes more rail options such as: light rail to the Eastside, commuter rail on the Woodinville subdivision using DMU equipment, extensions to Marysville and beyond, extensions to Dupont and beyond, putting rail in the East Lake Sammamish trail corridor, to name just a few.

As I alluded to just now, there are many possibilities for improvement in rail in the region. I have gone into detail in columns past, but let me reiterate, there is no reason to shy away from promoting it. I am happy to promote solutions that

help keep Eastside and rural Republicans neighborhoods livable.

What's that on the beam?

If you are a monorail proponent, then this is a time for reflection. If you are a supporter of rail, but not necessarily monorail, this is not the time to gloat. Right now there is no value in claiming victory for anyone on either side of the discussion. What should monorail proponents do? Simple. Go back to your roots.

While people might have voted against the plan because of its financing problems, what they have always voted for was mass transit, and preferably in an exclusive right-of-way.

If I were a strong believer in a monorail solution, I would be evaluating and promoting the real benefits, and being very critical and changing, if not removing, the things that cause the problems.

So, let's review, what are the benefits?

Exclusive ROW. This one of the monorail's best selling points. While Central Link opted for the more expensive tunneling option, they both perform at a higher level through the dense parts of the city. Now, where there seemed to be a loss of support, due to the way it was sold, was when the monorail supports and beams became larger in order to handle the larger vehicles the promise of high ridership dictated.

Remember what was first being sold with the monorail. A small footprint. The animation of the proposed monorail shows a smaller beam. However, this means the vehicles do not have the capacity of a light rail train. However, the Las Vegas monorail has the smaller profile that was promised. The LV monorail is the same as the one in Disneyland, and there the monorail is practically invisible. Why? For one, it lacks the safety walkway, and it also is only 1 story above ground level. The other difference is that the Disneyland monorail travels in only one direction, since it travels in a big loop. There is only one track in the areas it goes. This loop proposal has been put forward in Seattle, but since the monorail was trying to be like light rail, that was rejected.

Monorail also has issues.

It's Elevated. While this is a benefit for keeping speeds up, it is a visual intrusion. One of the issues that came up during the Sound Transit open houses in the Rainier Valley, was that while the opinions were split between the under- (See **Cusick**, page 5)

TANSTAAFL: A Semi-Satirical Look at a World Without Transportation Subsidies

By Tony Trifiletti

During the 2004 campaign our executive director contacted the candidates running for Congress from the 5th and 8th Districts to ask about their support for passenger rail. When he reached an aide to the Republican candidate for the 5th District seat, he received the answer, "We support passenger rail only if it pays for itself." Our executive director works with political figures day in and day out, so he's something of a diplomat. Had I been on the phone, I would have shot back, "When did I-90 ever pay for itself?"

Hanging around conservative Republicans like I do, time and again I'm confronted by people who think the gasoline tax is a user fee. And time and again I have to explain to them that highways are built and maintained by gasoline taxes, other transportation taxes and money drawn from the general fund. This is true not only in Washington state, but in all fifty states. "Well," they grumble, "that's only because they're spending our gas tax money on those worthless public schools and those welfare queens and their Cadillacs." That's when I have to explain the 18th Amendment to the Washington State Constitution which restricts gas taxes to highways and car ferries. If a state doesn't have a constitutional restriction requiring gas tax money to be spent on roads, then it probably has a statutory restriction. All of this is the legacy of the Better Roads Movement, an effort that began right after World War I and was funded by car manufacturers and the oil lobby. Brutally put, the gasoline tax is a tax on a commodity, not a user fee.

I hear the usual grumpiness about buses that are not stuffed to the gills and complaints that riders of public transportation don't pay their fair share of costs. That's true. But then neither do drivers.

Subsidies and History

Our highways have been subsidized since the Madison Administration. One of the five explicit powers granted to the federal government by the Constitution is to establish post offices and post roads. A post road is a road that *could* be used to deliver mail, not necessarily one that *is* used to deliver mail. The burning question of the 1820's was whether internal improvements, such as canals and roads, would be financed by the private or public sector. The National Republi-

cans, who later merged into the Whigs, took one side, and the Democrats took the other.

The Constitution also gives Congress the power to regulate interstate commerce, and that explicit power was quickly connected to internal improvements. Andrew Jackson vetoed an appropriation for a road that would have both begun and ended in Kentucky, stating that the road did not cross a state line and was thus unconstitutional for the expenditure of federal dollars. The fact that Kentucky was the political base of Henry Clay, one of Jackson's many arch-enemies, of course had nothing to do with it.

Canals were subsidized, and even rail started out on the dole. The state of Pennsylvania decided to build a rail line to link the state together and pierce the Alleghenies, a project known as the Main Line of Public Works. After spending a lot of money and getting very little for it, the

Hanging around conservative Republicans like I do, time and again I'm confronted by people who think the gasoline tax is a user fee....Our highways have been subsidized since the Madison Administration.

state sold the project to a group of private financiers in Philadelphia, who created the Pennsylvania Railroad, the standard gauge railroad of the world.

During the Civil War, Lincoln gave away vast tracts of the West, both to homesteaders and to railroads. The idea was for the railroads to sell the grant lands and use the capital to build rail lines extending across America. Nobody attempted to tell Lincoln that the West's population density was so sparse that it could not support passenger rail. Rather, the purpose of rail was create population density in the first place.

A Thought Experiment

For the sake of argument, let's say I'm a hard-nosed cost accountant armed with my mighty Excel spreadsheet and my manual of generally accepted accounting practices (GAAP). Let's say I'm the sworn enemy of all subsidies and want to set up a paradigm where every form of transportation pays for itself. Whenever I see a subsidy, I call out, "TANSTAAFL!" This is an acronym for "There ain't no such thing as a free lunch." While it doesn't sound very good in English, it sounds elegant in Italian: "*E finita la cucagna!*"

As a hard-nosed cost accountant, I look at our highway system and my brows furrow. Highways have no direct charged costs, so people use them at all

hours. Sometimes everybody and his brother wants to use the highways at the same time, a situation that occurs twice a day and is known as "rush hour." I see that and yell "TANSTAAFL!"

There is a way you can get around this, and we call it tolling. I grew up in New Jersey and every time I wanted to cross the Delaware River, I paid a toll to the port authority that owned all the highway bridges in the region. Even after the bridges had been paid off, tolls were charged because the federal legislation that created the Delaware River Port Authority authorized it to exist in perpetuity and those tolls were leveraged 10-to-1 for revenue bonds to support other port authority projects. Prior to the interstates, most superhighways in the East were toll roads, and even today highways such as the New Jersey and Pennsylvania Turnpikes still exist and charge tolls for the advantages they confer to the motorists using them.

But to paraphrase the governor of California, "Tolls are for girlie-men. Real men use transponders."

The earliest transponders weren't much more than intelligent circuits, and the best known was the *E-Z Pass* from

New Jersey. It started as a means of charging your trip across a bridge and paying for it with a monthly statement, rather than dropping bills or coins into the hand of a toll-taker. It was picked up by the New Jersey Turnpike, Garden State Parkway and the Atlantic City Toll Road. Then the port authority at New York picked it up, and now the toll roads of Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana use it.

Similar transponders are used in California for motorists who wish to use the toll roads that bypass suburban choke points in Orange County or the HOT lanes on the Riverside Freeway.

Oregon is proposing to put more sophisticated transponders in cars so that the mileage costs of using the roads are charged at the gas pump as a surcharge to the cost of gasoline in lieu of the gasoline tax. But Oregon is proposing a flat rate for each mile, ignoring the fact that different roads are owned by different levels of government. Oregon also ignores the time of day the road is traveled. My cost accountant looks askance at this kind of intellectual and financial sloppiness.

For the purpose of our exercise, I'm going to suggest a genuinely intelligent transponder. It clocks where and when you drive and passes that information (See **TANSTAAFL**, page 5)

Cusick, from page 3

ground and at-grade alignment, no one wanted an elevated alignment. Unless some technology can make a monorail beam both very small and very light, it will still have this problem. Titanium anyone?

Its Capacity. Light rail, despite its name, is a heavier mover of people than the monorail, unless you build monorail so robust that it no longer has advantages portrayed. Also, with less of a need for large supports, it's possible that the costs could be brought down enough that the tax revenues might be enough without resorting to the long term financing that sunk the proposal. Think of a lighter monorail as being equivalent to the lower cost Portland Streetcar.

Its Funding. Why should it be only car owners that pay? There should be some sort of LID on property owners (including homeowners) since it's advantageous for them having it in their neighborhood, also. Forget the attitude of making the evil car owners pay. Spread the cost around. MVET is only one option that should have been pursued.

What's that in the blender?

And while I'm at it, I'll confess that I've even modified my vision of light rail. Every time the subject comes up amongst friends and others in the general public, I invariably have to correct their usage of the terms "light" rail to describe Sounder, Link, and even the monorail. It's interchangeable to those not familiar. So, to add to this mix, I will coin a new rail term – "blended" rail.

Just to recap, and to help you easily describe the differences, here are the "sound bite" descriptions:

Heavy rail – "heavy" passenger loads, long trains, high frequency, exclusive right-of-way (NYC subway, Wash D.C.'s Metro, BART).

Light rail – "light" passenger loads, smaller trains, less frequency, able to mix with auto traffic and pedestrians (Portland's MAX, Salt Lake City's TRAX, Denver's RTD).

Monorail – ONE rail, must run in exclusive ROW, sharing the same advantages and disadvantages of heavy rail, but has

passenger loading characteristics of light rail, light loads (relative to heavy rail) (Las Vegas monorail)

Commuter Rail – Think Amtrak, which is for intercity, but for local residents, with stops at local towns and cities. Trains must be able to run with freight trains safely.

To that, I've added:

Blended rail – I actually have modified my position on the superiority of a system running in a fully exclusive ROW. When I first rode the Portland MAX Eastside line to Gresham in it's early years (when it was the only line), I remember feeling as though it was just a "bus on rails" while it was going only 10 mph through downtown and on out over the Steel Bridge. However, once it was in some of the areas where it was in it's own ROW, and not in the street, the speeds picked up until it actually felt like I was riding a train.

My version of a rail system is a blend of the others. Don't define the system with very short intervals between stations, much like that of a local bus route. Let the system run from town center to town center with the longer distances between stations. While it is between towns, run it at higher speeds, in its own ROW, but once it enters the actual business or residential districts, have it blend with the community better by having it perform in the "light" rail mode. This is where the overhead wires of light rail are an advantage.

See, I always have the perfect solution!

Since I've become convinced that voters in this region seem to know the cost of everything and the value of nothing, I will grace you with my perfect solution of how to pay for it all in the next column.

TANSTA AFL, from page 4

back to a central computer every time you pass one of our antennas. Once a month you get a statement of your driving record, and we bill your credit card. An average commuter can expect a bill for approximately \$350 per month. Let's toss out \$50 for taking the kids to soccer and eating out and call our commute bill \$300 per month. With two trips a day, five days a week, four weeks a month, that comes out to \$7.50

per one-way trip.

When you get that monthly bill, you notice that streets controlled by localities, counties and the state all have different rates. A limited-access highway like I-5 has its own premium rate. (We'll never call these highways "freeways" again.) But we also have surcharges.

"C" is for congestion. If many people insist on using the same highway at the same time, we charge a special rate, known as "congestion pricing." But we'll have a service level agreement with the motoring public to the effect that if people can't drive within ten miles per hour of the speed limit, we'll refund some money. If the highway is a mess due to an accident, we'll eat the cost and let the motoring public drive free for that trip.

"I" is for improvement. If we fix up a road by widening it or re-paving it, it wouldn't be right to spread those costs across other highways. We'll impose an improvement surcharge until the improvement is paid off.

"S" is for speeding. The transponder not only knows where you are and when, but how fast you're going. No longer will we need state patrolmen with unmarked cars or radar guns. Instead, we'll fine you directly on your monthly bill. We'll have connections with the computers of the large insurance companies, so if you're going fast enough, you'll get your bill for increased insurance premiums even before you get our monthly charges. No longer will people have to worry about SOV drivers using the HOV lanes and having to call a number to report violators. The transponder takes care of all that.

(To be continued next newsletter. Pres. Trifiletti delivered this paper at the Feb. 2005 WashARP meeting. If you can't wait for the next installment go to www.washarp.org/tanstaaf1.htm.)

A record 623,000 passengers rode the Amtrak Cascades during federal fiscal year 2005, up 4.4% over last year.

WashARP members contributing to this newsletter include Zack Willhoite, Jim Cusick, Darleen Flem, Lloyd Flem, Tony Trifiletti.

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All are evening numbers, except Lloyd's, which is available 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily.

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Washington, DC 20515
- U. S. Senate: Washington, DC 20510
- Capitol Switchboard (all members): 202 224-3121
- State Legislature: State Capitol, Olympia 98504
- Hotline for leaving messages: 800 562-6000
- Amtrak Reservations/Information: 800 872-7245
- WashARP: www.washarp.org
- NARP: www.narprail.org
- NARP Hotline: www.narprail.org/cms/index.php/hotline/
- Amtrak: www.amtrak.com
- Amtrak Cascades: www.amtrakcascades.com
- Sound Transit: www.soundtransit.org

WashARP News

January 14: WashARP meeting at **12:45 p.m.** at **Andy's Diner**, 2963 4th Ave. S., **Seattle** (just north of Spokane St.; on Metro routes 23 and 174, and near busway).

January 19: Commuter Rail Group meeting at **6:30 p.m.** at **Andy's Diner**, 2963 4th Ave. S., **Seattle** (transit information above).

February 11: WashARP meeting **11:30** at the **Panorama City** retirement community in **Lacey**. Cost: \$15 (cash or check) for the luncheon; includes room and other meeting costs. We will invite key political leaders. Driving: from I-5, north or south, take exit 108 (Sleater-Kinney Rd. south). Travel about 1 mile to Panorama City entrance, about 500 feet past 14th Ave. on the left. Follow Information Center signs to the Restaurant building. Proceed to the Garden Room on the second floor. Train: from and to the north, use trains 11 and 506. The program will fit between train arrival and departure. Pickup at Olympia-Lacey station will be provided. RSVP requested; call or email Lloyd Flem (see page 5 for contact info).

March 25: Joint NARP Region 8/WashARP/AORTA/MTWYarp meeting in Havre MT. Details and registration in the next newsletter. (No WashARP meeting in March.)

WashARP welcomed the following new members in Oct. and Nov.: Robert Schmitt, Bellevue; Eldon Leuning, Bothell; Sean Porter, Seattle; James Rohrscheib, Bainbridge Island; George Johnston, Bellingham; Gary & Marilyn Burlingame, Bellingham; Theodore Barrett, Everett; Glenda Choate, Bellingham; Tom Rawson, Seattle; Julie Rogan, Seattle; Laverne Seaburg, Seattle, Kenneth Smith, Newman Lake; Tom Janaky, Evergreen, CO; Todd Chaput, Centralia; Ralph Dufresne, Auburn; Ole & Kate Helgerson, Stevenson.

Washington Association of
Rail Passengers
P. O. Box 70381
Seattle, WA 98127

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Larry Kenck, left, national field representative for the Coalition Against Big Trucks (www.cabt.org), was the speaker at our Sept. 10 meeting. He thanked WashARP for it's

strong support of CABT. The coalition works on issues ranging from truck safety to truck size and weight to highway infrastructure matters such as construction and maintenance costs borne by all taxpayers. Nationally, 37% of Interstate highway bridges are deficient for 80,000 pound trucks. WashARP supports reductions in long distance trucking by moving more freight to the private railroads where it can be handled more safely and efficiently.

Flem, from page 2
empty on some midweek trains. (Friday through Monday trains are often full or near full.) This is revenue that would not exist without the Schools program. And this not only gives children a very safe and fun means of getting from, say, Kelso to the Tacoma museums and back, but also brings full fare paying parents on board for future trips, a results of the pleas of their new rail-loving kids. Educationally good and a fine marketing strategy! While thanking Congress for Amtrak funding, I shall also ask that our delegation try to limit or eliminate such counterproductive measures as dictating fares on **our** trains.



While it is unfortunately necessary to devote too much time to preserving our existing intercity passenger rail service, the Olympia office also serves as an ombudsman, bringing to the attention of appropriate Amtrak and WSDOT people concerns WashARP members have which, if addressed, would result in both better service for rail passengers and either more income or a better public presence for our existing trains. Currently there are five issues, all of

modest to medium import, we are working on. All were suggested by WashARP members. I hasten to say our Northwest Corridor trains and the *Empire Builder* remain among the best services in the Amtrak system (The once magnificent *Coast Starlight* has been "genericized" by Amtrak-DC, but more importantly has been devastated by chronic severe delays (often many hours late, mostly on the UP-owned tracks south of Portland). None of the five items would seem to cost Amtrak added money, would require more personnel, or would cause any administrative problems. No guarantees, but I'll keep working on the issues and have a report next newsletter.



Maurice "Buck" Harmon

Among the many accomplishments of former WashARP member, Olympia's Buck Harmon, who passed away recently, was his dedicated leadership in the development and construction of Centennial Rail Station. For years Buck served as president of the Amtrak Depot Committee. He relentlessly and effectively got businesses, institutions and individuals to donate money, materials, labor and talent to produce what became literally Amtrak's poster child. (The J Craig Thorpe painting of Centennial was the subject of the 1993 Amtrak calendar.)

Buck was leader of a small number of us who had to overcome skeptical and reluctant bureaucracies of government, Amtrak, and BN in order to get the job done. (In fairness, WSDOT and local governments did supply some funds to complete the mostly-private-donations project.) The initiative shown in building Centennial by Buck and his committee so impressed otherwise rail-skeptical legislators, the elects appropriated among the first significant monies for the then-new state rail program.

Centennial station is a tangible monument for a life full of major public good works. Thanks, Buck.

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