

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."

Washington's DOT Rail Office lays out plans for next two years

WashARP sat down with Ken Uznanski, manager of the WSDOT Rail Office, on Sept. 28 to discuss the state's plans for passenger rail improvement during the 05-07 biennium. We discussed a variety of other rail issues as well. Participating in the meeting for WashARP were Lloyd Flem and Jim Hamre.

The most notable project for most passengers will be the start of a fourth Amtrak *Cascades* round-trip between Seattle and Portland. The additional run, using the existing equipment pool, is scheduled to start July 1, 2006. WashARP suggests DOT and Amtrak explore a late May start for the new train in order to fully take advantage of Memorial Day and the start of the summer season. Uznanski noted that train schedules from Bellingham to Eugene will need to be adjusted to accommodate the added frequency. This will allow dwell times in Seattle for those passengers traveling **through** the Emerald City to be reduced from the current one hour southbound and one and a half hours northbound to 20-25

minutes. "We are happy to see the continuing strong increase in ridership on the Bellingham trains and the schedule changes will enhance that service," Uznanski stated. He noted that, overall, *Cascades* ridership is up 3.7% this year.

An issue that continues to be a concern for everyone is the less than adequate on-time performance of trains in the Northwest Corridor. In the second quarter of 2005 *Cascades* on-time performance was only 55.6%, 8% below a year earlier and well below the goal of 80%. Uznanski said that the freight railroads, after decades of downsizing their infrastructure, are not well equipped to handle the current explosive growth in traffic. More freight trains mean more opportunities for conflicts and delays—despite taxpayer investment of more than half a billion dollars in track and signal improvement through Sound Transit, WSDOT and ODOT. He was emphatic in stating, "There needs to be a candid look at how the railroads operate. They all need to move to a more scheduled operation, as Norfolk Southern and Canadian National have done." He thinks the states and Amtrak need to insist on stronger performance requirements from the railroads, but research to better assess passenger train access costs for use of the freight rail network is also needed. The states have requested federal funding for this study.

Two infrastructure projects scheduled to start construction next year will have major positive impacts on passenger service. The first is in Everett: PA Jct. Curve realignments and Delta Yard improvements. PA Jct. is where the lines to Vancouver, BC and Spokane branch. Extremely tight curves will be improved, increasing passenger train speeds by 15 to 20 mph and reducing travel time by two minutes for Seattle-Vancouver, BC trains. Tracks will be added in Delta Yard to make the facility more efficient and reduce impacts to the mainline. The first phase is funded at \$9 mill.

The second project is a set of crossovers between the mainline tracks at Centennial Station in Lacey. This (See **Plans**, page 6)

North Sound looking at Commuter Rail

By C. B. Hall

North Sound transit activists are weighing alternatives for connecting Whatcom and Skagit counties to Seattle via commuter rail. The scenario currently on the table calls for a Bellingham-to-Everett service coupled to the Sounder Everett service. The availability of self propelled cars (diesel multiple units or rail diesel cars) presents attractive equipment options, but administrative turf issues and overlaps with other transit systems loom as hurdles.

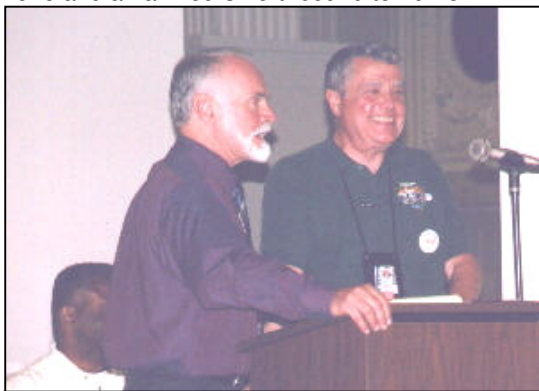
A Wilbur Smith Associates analysis completed this spring directs much of its attention at Colorado Railcar's DMU, although the study does not endorse any equipment option. The Colorado car offers the serviceability of a diesel engine, excellent fuel economy, rapid acceleration and deceleration, low capital cost per seat, and U.S. origins: the firm is the nation's only manufacturer of passenger rail cars.

The WSA study also looked at reconditioned Budd RDCs and the United Transit Systems DMUs that North Carolina's Triangle Transit Authority concluded an agreement for last year.

"The most recent data on performance and cost was from Colorado RailCar," WSA's Tom Jones explains. "That appeared to be the one that would be available the soonest."

Industrial Rail Services, of Moncton, New Brunswick, recently quoted a price of about \$10.7 million for an order of nine fully modernized Budd cars for three consists of 231-252 revenue seats each. The Canadian firm obtained the cars, built in the 1950s, after VIA Rail decommissioned them. The price works out to \$12,700-13,900 per seat. Colorado Railcar can offer three consists with approximately 275 seats each at \$22,400-25,700 per seat. The Colorado car, with its panoramic windows and streamlined nose, offers more glitz for the photo-ops that politicians love—though the boxier RDC promises a classic rail-roading feel.

The UTS equipment selected by TTA will furnish a revenue seat for a steeper \$33,600 for cars that, unlike the RDCs and Colorado Railcar, do not have lavatories. All three options are far cheaper than the *Cascades'* Talgo equipment, which (include **North Sound**, page 4)



Master of Ceremonies and WashARP Executive Director Lloyd Flem, left, introduces Amtrak President David Gunn at the celebration for the relaunch of the *Empire Builder* on Aug. 21 at King St. Station. Other speakers included King County Executive Ron Sims, seated to the left. For information on the refurbished equipment and new amenities, see the August/September **WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS**. For a report on the festivities, see the NARP Hotline of Aug. 26 at www.narprail.org/cms/index.php/hotline/more/2005/08/ (scroll to near the bottom of the web page).

Photo by Jim Hamre



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

Rail Capacity Study; Federal rail investments, Katrina and Rita; Ombudsman Efforts; I-912 Again; See You at Centennial

The 2005 Legislature allocated funds in the 2005-07 Transportation Budget to have the Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC) implement a state-wide rail capacity and system needs study. Representing WashARP, I as well as representatives of a score or so private, non-profit, and public sector interest groups were asked to provide comments on a draft preliminary scope of work concerning the study. Two hearings were held in September, with WashARP offering both oral and written testimony on 21 Sept. in Olympia.

WashARP's concerns are that this new study might "start all over" and not reference and include the many excellent works done in recent years, overseen by our state Rail Office, and in cooperation with Class I railroads, the ports, and other interested parties. (As an advocate for rail passenger and rail freight interests, WashARP was usually involved in development of past studies, which were completed by very competent consultants with broad expertise on rail issues.) Getting to the purpose of the study, we fully agree with the oft-stated position that added track capacity on east-west mainlines through the Cascades are needed, as well as alleviation of rail "choke points" near the major Puget Sound ports.

Assuming the study will detail these physical infrastructure needs, we also endorsed improved operational practices by the railroad companies as a means to, in effect, increase capacity. I referenced the article "Keep Them Rolling" from the current Railway Age, which showed how two of North America's most successful Class I's, Norfolk Southern and Canadian National, increased operational efficiency and throughput of trains with better infrastructure management without major physical infrastructure investments.

We believe, however, that it is often in the public interest for the public sector to partner in investments on the property of the Class I's (which is now being done with great success in the case of the Amtrak Cascades passenger trains and the BNSF on the Washington portion of the Northwest Corridor). But before we taxpayers dig in additionally to help with rail infrastructure, we must be assured that the public interest

is served, including maintaining on-time passenger train operation and appropriate freight service to Washington industries and shippers. Yes, there are "strings attached" to any of our taxes so invested! Interestingly, complaints about "strings" have generally **not** come from NS, CN, or BNSF, which do credible jobs of running Amtrak and commuter trains on their properties, but from the other two biggest US Class Ones, whose records at moving their own freight and commuter and intercity passenger trains are spotty, to put it mildly. Despite increasingly time-lengthened schedules, neither the *Sunset Limited* nor the *Coast Starlight* has had more than a very few if any on time runs during the entire past summer! Virtually all these chronic and massive delays were on the tracks of the "We don't want strings attached" railroads! This has devastated ridership and the reputation of these once fine passenger trains.

The study will also look at costs and benefits of existing and potential future state roles and investments in rail. WashARP surely approves of such analyses, as long as costs and benefits are for the long term and are fully comprehensive

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in nature. Some have suggested that any public investments in rail produce a direct profit, while no such demands are made upon road and highway, marine and aviation infrastructure spending. In considering public rail investments, such benefits as avoidance of highway wear, the costs and future supply of petroleum fuels, safety issues and environmental impacts must be considered in the cost-benefit equation. In the case of our shortline investment programs, the great benefits to rural and small-town Washington, which has not realized the economic boom of metropolitan Washington, should be considered.

We had the opportunity to comment on the detailed and generally very good second draft study scope of work, which was due on 7 Oct. WashARP will continue to stay involved. We believe our input, as well as that from other involved parties, is important to ensure a broad base of rail interests are considered in the doing of this important work.

Just when it seems a critical mass of the body politic has recognized the value of both passenger and freight rail and serious investments in rail are proposed and widely supported, events occur which allow the small but noisy anti-rail fraternity to exhume from-the-dead arguments against these in-

vestments. This time the tragedies associated with the Gulf hurricanes have given cover to a group of US House members whose philosophy is to downsize government, except for security, law enforcement, and defense functions. Amtrak is, as always at the top of their list.

While I believe the federal government has some responsibility in preventing, responding to, and repairing the results of such events as Katrina and Rita (as do local; and state governments and private and non-profit entities), Americans need to be vigorous in their insistence that tax monies are carefully spent. The recovery of the Gulf region should not enrich a few select interests. Naive on my part? Perhaps, but when once again threats to reallocate rail and other domestic-program monies are present, we need to be certain every dime allocated to the Gulf is well spent in the recovery/rebuild process.

At this writing, a "continuing resolution" in Congress maintains Amtrak funding into October. Beyond that, good bi-partisan funding proposals are being offered, though criticisms of "too much of this" or "too little of that" are heard from some interested parties. (Some in WashARP leadership, including your executive director, could suggest some changes.) But what is vital is the commitment to continuing federal investment in intercity passenger rail services. Appropriate cliché is "Don't let wishing for the perfect drive out the good." The proposals are good. My correspondence with our Congressional delegation will be to be compassionate to the victims in the Gulf, while avoiding gratuitous giveaways and continuing to invest in rail for the Gulf, the Pacific Northwest and the nation.

Thanks to several of you for reporting on passenger train service concerns. Generally, those who have ridden Amtrak around the country feel that service and staff demeanor are better in the Far West, and tend to decline as one travels east. Pretty good on the California trains, the *Empire Builder* and the *Cascades*. Downhill east of Chicago, I'm told. I'll continue addressing your concerns and compliments to appropriate Amtrak and WSDOT personnel. Please keep telling me both the good and not-so-good of your train trips.

Some improvement in some cases in keeping the Bistro car on the *Cascades* open. But on a late September trip on train 500 to Tacoma, the Bistro man announced the closure of the car upon arrival in Tacoma, the same time as before the costly "point-of-sale" technology was installed. As previously stated, longer open hours in the Bistro not only benefit passengers, but importantly bring more income toward operating the trains, improving the critically- (See **Flem**, page 5)



The View Down the Tracks

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with Jim Cusick

The Road Trip

So what are you going to do about the price of gas now? This summer, we thought it would be a wonderful time for a road trip! A bargain then, at less than three dollars a gallon. Ah, there's nothing like a road trip to help us connect with that basic emotional instinct – **ROAD RAGE!**

In that vein (like the one that was popping out of my forehead on the road), I feel some ranting and raving is in order! Why not? Since I have all the answers transportation, I feel I'm as qualified as our local prognosticators Ted Van Dyk, Dan Savage, Bruce Ramsey and our old friend Mr. Eye-man. I might just do enough ranting that maybe anything constructive I would have to say will have to wait until the next newsletter.

And speaking of the righteous, who are these people who think they are the only righteous drivers on the highway? They are always going exactly the speed limit (here's something to do smarty-pants, get your speedometer tested!) in the left lane! So given that my righteous brothers on the highway are now traveling in the left lane, EXACTLY at the speed limit (maybe), what happens to the other rule? (RCW 46.61.100 "Keep Right Except when Passing, etc.") If you aren't passing traffic on your right, MOVE OVER!

I'll have to give in to my righteous "roads-are-the-only-solution" brothers on one thing. I think the minimum lane count in the non-rural (but not congested) areas should be 3 lanes per direction. Why? Because the slower moving trucks conflict with the mostly faster moving cars, and that extra lane helps with the passing options. Like putting high-speed rail in with freight trains, you need extra options, and roads don't have centralized traffic control.

I'll also have to gripe about entrance ramp designs. Did the same people who designed LA's freeways design Puget Sound's? None seem to have any acceleration lanes, and bring you into traffic at the angle that puts the freeway traffic in your blind spot, where that frustrated fast driver is coming up on you way in excess of the speed limit because Mr. Righteous Driver is hogging the left lane.

MOVE the heck over to the right lane, let the speedster pass on the left. Who cares? It makes it easier for the law-officers to catch them and it makes it easier for me to merge if I'm just dealing with slow cars in the right lane.

Thank heavens for truckers. They are

the smoothest, most predictable drivers on the road.

The Train Trip

Since our road trip took us to Las Vegas, of course we rode the Las Vegas Monorail. How well did it work? Well, there is one problem with it. It doesn't run on the strip. Certain casinos actually advertise on the strip that they have a monorail station close to the strip. Was there an advantage to taking the monorail in Las Vegas? Compared to walking in 110° heat, YES! It's air-conditioned! Now, for anyone who's been to Las Vegas, a city block is a half-mile long. However, to get to the monorail you have to walk half-mile through the casino. The monorail runs between the parking lots and the casinos. I like the stations because they have the same "elevator doors" on the platforms as the SeaTac Airport shuttles that run between the terminals. In Seattle, that would be the one element in design to protect us from our local elements.

The next "rail" stop was in San Francisco. Time to ride BART. What I found disappointing about BART, given its prox-

Here's why rail transit appeals to auto drivers as an alternative: it's simple. The stations and the routes don't change every season.

imity to Silicon Valley, was how counter-intuitive the fare card machine software is. Thank goodness ST picked the company they did for the Sounder machines. Read the book by Donald Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things*, and you'll understand how important good design is. The BART personnel were very helpful and the ride we took under the bay to the Oakland Coliseum/Airport station and back was pleasant, save for the inebriated, loud, profane passenger that took the train for one stop. Ah, yes, the real reason all the righteous people don't take transit. Heavens, there might be someone different on it. We lived through it. Hey, it could be worse, he could have been DRIVING a CAR! And just think, no one would have had a clue, until there was an accident.

San Francisco's cable cars as mass transit? Do they really have less value if it's tourists that take it? Realize that tourists in cars cause congestion. They can even be worse, since they usually don't know where they're going. Yes, there is value in mass transit use by tourists.

The Mind Trip

So, who is most righteous? Drivers doing the speed limit? Drivers staying to the right? Bicyclists because they are environmentally correct (and disgustingly fit)? Pedestrians because they can smugly walk where and when they want? Monorail proponents because it's the solution of the future? (Not like light rail, which was invented

in the past.) Expert transit riders? (You know the type: can digest any bus schedule, the more complex the better, and then smugly advise the general public that it's easy to take transit.)

So who has the answer? (Besides me, of course.)

Hold on, because here are my opinions. Pedestrians are going to find out how much they and the driving public can work together to actually improve the flow. With the closing of the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel for light rail work, they won't be able to walk when the red "Don't Walk" light starts flashing. Now this should be interesting. And because I grew up in the New York area, I'm used to jaywalking a lot, especially in the middle of the block. How did I survive? Simply because I yielded the right-of-way to the cars as I was in their environment. Pedestrians in the Seattle area actually believe there is some force field protecting them while they are in the crosswalk. We know they have the right-of-way, but physics demands that you respect the difference. To paraphrase a quote from a railroad engineer on the Internet, while

discussing people who try to beat the train at a railroad crossing: If you, the pedestrian (car driver), get to the crosswalk (RR crossing) before me, you win! If I beat you, I win. If it's a tie, I win again!

And then there are the righteous bicyclists. They have the right to the road, same as cars. However, they are also slow-moving vehicles. I can always tell the bicyclist that also drives a lot. They understand where they fit in. Remember bicyclists, you also have to obey the same traffic laws. I know in Seattle they can ride on the sidewalks but like pedestrians, you must understand how you mesh with the other modes and respect them.

So if driving is the righteous thing to do, according to all the above named experts what can we do? People drive their car instead of taking the transit because it's simple. You just get in, turn the key and point it towards where you want to go. Even if you get lost, you don't have to feel vulnerable as you do when you are on transit, especially if you are at a stop that is in a not-so-nice neighborhood.

Here's why rail transit appeals to auto drivers as an alternative: it's simple. The stations and the routes don't change every season. The ride is smooth and quite, and the times are consistent. Surprise, but that goes for both monorail and light rail.

I can be a man of many modes if I worked downtown. I could drive to a train station, and yes, in suburbia, the car is the preferred and quite appropriate mode for most trips. I board Sounder, then downtown I could, if needed, take the bus to a place next to my employment and then walk to work on the final leg. Granted, a bicycle didn't fit into this scenario, but except for (See **Cusick**, page 5)

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ing locomotive) cost about \$45,000 per revenue seat in 1998. Sound Transit's locomotive-hauled consists, configured for 290 seats, cost about \$19,800 per seat that same year.

Equipment comparison, however, involves apples and oranges—and maybe some lemons, too. Industrial Rail did not respond to a request for information though a mileage figure of about 1 mpg seems likely for a 3-car consist and the acceleration appears to be slower than the Colorado cars. Colorado Railcar advertises a cruising speed in excess of 90 mph, fuel economy of 1.1-1.3 mpg and attractive acceleration. The UTS equipment accelerates even more quickly, but offers fuel consumption of about 0.8 mpg.

None of the options studied by WSA offer the tilt technology that gives Talgo equipment a speed advantage on curves. The Talgo, however, is a more elaborate piece of equipment. Each trainset includes two food service cars and the consist cannot easily be reconfigured. WSA omitted the Talgo from its analysis completely, focusing attention on the Colorado DMUs.

According to Brad Barkman, director of operations for the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority, a single-level Colorado power car tested in revenue service "seemed to do OK" when pulling a double-deck Bombardier coach and cab car. SFRTA will be accepting delivery of a full 3-car consist of Colorado DMUs next year and expects them to meet a 15-minute turn requirement in revenue service on the state-owned 72-mile line between Miami and West Palm Beach.

Dallas Area Rapid Transit used RDCs as start-up equipment for its Trinity Railway Express service. Kathy Waters, DART's vice president for commuter rail, reports that, after some initial problems with old components, the RDCs "run like clockwork" today, and that operating costs are "quite reasonable." She added, however, that "that old metal still fatigues. You've still got a 50-year-old shell."

Capital costs of course constitute only one element of the equation. Under WSA's assumptions, a public agency would buy three 3-car sets of the Colorado DMUs—two in-service sets and a spare. The scenario calls for two round-trips daily (morning southbound, evening northbound) between Bellingham and Everett. Passengers bound from Bellingham to Seattle would transfer to a Sounder train for the last 33 miles to King Street, while the Talgos would continue to cover the entire Bellingham-Seattle run as intercity *Cascades* trains.

Resolving the inefficiencies of such layered services looks simple enough on paper, but presents devilish complications in the real world. Assuming track upgrades and turn-around times that are fairly ambitious two in-service Colorado Railcar trains

could by themselves provide Bellingham-Seattle with three round-trips daily, and Everett-Seattle with eight. Tom Janaky, Colorado Railcar vice president for sales, said his product would be equal to the job. The cars can be designed with more leg room and a coffee bar to accommodate passengers traveling a distance somewhat longer than a typical commute.

That sounds like the sort of simple, economical rationalization that fiscal conservatives extol. In government, however, common-sense frugality often gets left at the door. Sound Transit has invested large amounts of capital in its service configuration and WSDOT stands firmly behind the *Cascades* Talgo vision.

Still, Sound Transit has cushioned its initial over-investment in equipment by leasing some of it to transit agencies elsewhere, the Sounder Tacoma service is thriving, and additional frequencies be-



Colorado Railcar's single level DMU.

Photo courtesy of Colorado Railcar

tween Seattle and Portland will ultimately mean a need for more Talgos in that corridor. Why not put the locomotive-hauled equipment elsewhere and consolidate the lighter-traffic North Sound runs as DMU services? As Janaky puts it, "You don't need a 3500-horsepower locomotive to pull a couple of coaches."

The money issue is both crucial and ambiguous. The Bellingham *Cascades* train recovers 31% of its costs at the farebox. The Sounder services to Tacoma and Everett, taken together, get back 12.4%, with the Everett run the much weaker of the two. WSA projected a 14-23% recovery rate for the DMUs, but, as Jones hastens to point out, the analysis carefully delineates maximum costs and modest revenues. Taxpayers don't like the unpleasant surprise of a service that loses more money than the experts projected.

The WSA study envisions only two 130-mile round-trips five days a week. Figuring in the spare set, that translates into a paltry 62 miles of service per trainset per day. Expressed in train-miles, the extra-light utilization sends costs for capital and insurance skyrocketing. The study assumes that insurance premiums would be staggering. Information from WSDOT indicates that the WSA scenario would shed about 94% of its estimated premium costs—and thus about almost 45% of total operating costs—if Amtrak, with its far less costly liability insurance, were the operator.

The WSA scenario cuts no corners. An

Everett layover facility drinks up \$2.7 mill., while building a Bellingham car shop takes \$8.0 mill. in spite of lower-cost options there: according to Shirley McFearin, real estate manager for the Port of Bellingham, the port is offering a 50,000-square-foot building with 22-foot doors, adjacent to the BNSF, at \$25,680 a month. This compares with a \$45,000 monthly mortgage payment quoted by a local bank to finance the build-it-yourself option.

The Seattle Monorail Project maintains a paid staff of about 47—down from 98 a year ago—although it has yet to lay a yard of guideway. The project's board chairman and executive director resigned this summer amid controversy over how to finance the undertaking whose fate hangs in the balance as elected officials, consultants and commentators monitor the patient's vital signs. Should North Sound transit decision-makers be looking over their shoulders?

Larry Wickkiser, who owns the Ferndale-based Airporter Shuttle bus service, has a simple rejoinder: "For what the public is going to spend on those two round-trips to Everett, you could put a heck of a lot of buses on the road."

"Respect for taxpayers' dollars has to be part of the equation," says WashARP's Lloyd Flem, "but we support all modes of high-capacity transportation."

State Sen. Mary Margaret Haugen (D-Camano Island), who chairs the Senate Transportation Committee, finds WSA's farebox recovery figures daunting. "We have to try to get what transit gets generally—at least 33%."

The money issues, however thorny, may nonetheless prove more tractable than potential administrative entanglements between WSDOT, Sound Transit, and the third agency envisioned by WSA as managing the Bellingham-Seattle service.

Commenting on the alternative of an administrative consolidation of north-of-Seattle services, Jeff Schultz, rail operations technical expert at the DOT Rail Office, says "there are probably some economies of scale with consolidating services." However, the Talgos provide greater passenger comfort and speed, he says. "We're set on tilting equipment."

He also sees problems in WSA's assumption that two DMUs and four *Cascades* trains could share the track with freights between Everett and Bellingham. That's more traffic than the BNSF track can handle, he says, adding that the number of riders might not be enough for six trains.

The possibility of a consolidation of services gets a tepid response from Sound Transit, too. Spokesman Lee Somerstein terms the possibility "entirely speculative." Since its taxing district only includes Pierce, King and Snohomish counties, Sound Transit would need a new authorization from voters to run a service that (See **North Sound**, page 5)

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watched farebox recovery ratio.



While the WashARP Board has not at this writing taken an official position on the Radio KVI-promoted Initiative 912, which would eliminate the 2005 Legislature's passage of a modest motor fuel and vehicle tax increases, Chairman Chuck Mott has publicly opposed its passage, while conceding concerns of some opponents of the transportation package. I am totally opposed to I-912. The needs for revenue are great; the increases in costs would be a near imperceptible percentage of the ownership and operation of a motor vehicle. While drivers complain about the current high cost of gasoline, the week-to-week and block-to-block differences in the cost of a gallon of unleaded regular far exceed the yearly, even total multi-year tax increase in the cost of motor fuel. And the tax goes for needed road and bridge improvements, jobs and services in our state, not to multinational oil companies and, indirectly at least, unfriendly foreign governments. Another cliché, "penny-wise and pound-foolish," applies here, in my view, if one votes for I-912 and repeal of the transportation improvement package.



Hopefully, many of you enjoyed WashARP's meeting in Bellingham 8 Oct. Arrangements were in the able hands of WashARPer C. B. Hall. Our December meeting will be at Olympia-Lacey's Centennial Amtrak station on Saturday 10 Dec. Hosting will be Darlene Austin, Darleen Flem, Susan Sauer and Rich DeGarmo. Additional local WashARPer's will assist in providing small-town hospitality for the big city folk. A couple of present and past state senators have been invited as guests, but this gathering will be long on fun and fellowship, short on business. A silent auction will be held to raise money for WashARP. Please consider donating railroadiana and other items or services for the auction. The meeting/party will be 11:45 a.m. to 2:15 p.m., assuming an on-time arrival of train 11; departure to the north at 2:22 PM on train 506. From the south, travel on train 500, heading back south on train 507 at

3:10 PM. Lunch will cost \$10.00 with choice of pizza and sub sandwiches, with salads, desserts and beverages included.

Ride those trains and support rail investments!

Cusick, from page 3

the weather and the sweating, the suburban car could be substituted with a bicycle. However, I prefer more exclusive riding areas. Most suburban roads start out semi-rural, with two lanes and ditches. There is no room to safely ride or walk. Amazingly, some of my righteous neighbors think that once you put in a sidewalk, you've succumbed to developers and ruined the perceived "rural" character of the area. That argument I still don't understand. Somehow the constant stream of cars on that very road is invisible and noiseless.

Now what could be more righteous than the monorail? We are now seeing the unfortunate problems the monorail is up against. However, what's more unfortunate is the reaction by many transit-friendly people to their problems. The monorail proponents, including Peter Sherwin, spent most of their energy selling the monorail as the anti-light rail solution. Now that they're having trouble, I've met too many of transit friendly people who seem to be in no mood to defend the monorail folks. Why? Because people like Mr. Sherwin, Grant Cogswell, the staff at The Stranger (except for Erica C. Barnett) and others spent too much effort alienating them. The president of People for Modern Transit, Richard Borkowski, (in my opinion) spends too much time working against the monorail. These are two groups that should be working together. However, the unfortunate habit of monorail proponents using less than valid arguments has made these potential allies more than just critical. Where are the past monorail allies, such as Maggie Fimia and Rob McKenna? Certainly not outspoken in its defense.

Speaking of road proponents, during my time on the I-405 Corridor Program's Citizens Committee my righteous fellow committee member, Mr. Kemper Freeman, righteously protested the cost of one of the corridor's Park & Ride lots, when he had

just finished an addition to his parking structure at a much lower cost. Program manager, Mike Cummings suggested Mr. Freeman bid on the next Park & Ride project. Simple to talk about it, another thing to actually do it. While highway supporters such as McKenna and Freeman might be pleasantly amused by the trials of the Seattle Monorail Project, it's obvious by the popularity of I-912 that not even roads are a sure thing. However, even Republicans are split on this.

So whose plan is the right one? Is it all really a matter of egos? Is it Monorail or nothing? BRT or nothing? Buses or nothing? Bicycles or nothing? Light rail or nothing? Roads or nothing?

It appears with the prevailing righteous attitudes, that what we have achieved so far is...Nothing.

Next time, I'll share with you all my answers to our transportation problems. Well, at least what will fit into this column.

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reached to Bellingham.

Bellingham transportation consultant Preston Schiller disagrees. "Sound Transit could start one of their morning runs earlier, up here. It could be tried for a year through a contractual arrangement or grant, without expansion of their taxing district. I think Sound Transit should be looking at DMUs. There's a niche for service that's not quite as expensive as the full locomotive service and I don't know why we haven't been looking at that more closely."

Sen. Haugen says that the upcoming construction of HOV lanes on I-5 in Everett could drive the project forward. "That congestion is going to have a huge impact and commuter rail is one of the ways to mitigate that." She sketches out the idea of trial service north to Stanwood or Mount Vernon during construction. "The important thing is to get the service up and running. You see whether you've got the ridership. If it's a success, you can build on it."

She terms the DMUs "something we ought to look at. We could also contract with Sound Transit to use their trains. I never meet people without their expressing interest in this service."

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- Rocky Shay, Federal Way..Secretary253 925-2085 ... HarmonShay@aol.com
- John Carlin, Edmonds..Treasurer.....425 778-4529 ... john.carlin@alum.mit.edu
- Jim Cusick, Bothell..VP-Commuter Rail.....425 481-2322 ... jc.cusick@gte.net
- Jim Hamre, Puyallup..Newsletter Editor.....253 848-2473 ... jimhamre@mindspring.com
- Warren Yee, Seattle..E-newsletter206 723-0259 ... wye@earthlink.net
- Brandon Swalley, Lakewood..Communications Dir...253 906-0932 ... anonfree@yahoo.com
- Lloyd Flem, Olympia..Executive Director....360 943-8333 ... washarp@olywa.net
- Office FAX.....360 943-0136
- Address.....2508 Columbia St SW, Olympia 98501

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

Important Addresses and Phone Numbers

- U. S. House of Representatives:
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

November 12: 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).

November 17: Commuter Rail Group meeting at **6:30 p.m.** at **Andy's Diner**, 2963 4th Ave. S., **Seattle** (transit information above).

December 10: WashARP meeting at **11:45 a.m.** at **Centennial Station**, 6600 Yelm Hwy SE, **Lacey** Meeting is timed to fit between the arrival of train 11 and departure of train 506. Limited Saturday bus service is available on Intercity Transit route 94. Cost is **\$10 cash or check** for subs and pizza, and also salads, desserts & beverages.

The joint NARP Region 8/WashARP/AORTA/MTWYarp meeting will be hosted by the Montana group next Spring. The meeting has been set for Saturday March 25 in Havre. Coming from the west will require an overnight stay. The meeting will start in the late afternoon to accommodate the arrival of both the westbound and eastbound *Empire Builders*. More meeting details will come later but it's never too early to make your train reservations.

WashARP welcomed the following new members in August and September: Prof. Robert McCoy, Anchorage; Sandra Smith, Quilcene; Lucia Essig, Gig Harbor; John Lindberg, Mercer Island; Herb Smith,

Spokane; Lowell Ellingson, Richland; David Henry Tiffany, Cheney.

WashARP members contributing to this newsletter include C. B. Hall, Ken Uznanski, Jeff Schultz, Lloyd Flem, Jim Cusick, Tony Trifiletti, Rocky Shay, Kirk Fredrickson and Darleen Flem.



Photo Jim Hamre

The annual WashARP picnic was held on Aug. 13 at your editor's estate. The speakers were Ron Ernst, marketing director for shortline Tacoma Rail and Ted Botigger, chairman of the Port of Tacoma commission and a former state senator. Both speakers discussed freight rail issues affecting the Tacoma/Pierce County area and the implications at the state, federal and international level. As usual, a great time was had by all and we didn't let the business at hand interfere too much with the socializing.

Plans, from page 1

\$3.9 mill project will eliminate a 12-mile stretch between crossovers. The new crossovers, one just beyond each end of the station platforms, will provide much improved operational flexibility for both freight and passenger trains in this area. Hopefully, dispatchers will make more effort to use the station's easterly track, with its better and safer platform, for passenger trains.

The King St. Station renovation project continues, albeit slowly, as negotiations between the state and BNSF for access

and control of the station continue at a snail's pace. Still to be resolved is whether DOT will secure a long-term lease or take ownership of the building. Progress on the new passenger train maintenance base just south of Safeco Field is also stalled pending an agreement with the city of Seattle over Holgate St. WSDOT wants to close the grade crossing as it is blocked many hours each day with all the switching and mainline train movements but the city has not yet agreed to do so. However, construction of the relocation of the freight mainline to the east side of the maintenance base is still scheduled to start by Spring. The first phase of the project to increase station track capacity is also scheduled to begin construction in the Spring. This project will ultimately provide passenger platforms along the mainline tracks and will extend several other platforms to the south, allowing two trains to be staged simultaneously on the same track.

Engineering work and right-of-way purchases continue on other projects such as the Vancouver, WA rail yard improvements and the Kelso to Martins Bluff third main track. WSDOT will also begin design and environmental work on the Pt. Defiance Bypass project in south Pierce County.

When asked about getting a second train extended from Bellingham to Vancouver, BC Uznanski was hopeful. WSDOT and TransLink, the greater Vancouver transportation agency, have identified funding at both the provincial and federal level for needed track improvements. "We now have a window of opportunity," he said, adding that windows often close quickly in Canada.

For more details on these and other projects visit www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects.

In closing, Uznanski again asked, "Where is the federal rail funding partnership that the states continue to wait for?"

Washington Association of
Rail Passengers
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Seattle, WA 98127

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Note: if you move, let us know in advance and save WashARP 75¢ for address correction service.

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