



WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

DECEMBER 2007/JANUARY 2008

www.AllAboardWashington.org

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

Aubrey Davis and Ed Barnes, long time rail supporters, honored by All Aboard Washington

At its annual membership meeting on Nov. 10 at the state History Museum in Tacoma over 50 members of All Aboard Washington honored two of our state's biggest advocates for rail transportation, particularly passenger rail service: Aubrey Davis of Mercer Island and Ed Barnes of Vancouver.

Aubrey Davis, now in his ninth decade, has been involved in public transportation for many years. He has served as mayor of Mercer Island, was the Northwest regional administrator for the Urban Mass Transit Administration (predecessor of today's Federal Transit Administration) and served on the state Transportation Commission. In his introduction of Davis, Lloyd Flem noted that you don't hear him talking much about the past; Davis is always looking

to the future.

When serving on the Transportation Commission in the early 90s Davis asked Gil Mallery, then the head of the DOT Rail Office and recently retired from Amtrak, how much could DOT spend on passenger rail in the state. Mallery's analysis produced a figure of \$43 mill. The Commission put it in their budget proposal to the Legislature. With the strong support of the late Ruth Fisher and other legislators, the funding was approved and the Amtrak Cascades were born. It was Mallery that really got the state rail program going. Davis said Mallery had many ideas on service and improvements that could be made. We've taken several steps in implementing Gil's vision with reduced travel times, additional frequencies

south of Seattle and restored service north of Seattle. Davis praised Ed Barnes's service on the Transportation Commission and his strong support for rail service.

Though not prefect, Davis supported the Sound Transit/Regional Transportation Improvement District's Proposition 1. "The only perfect plan is to do nothing," he stated. We need to change the way we pay (See Honor, p. 4)

Amtrak ridership and revenue: another record year; 2008 funding still in flux

Amtrak ended fiscal year 2007 on Sept. 30 with its fifth straight year of ridership increases, carrying the most passengers in the railroad's 36 year history. The company carried 25,847,531 passengers, up over 6.3% from 2006.

Ticket revenues in FY2007 also reached a new record: \$1.5 bill., an 11% increase over the \$1.37 recorded in 2006. Including income from contract services (for instance, Amtrak maintains Sounder equipment in Seattle), the company's total revenue in 2007 was \$2.2 bill.

"Highway and airway congestion, volatile fuel prices, increasing environmental awareness and a need for transportation links between growing communities are some of the factors that make intercity passenger rail extremely relevant in today's world," said Amtrak President Alex Kummant. "Our record setting ridership and ticket revenue in FY07 indicate the stage is set for Amtrak to take on a role as not only a contributor to the nation's transportation network, but as a leader among modes," he added.

According to the Travel Industry Association of America's latest report, demand for the rail option is now growing faster than air passenger boardings and motor fuel use. This despite constrained capacity in many markets due to limited frequencies and not enough passenger cars.

In the Northwest, here are the ridership and revenue figures for FY2007 for our Amtrak trains (percentage change from 2006 in parenthesis).

- Cascades: 674,153 (+7.4%); \$18,165,351 (+9.9%)
- Empire Builder: 504,977 (+1.6%); \$53,177,760 (+9.2%)

(See Record Year, page 6)



Left photo: Aubrey Davis, center, with Tony Trifiletti, left, and Lloyd Flem. The plaque presented to Aubrey by All Aboard Washington states: **All Aboard Washington extends its appreciation to Aubrey Davis. Your decades of leadership in Washington State have ensured that passenger and freight rail are key components of multimodal transportation operations. Your legacy – the single most important Washingtonian in bringing modern rail service to our state – provides an ongoing inspiration for 21st century leaders. Tacoma, Washington November 10, 2007**

Right Photo: Ed Barnes, left, with Lloyd Flem. Ed's plaque presented by All Aboard Washington states: **All Aboard Washington extends its appreciation to Ed Barnes. During your twelve years of service on the Washington Transportation Commission you were a tireless advocate for modern passenger train service. Planners and passengers alike are forever in your debt as a true public servant. Tacoma, Washington November 10, 2007**

Photo by Jim Hamre

*From the desk of
the Government
Affairs Director
by
Lloyd H. Flem*



**Thanksgiving and Christmas
Holiday Blessings; Congratulations;
"Cooperate, Guys, It's a Good
Storm!"**

At this Thanksgiving and upcoming Christmas holiday season, it is appropriate to list some things about which we Washington state passenger rail advocates should be thankful.

We have **SOME** passenger trains, intercity, commuter and light rail (thriving in Tacoma and pending from Seattle to SeaTac.) For these trains let us again thank past and present enlightened members of our Washington State Legislature (special thanks to the late Ruth Fisher!), past and present members of our Washington State Transportation Commission (two, Aubrey Davis and Ed Barnes, we properly honored at our annual meeting in Tacoma on Nov. 10), most of our governors in recent years, and other vital state officials such as Ralph Munro and Sid Morrison. In addition, thanks to many past WSDOT people. Men like Jim Toohey, Jim Slakey, Gil Mallery, and Ray Allred. And sincere thanks to the talented and dedicated folks now in the state Rail Office, nationally seen as one of our country's best.

Thanks to those at Amtrak and Sound Transit who view their work as a mission, not just a job. I believe most of our rail employees are of that quality. So thanks, rail people, management and labor. We can also be pleased that the state, Amtrak, Sound Transit and BNSF have cooperative relationships that have evolved into what this Old Prof would grade a solid B, considerably better than what similar relationships in many other parts of the US have endured.

Thanks to most of our Congressional delegation, which have consistently supported preserving and increasing federal funding for rail for our state and country. They constitute among the best pro-passenger-rail delegations west of Illinois. (Thanks also,

to our big-little brothers in Montana, our friends in Oregon and now, Idaho, too!)

Thanks to elected officials and other community leaders in many parts of our state who have worked for and supported passenger rail. (OK, call me provincial, but leaders in my own Olympia, Lacey and Thurston County have been and remain among the best! See below.) Kudos to Dryside advocates like Jim Neal and new Leavenworth Mayor Rob Eaton (AAWA activists) who continue to lead the way for more rail in Central Washington. And thanks to Chuck Mott and other AAWA members who are leaders in the important effort to preserve rail service in Metro Seattle's Eastside suburbs.

Thanks to you loyal members of WashARP, now All Aboard Washington, many of whom have hung in there for two decades or more as we slowly make progress as one America's most respected independent rail advocacy organizations. Also, thanks to those members who make tangible, as well

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as time and energy contributions to our cause. Among those are Bob and Hope Stevens of Helena, Montana (Yes, Montana again!) whose Fanwood Foundation makes a most generous annual donation to All Aboard Washington.

On a personal level, Loren Herrigstad, Jim Hamre and other South Sound AAWA regulars have been particularly helpful, as I have experienced physical mobility challenges in recent years. Most of all, I want to offer thanks to one Darleen K. Flem. Upon our initial meeting in the Fall of 1990, Darleen said, "Passenger trains are my favorite mode of travel." As well as her other virtues, that statement helped lead me to say "I do" at Centennial Station and to an Amtrak honeymoon on February 6, 1992. Darleen's devotion to passenger trains and to me and my work has been and is a priceless asset and has contributed greatly to forwarding the rail advances which I have helped to accomplish in the last sixteen years.



Congratulations to AAWA Board members George Barner of Olympia and Louis Musso of Cle Elum. In the recent November election George won a position on the Port of Olympia commission, where the role of rail serving the Port will now certainly retain a strong position. Louis was significantly responsible for the successful vote to create Washington's first county rail district in Kittitas County. Also congratulations to Olympia Mayor Mark Foutch, who will be retiring from that position after 16 years on the city council and four years as the Capital City's mayor. AAWA member Mark has served as the most pro-rail member of the most pro-rail city council in our state. (Doubt it? Were the rest of the state to have the same per capita ratio of members as from Olympia and Lacey, we would be about ten times larger than at present.)



Opinion pieces from recent professional rail periodicals plead the case that all rail interests have much in common and should be cooperating closely for the good of all involved in the rail mode. I may add, should be cooperating closely for the good of North America and its citizens, economically, environmentally and socially. Rail ownership, management and labor will all benefit from working together rather than exhuming old or exaggerating new problems. (This does not mean rail labor should not be treated with the greatest respect, management should not seek to decrease the role of obsolete steam-era work rules, or there shouldn't be caution about the latest hustles by "hedge fund" investors and others whose interests are just in overnight profits rather than investments that bring long-term benefits to shareholders and the larger economy as well.)

Rail management should be more interested in this kind of cooperation for their own and the rail mode's benefit rather than some morbid fear than somehow, some way another railroad company might benefit just a little from some public policy, even when their own company benefits as well! What is not needed is, "We'd rather all that (See **Flem**, page 4)



The View Down the Tracks

=====

with Jim Cusick

Reduce Congestion Now!

Now that the people have spoken, it's time to step up and bring all the better plans to light.

I am recommending everyone go out now and support Kemper Freeman's plan to solve our mobility crisis.

During the I-405 Corridor Program it was presented as "Reduce Congestion Now."

Although the municipalities along the corridor rejected his plan early in the study he stayed with his conviction.

Towards the end of the program Alternative 3, adding two general-purpose lanes in each direction and increasing bus transit, was being finalized. At one of these meetings Kemper thought that it was important to explore the roads-only solution more fully. When he said this I spoke up in agreement.

At this point Peter Hurley from Transportation Choices Coalition looked at me as though I had just grown another head. What Peter didn't understand was that I knew when a full and complete roads-only solution is developed, it will become very apparent why planners come to the conclusion that rail transit is the best long-term solution.

This is why I honestly think that the solution being proposed by the Eastside Transportation Association in response to the failure of Proposition 1, the joint Sound Transit/Regional Improvement District transit and roads measure, should be given as much press as soon as possible.

What part of NO...

don't you understand?

With the defeat Proposition 1 it is very clear what the people want.

If you talk to the Sierra Club, it's obvious the people want more transit.

If you speak with the Eastside Transportation Association it's obvious that we need more roads.

If you speak to Tim Eyman it's obvious we don't want taxes.

It **is** obvious we want solutions.

Given that I was the spokesperson in this newsletter for voting YES on Proposition 1, I can say that I am disappointed at the outcome. I would say that I'm more disappointed in that what took the day was the attitude of the "winners." It was as though the most vocal opponents were voting for the Seattle-area-Status-Quo. **Process**

Even those in government, accused of always looking to keep their jobs by making sure things don't change, appeared to be the strident progressives.

We have met the enemy, and they are us.

After the outcome of the election, statements were made that our elected officials should go back to the drawing board and come up with a better plan (whatever that might be), since, after all, it is THEIR JOB.

Having watched and participated in the process and along with all the other volunteers who contributed their time (and even the ones paid to attend), I can say that enough is enough.

Now that those who voted NO on Proposition 1 have succeeded in breathing life back into the campaigns of Tim Eyman, Kemper Freeman and Jim Horn, the way to deal with this is not with fire, garlic, or a wooden stake, but simply the TRUTH.

I could see that although it was not perfect, the plan was a good compromise. At first, I figured that tying RTID to ST2 would be the proverbial albatross around the neck for ST2. Once I looked at the plan, I realized that:

- No, it didn't include putting commuter rail on the Woodinville Subdivision.
- Yes, light rail seemed to be the more expensive option. However, we gave up numerous rights-of-way that would have made it cheaper, so now we have to pay the piper in today's dollars.
- No, it didn't make the truly useful road improvements that I once outlined here.

Yet it contained a lot of road improvements that weren't solely capacity increases for general purpose only lanes. Yes, it included GP only lanes, but the reality is that the public isn't fully on-board with rail in the urban/suburban environment as the sole so-

lution.

They are a lot closer to that than you think, but not quite there.

Where to look...

for the answer.

Now that those who voted NO on Proposition 1 have succeeded in breathing life back into the campaigns of Tim Eyman, Kemper Freeman and Jim Horn, the way to deal with this is not with fire, garlic, or a wooden stake, but simply the TRUTH.

I'm not talking about a version of the "truth" as told by anyone with an agenda, which includes All Aboard Washington, certain politicians past and present, activist groups, or any others.

Where do you go for the "truth"?

It's all public record.

You start with the Environmental Impact Statement for any given project and you work from there. You look at the supporting documentation. You attend public meetings. You attend public

open houses. You ask questions. You listen to others ask questions and listen to the answers. You do research.

Even if a political agenda is being pushed, you won't find explicit LIES. These are documents of record. No one can put bad data in them without fear of it being exposed upon further scrutiny.

The data speaks for itself.

Who speaks for...

the Data?

Just after the election, KIRO-710's Frank Shiers interviewed former State Senator Jim Horn. They spoke of the shortcomings of Proposition 1, which allowed Mr. Horn to share his views about the solution. His solution to our congestion problem was in road capacity, of course. Mr. Horn then went on to speak about his involvement in the I-405 Corridor Program. He stated that the Record of Decision chose the four GP lanes over light rail because it was determined that it was the most cost-effective.

Frank Shiers, who agrees with All Aboard Washington that the Woodinville Subdivision is perfect for a commuter rail solution, asked Mr. Horn about that solution.

Unfortunately, Mr. Horn went on to say that this line was also looked at, (See **Cusick**, page 6)

Honor, from page 1

for transportation. One direction we need to move toward is congestion pricing as our "freeways can't be free." The average cost to own a car is \$16 per day.

Ed Barnes, the former head of the electricians union in Vancouver, just retired from the Transportation Commission after serving for 12 years, the maximum allowed. Flem noted in his introduction of Barnes that he was always the one to remind his fellow commissioners to think about rail.

Barnes thinks the Legislature made a mistake taking away so much of the Transportation Commission's authority when they made WSDOT a cabinet-level agency with the governor directly appointing the Secretary of Transportation. This change now subjects WSDOT to more political pressure.

He stated he is proud of his 12 years of service as a citizen commissioner. It was a struggle to remind people that rail is as important as our other modes of transportation.

Barnes also feels that tolling is the way of the future. He noted how smoothly tolling is working on the new Tacoma Narrows Bridge. Another idea that could be considered is charging people a fee based on the number of miles they drive every year. Barnes stated, "If we don't meet the demand for our transportation needs our economy will fail."

Also speaking at the membership meeting was Sound Transit's Martin Young. He manages Sounder commuter rail service. The failure of Proposition 1 delays the transportation improvements that must be made in the Puget Sound region. And the costs of construction continue to escalate at a much more rapid pace than the general inflation rate. The Legislature forced transit and roads together on the ballot but the theory that it would make the plan more likely to pass voter muster failed. Sound Transit is analyzing the results and the board of directors will decide how to repackage the transit proposal and when to submit it to the voters again. It appears that going in an off-year election with its lower voter turnout played a hand in the defeat. Voter education on a new plan also needs to be improved.

Young noted, though many citizens wanted improved and added Sounder service, there was little in Proposition 1 for Sounder. The very difficult and expensive agreements needed with BNSF to eventually get the level of service originally planned caused the board to shy away from putting concrete proposals for more trains in Proposition 1.

Sound Transit's long term goal is more commuter rail service, but they did not want specific levels of service and spending amounts laid out in a ballot proposition as was the case with the original Sound Move in 1996.

The extension from Tacoma Dome Station to Lakewood will not open until late 2011 or early 2012. ST has spent the last two years trying to satisfy various critics of its proposals to build the East D St. to South M St. connection but has been unable to satisfy them. The Sound Transit board is now prepared to vote Dec. 13 on one of two alternates: a grade crossing of Pacific Ave. or a rail bridge over Pacific Ave. See www.soundtransit.org/x2135.xml for more information.

A permanent station in Tukwila is moving along slowly. It is tied to the extension of Strander Blvd. by the cities of Tukwila and Renton. The Union Pacific tracks need to be relocated closer to the BNSF tracks to allow the road overpass to be built. Start of construction is about three years away.

George Barner, All Aboard Washington board member, talked about his upset victory over an incumbent for a seat on the Port of Olympia commission. He wants to put the public back in the port. George understands the importance of good rail connections and service to a port. He received over 52% of the vote.

Louis Musso, an All Aboard board member from Ellensburg, touted the passage of Kittitas County's own Proposition 1. It called for the creation of a county rail district (the first in the state) to study passenger rail service from Ellensburg to Seattle. More and more people every year are making the daily commute across Snoqualmie Pass from the Ellensburg and Cle Elum areas to the Puget Sound region. Louis is optimistic that commuter rail service could happen in five to seven years. This Proposition 1 passed with a 58% yes vote.

And another board member, J. Craig Thorpe, updated the gathering on the Eastside rail line saga. Our main effort now is to keep the issue of retaining the tracks in place alive before the public and the politicians.

(In late November, several Port of Seattle commissioners indicated that if the port buys the line from BNSF, they want the tracks to remain in place with a trail placed adjacent to them. King County Executive Ron Simms is saying the deal between the port and the county would be off if that were to happen as trail construction would be too expensive. Stay tuned.)

Flem, from page 2

freight go by truck than one carload travel on that other rail company's tracks!"

I am sympathetic to rail management having to endure Wall Street's lack of apparent understanding of the rail industry's need for massive and near-continual capital investments. It would be good if Wall Street would show a level of patience we ask from a six-year-old on Dec. 24th, because these capital investments near-always pay off in the medium and long run. Rail management should show a level of discipline not to treat their short-line partners and customers in such a manner that may make a few bucks next Tuesday, but would poison relationships and hurt long-term profits for the rail industry and the greater society that depends upon it.

Finally, everyone benefits – freight rail interests, passenger rail interests and the country at large – if freight and passenger rail work as one in seeking public policies fair to the rail mode. Given that government at all levels has, for nearly a century, favored road, waterway and air modes while simultaneously taxing and regulating rail sometimes almost out of existence, it is counterproductive for freight and passenger interests to not join together for fair and constructive treatment of the rail mode as a whole rather than blaming each other for what is often its own blunders and shortcomings. Some private rail companies and some passenger interests are far better than others in that regard. As mentioned above, the Old Prof issues a solid B grade to major players here in western Washington.

Those in All Aboard Washington who have followed the status of rail for a quarter century or more feel both the potential for growth in passenger and freight rail and public support for such growth has never been higher than now. It may not be a "perfect storm" for rail, but it is at least a "good storm"! Environmental concerns, from the ideas of human-induced negative climate change, to the permanent increases in the costs of fossil fuels, coupled with the growing unattractiveness of road and air travel have finally convinced even such disparate entities as the Wall Street Journal and Parade magazine that rail, particularly passenger rail, should assume a much larger place in tomorrow's transportation picture. Will the public push for more rail? Will public decision makers then make the correct investment and regulatory decisions? Will we North Americans use trains more for riding and shipping if made available? I like to think so. We of the organized rail advocacy community must take the lead with the pushing, riding and shipping.



Photo by Zack Willhoite

Above, Seattle's new South Lake Union Streetcar line being tested on Nov. 16. The 1.3 mile line connects the downtown shopping district at Westlake with the re-developing South Lake Union neighborhood. The streetcar line, similar to Tacoma Link and the Portland Streetcar (including the equipment) is scheduled to open on Dec. 12. Below left, the new light rail line, Lynx, in Charlotte, NC, where the NARP board met Oct. 25-27. The board got a ride on the line and a tour of the maintenance facility. The 9.6 mile starter line opened to the public on Nov. 24. Bottom right, construction on the Portland Transit bus mall to add light rail is in full swing. The new North-South alignment through downtown complements the current East-West rail alignment. The existing Yellow Line to Expo Center and the under construction Green Line to Clackamas will run on the new alignment with buses when the project is finished in Sept. 2009. Direct MAX access to Union Station and the bus station will finally be available.

Amtrak directed to study reviving Pioneer and North Coast Hiawatha routes to Seattle

The \$11.4 billion, six-year Amtrak reauthorization, S. 294, passed by the US Senate on Oct. 30 contains provisions directing Amtrak to analyze restored service on the *Pioneer* route, discontinued in 1997, between Seattle and Denver via Portland and Boise, and on the *North Coast Hiawatha* route, discontinued in 1979, between Seattle and Chicago via Missoula, Billings and Bismarck. The *Pioneer* provision was sponsored by Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID) and the *North Coast Hiawatha* provision was sponsored by Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT). Sen. Crapo said, "We subsidize highways, we subsidize airlines. We ought to subsidize railroads to some extent." Sen. Tester said, "If we can get passenger train service through southern Montana back on track without jeopardizing the *Empire Builder*, what are we waiting for? I want to make sure we have all the options on the table and this amendment does just that, while protecting service in northern Montana where train service is already critically important."

Rail work in British Columbia means more Cascades service

A siding extension and new signals on BNSF's Seattle-Vancouver, BC mainline at Colebrook, BC will finally allow Amtrak *Cascades* trains 513 and 516 to be extended from Bellingham to Vancouver. The siding and new centralized traffic control (CTC) system are to be fully operational in January. This project has been years in the making because of funding issues. BNSF required the upgrades prior to more passenger service north of Bellingham. It wouldn't pay for the work because it is directly related to passenger rail expansion and WSDOT is not authorized to



All Aboard Washington members at the Nov. 10 meeting at the state History Museum in Tacoma. Photo by Jim Hamre

spend state money in British Columbia. However, after years of negotiations, promises and false starts, the BC and Canadian governments finally committed funds for the work.

According to Jeff Schultz of the state Rail Office, WSDOT and Amtrak plan to extend trains 513 and 516 in summer 2008. There would be an early morning departure from Vancouver with through service to Portland. Northbound, a mid-afternoon departure from Portland will put you into Vancouver in the late evening. Now Oregon DOT needs establish a Thruway bus connection from Eugene for these trains.

Stampede Pass tunnel update

All Aboard Washington has learned that BNSF plans for improving the clearances in the Stampede Pass tunnel are nearly ready to go. The engineering firm designing the project has virtually completed the contract documents but an internal discussion within BNSF is holding up the project. The concern is over disposal of the brick tunnel lining which contaminated with over a century of soot. The railroad's environmental people want the 30,000 tons of waste sent to hazardous waste landfill; the engineering people want to put the materials in an adjacent abandoned tunnel and seal off the tunnel. The issue has advanced to the vice president level at BNSF; once it is resolved the railroad will be ready to bid the contract.



Photos by Jim Hamre

Amtrak is testing Wi-Fi on the Mt. Baker set of *Cascades* equipment to determine feasibility of providing the service throughout the corridor. There are currently some dead spots but the service is free for now. Go through the login screen that pops up to connect.

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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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 Amtrak *Cascades*: www.amtrakcascades.com

All Aboard News

January 29: All Aboard Washington will again participate in **Transportation Advocacy Day** in **Olympia** during the Legislative session. The day's activities will begin at **United Church of Christ**, 110 11th Ave SW. Lloyd Flem and others will prep us to visit with our legislators before we go out to meet with them or with staff. Members should let Lloyd know in advance they will be participating as he will then work to get appointments with your legislators (contact info, p. 5). From the north use *Cascades* 501 southbound and 506 or 516 northbound. Transportation provided between Centennial Station and the church.

February 23: Annual joint meeting with NARP Region 8, Assoc. of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates and Montana ARP in **Portland**. A registration flyer will be sent out in late January. Use *Cascades* train 501 southbound and train 508 northbound. The earlier you purchase tickets the better the price. The Portland Visitor Association now is offering a 2-for-1 deal on *Cascades* service to Portland. Use promotion code H750 when making reservations with Amtrak. Restrictions apply and a limited number of seats are available on each train.

All Aboard Washington welcomed the following new members in October and November: David Stubbs, Surrey, BC; Michael Bryans, Vancouver, WA; Alan Deright, Seattle; and Weylin Doyle, Bonney Lake.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include Hans Mueller, Stuart Adams, Bob Lawrence, Jeff Schultz, Zack Willhoite, Tony Trifletti, Lloyd Flem, Warren Yee, Loren Herrigstad and Jim Cusick.

Many members help All Aboard Washington throughout the year, both financially and with their time and talent. Another way to support All Aboard Washington into the future is to consider a **bequest in your will** to our organization. Please consider doing so.



Record Year, from page 1

- *Coast Starlight*: 343,542 (+3.5%); \$29,171,278 (+5.2%)

Amtrak's 2008 funding (like most of the federal government's) remaining in flux though the fiscal year started Oct. 1. The House and Senate have negotiated the differences in their separate bills for Transportation and Housing. The conference report passed the House on Nov. 14 270-147, eight votes shy of the supermajority required to override a promised presidential veto. The bill would provide \$1.45 billion for intercity passenger rail (\$1.375 billion for Amtrak and \$75 million to match state investments). The Senate has not yet acted on the conference report. NARP reports that many scenarios

for avoiding a veto have been discussed; some include lowering the spending level of all appropriations bills. The effect of these cuts would fall hard on Amtrak. NARP urges people to contact their representative and senators and appeal to them not to cut Amtrak funding in the final bill.

In good news from Congress, the Senate passed S. 294, the six-year \$11.4 billion Amtrak reauthorization on a 70-22 vote on Oct. 30. This is a veto-proof margin and the six Democrats that did not vote would have probably voted yea. Sens. Patty Murray (D-Bothell) and Maria Cantwell (D-Edmonds) voted yes, as did Oregon Sen. Gordon Smith (R), Idaho Sen. Mike Crapo (R), and Montana Sens. Jon Tester (D) and Max Baucus (D). Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden (D) did not vote and Idaho Sen. Larry Craig (R) voted no. Rep. James Oberstar (D-MN), head of the House Transportation committee, has said he will introduce a House counterpart to S. 294 early next year.

Cusick, from page 3

but it wasn't considered to be cost-effective. As you all know from reading this column, the study of this line as a commuter rail solution never made it to the Cost/Benefit stage.

What do you do? What **do** you do? What did I do?

I called Frank Shiers and clarified what happened in the study of that line.

It wasn't hard to talk about it, since the data spoke for itself.

Eastside commuter rail is a viable solution.

I'll be waiting for the opponent's plan.

All Aboard Washington
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