



# WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

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*"Moving forward... On Rail."*

## Congressmen Oberstar and Mica, BNSF CEO Rose talk passenger rail service

House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman James Oberstar (D-MN); Rep. John Mica (R-FL), ranking Republican on T&I; and BNSF President Matt Rose spoke at the National Assoc. of Railroad Passengers (NARP) spring board meeting in April 2008.

In an upbeat presentation, Chairman Oberstar announced "we are about to see a new era for Amtrak" as he and Rep. Mica were preparing to introduce the House version of a new 6-year reauthorization. "After six years of a starvation diet, we have a bill to provide substantial



Congressman Oberstar

investment Amtrak," he declared. (The Senate passed its reauthorization, S. 294, last fall. The House reauthorization, HR 6003, passed on 311-104 vote on July 11. A conference committee has been ap-

pointed to work out the differences in the two versions, though the bill is now referred to only S. 294. No members of our state delegation are on the committee, but our members still need to heed Lloyd Flem's challenge; see page 2. Both the House and Senate passed their Amtrak reauthorizations by veto-proof margins.)

Oberstar easily slipped between English and French as he recalled his time as a student in Belgium in the late 50s and explained how Europe continues to do transportation and passenger rail right. Since he lived there, Paris-Brussels train service has gone from six hours to 80 minutes and Paris-Lyon from 4.5 hours to two hours.

He noted that Boise wants is passenger train service restored to improve mobility and reduce pollution. Boise is on the route of the Seattle-Chicago *Pioneer* that Amtrak eliminated in a false economy move in 1997.

In New Jersey, ten percent of all trips are now made by transit. If we reached

this level nationwide we would eliminate the equivalent of all oil we import from Saudi Arabia.

Oberstar called for reprioritizing our national transportation network to include a much more robust rail component. He noted that Amtrak removes 8 mill. cars from the road each year. While highway expansion projects are virtually rubber-stamped, the federal government requires lengthy and burdensome benefit/cost analyses for rail projects.

Amtrak has made many reforms in recent years, but continues to be blasted by the administration and some in Congress as refusing to reform. Amtrak now needs the real support of the federal government to move forward and become a world class transportation provider.

Oberstar said he and Paul Weyrich, a leading conservative who is strongly pro-transit and pro-rail, are joining forces to blunt the "drumbeat of negativism [on Amtrak] from the White House" for the last six years.

Rep. John Mica began by stating that in the U.S. we can only dream about having a rail system as in Europe. He joked, "I am sometimes characterized as a critic of Amtrak." But he continued, "I criticize Amtrak because I think we can do better – with innovation, with public-private partnerships and with a vision."

Mica's views on Amtrak have moderated in recent years. He formerly called for the end of all Amtrak service except the Northeast Corridor, Auto Train (which has its southern terminus in his Florida district) and maybe the California corridors. He now supports a national system, but one which needs to involve more private participation and innovation, particularly in the corridors.

He added provisions to HR 6003 to have the Federal government seek proposals for a new TGV-style high speed corridor in the Northeast that would be separate from the existing infrastructure that also supports thousands of commuters. (See **Talk**, page 5)

## Transit, Amtrak ridership booms



Photo by Jim Hamre

Above, hundreds of commuters pour off an evening Sounder train in Puyallup on July 25. Nationwide, transit ridership is up 3.3% so far this year over last and is at a 50 year high. Amtrak's ridership is up more than 11% this fiscal year (since October 2007) and the company should approach a record 28 mill. passengers carried.

Locally, Sound Transit's Sounder service was up 31% in the three months ending June 30 compared to the same time last year. More than 1.2 mill. passengers boarded Sounder in the first half of 2008. In June, ridership was even stronger: up 37% on the Tacoma-Seattle line and up 44% on the Everett-Seattle line, thanks in part to the opening of the Mukilteo station on May 31<sup>st</sup>.

Amtrak *Cascades* ridership is 11.8% in the first six months of 2008 over 2007. On Fridays and Sundays in particular it is difficult to get reservations between Seattle and Portland if you wait till just a few days before departure.

At a time when people are demanding more rail service, Amtrak and WSDOT are being stymied in their plan to extend *Cascades* trains 513 and 516 from Bellingham to Vancouver, BC. They had planned to launch the extension in August. However, NARP has learned from Canada's Transport 2000 advocacy group that the extension will not start until our DOT, which has underwritten capacity improvements (along with British Columbia) and will fund the operation, reaches an agreement with the Canadian Border Security Agency. CBSA is reportedly demanding payment for screening passengers at any new "facilities." While new international flights to Canada are not subject to such fees, CBSA views the extra train as a new "facility" and is demanding **\$1,500 per day** to screen passengers. The travel industry is supporting Amtrak on this issue because they fear its spread to all other modes of transportation.



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

### **The Change to Passenger Rail: Permanent? Midrange Plan and Your Efforts; Save a Life, Maybe Yours**

In addition to the hard data that all forms of passenger rail, from streetcars to light rail to metros to commuter trains to interurbans to corridor and national network Amtrak trains, are experiencing strong growth in ridership, I like to think we are beginning to see an actual change in perception and behavior in transportation modal choice among a significant percentage of the American people. Not in decades have the non-rail media, from the evening news to the Wall Street Journal to Parade magazine and to commuters who would “never” have not driven to work are talking about and taking the train. The professional rail press is upbeat about gains in passenger rail, and, with a very temporary pause with a slumping general economy, freight rail. Railway Age is not a railfan mag, but a hard-nose journal for the industry. The lead article for July: “America Takes the Train and Railroads are Enjoying the Ride.”

Or has the recent rather dramatic increase in motor fuel prices, so rapid that the public was shocked into considering non-driving means of travel, been the major and perhaps temporary cause of sold-out Amtrak *Cascades* and standing-room-only Sounders.

Or like the young LA man, who switched back to driving alone following repair of earthquake-damaged freeways rather than riding a cheaper, faster, right-to-his-job train that had been quickly established following the quake, because, “Man, I just didn’t feel right without my own wheels!”, when today’s riders get used to today’s high motor fuel prices, will many revert back to personal motor vehicles. I never believed Americans “love our cars” any more than do Europeans, but we may be addicted to driving in a way Europeans and East Asians have never been. Certainly, the LA dude’s behavior was an example of clinical addiction, not rational behavior!

While street and highway congestion on freeways and in urban areas seems bad as ever, despite a reported two per-

cent drop in total miles driven (first since the mid-70s), that nasty traffic, plus a rapid drop off in the quantity and quality of commercial air service, plus a concern among some conscientious people about the external costs of driving – environmental, dependence on oil and safety – compared to transit and trains (Not everyone makes all decisions based on “What’s in it for me, right now.”) may be leading folks off the roads and out of the air and onto the rails. I surely hope so. For so many reasons, our country would benefit from a better transportation modal balance.

At a recent meeting of the Advisory Committee to WSDOT’s “Midrange Plan for the Amtrak *Cascades*: 2009-2016,” on which I serve as the representative of AA WA and Amtrak riders generally, WSDOT’s rail marketing person said many new riders are “trying the train” for

***I like to think we are beginning to see an actual change in perception and behavior in transportation modal choice among a significant percentage of the American people.***

the first time and are said to “love it and will ride again.” I maintain the *Cascades* yield a much more pleasant travel experience than I-5. I cannot speak to the short-hop air service in the corridor. While I have and will fly to the East Coast or Europe, I cannot conceive of a need to fly from, say, Seattle to Portland. As the marketing person said, one can use train travel time productively, while a driver cannot or certainly should not be using electronic gadgetry while driving. She also distributed some excellent postcards of the dramatic natural and urban scenery along the *Cascades*. Yes, three of the most photogenic big cities in North America are served by the *Cascades*. Also, plans to cooperate with quality hotels in these cities is planned. But some would argue our problems along the Corridor involve capacity supply, not customer demand, which far exceeds available seats on increasing numbers of days.

The WSDOT rail people, while cautious and careful, are optimistic about moving to the future in their Midrange Plan. The original plan, which emerged in the mid-90s, but was sidetracked by the dramatic loss of state funding as a result of an unfortunately successful state initiative, would have allowed eight round trips Seattle-Portland by now. Hope of achieving such, plus at least one additional round trip Seattle-Vancouver, BC

would require very significant state funding for infrastructure and equipment as well as fares from the growing numbers of passengers to support operation of the trains. Eight round trips daily in a rail corridor such as our Northwest Corridor would probably come close to paying the costs of operating the trains, but would not pay capital costs. And contrary to myth, gas taxes and other driving fees do **NOT** pay nearly all the capital costs of all street, road and highway infrastructure, and particularly the external costs of driving and parking, either.

The WSDOT presenters at the meeting correctly said the money to continue the incremental “building blocks” of a larger Amtrak *Cascades* system is not currently in sight. Existing sources of funds will probably allow continuation of ongoing projects but the system growth that sold-out trains suggest will require more and bigger bucks. Essential to the Legislature coming through with sturdier funding sources is the Federal government at long last taking the now-recognized need and apparent popular desire for a much larger role for passenger trains. And

this is where you, fellow rail advocates must do more than just wish, or worse, complain about our region or country’s “backwardness” in passenger rail compared to other industrialized democracies and now, even such “Third World” awakening giants as China, India and Brazil. As I am weary of writing and you may be weary of reading, you **MUST** contact your Congresspeople. Perhaps many of you have, but I have little evidence of same. Again, a personal, as opposed to pre-prepared correspondence is better. Your representatives in Washington, DC need to hear from you, their constituents, not near-duplications of what AA WA or NARP leadership might author.

Only if the Feds come through with monies for intercity passenger rail now authorized (but not appropriated), will we have a reasonable chance for the state, with the money shortfall and increasing demands for all kinds of transportation infrastructure, to come through with passenger rail investment dollars. Concentrate on Congress for the moment; we’ll address our Legislature early in 2009.



Another young person, this time on a bicycle, rode in front of an Amtrak train, this time in Centralia, and was killed. What a tragic and needless waste of a young life. Several of us will be giving (See **Flem**, page 5)



## The View Down the Tracks

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with Jim Cusick

### Pouring money

I used to have a great way to limit my gas usage. I used my standard credit card. Gas pumps I visited had been set to stop pumping at \$75. And with an average price of \$4.25 per gallon, my Imperium Condescender regularly hit that limit. (Although they “fixed” the pumps to allow a higher limit, I still haven’t hit the \$100 fill-up mark yet!)

While it really didn’t prevent me from filling up, it allowed me to stop and think. Think about whether I really need to take that extra trip. Think about combining trips. Think about taking alternate transportation.

Time to take transit, and of course I’d think about taking the train. As we all know the problem is that there aren’t enough of them.

Sounder schedules aren’t yet quite robust enough for me to use, but the trains are filling up. Amtrak trains are selling out regularly. Some see that as a good thing, some see that as a bad thing. Seeing as we’re a rail advocacy group, we’re never satisfied with the status quo. Amtrak schedules need to be a bit more robust, too.

Sold out trains frustrate those who hope to make a quick painless trip. Planning early can alleviate this. However, while Sound Transit has many extra rail cars (leased to agencies in various parts of the country), Amtrak has always had to contend with equipment shortages. Thanks to the perennial budget battles, Amtrak has at least become expert at keeping equipment operational with limited resources.

What would happen if Amtrak did have the funds to replace the basic equipment? It appears that the political “perfect storm” is brewing thanks to high gas prices. Now it seems that Amtrak is on everyone’s radar.

“Why aren’t there more trains?” they ask.

### Amtrak: a growth company?

More trains are just what Amtrak would love to have. However, the critical part of that argument is that Amtrak needs new equipment, not just more trains. That is what was evident to David

Gunn when he headed up Amtrak, something that everyone working with the equipment appreciated.

In a recent interview with [Reuters](#), Amtrak Pres. Alex Kummant answers most of those questions, and even hits the tired arguments against Amtrak head on, with concise and accurate figures. He understands the “who gets what subsidy” argument, and has a good understanding of the need for freight and passenger rail investment. He actually makes almost all the same arguments for passenger rail as we at All Aboard have over the years. I’d love to think he got all his ideas from reading our newsletter.

Now that the House and the Senate voted to authorize significantly more money to Amtrak, it appears that Amtrak might just get what they’ve been asking for.

Editorials, letters to the editor, political

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prognostications are all evidence that the time is ripe for passenger rail to be part of a balanced transportation system in this country.

Now the question is, can Amtrak, which was born as the unwanted stepchild of the railroad industry and having suffered under more than 35 years of the same refrain of “passenger rail is no longer needed,” actually change to a growth company?

This is a major shift in perception.

Amtrak personnel have shown that they can perform despite the predictions of their impending demise, ancient equipment and inadequate funding for the basic resources such as new catenary wire on the Northeast Corridor.

Even when things that are out of their control, Amtrak on-board personnel consistently earn accolades from customers. Not that we have any bias here in the Pacific Northwest, but the routes rated high most consistently on customer satisfaction surveys are the *Empire Builder*, our *Cascades* service, and the *Coast Starlight*.

Who should get the chance to spend this newfound political windfall?

Before you jump on the “privatization” bandwagon, remember a comment made by billionaire Warren Buffet when asked what he thought about the anniversary of

the Wright brothers’ first flight, and how it changed the world. [His comment](#) was “any right-minded capitalist who had seen the Wrights’ contraption take to the skies in Kitty Hawk might have shot it down and saved investors 100 years of agony.” Why? Data from the International Air Transport Association shows airlines around the world have lost \$5 billion since 1982. Warren Buffet even went as far as to say airlines as a whole hadn’t netted a dime since 1903.

Before you act too smug, don’t forget what was happening to the passenger rail industry when it was privately run during times that also got a little rough: crowded cars, poor schedules, poor (or non-existent) customer service.

Sounds like the current air travel situation, doesn’t it? “Jet Set” carries a different connotation now than it did in the sixties.

Transporting humans is not a profit making enterprise.

The problem is, we’ve neglected rail for so long, we no longer have a passenger rail infrastructure, equipment manufacturer base, or station operations that comes close to passenger rail’s heyday after

World War II.

Except for Amtrak.

Amtrak’s challenge now is how do you take all that “tribal knowledge” they’ve accumulated and transfer it to all the new people that will have to be hired to support their expansion and to replace retirees.

Amtrak’s other challenge is how do you build that esprit-de-corps that comes when you invest in a corporate future based on growth.

A good example is Nordstrom’s push to the East Coast back in 1990. They expanded with a well thought out and deliberate, but not too aggressive, growth plan. I was there when it happened. They were heady times.

My advice is that rail travel must remain the quality transportation of choice.

Passenger rail’s value lies in the level of comfort, the scenery, and the total experience that draws people to it. Raise fares if needed, but maintain that comfort level.

Shorter distance travel can be slightly less, but still at a superior comfort level because of the nature of rail vehicles. That job falls to the regional providers.

The problem still exists, though.

We need **MORE TRAINS**.

(See **Cusick**, page 5)



## Bridge-Building in Montana

By Alfred Runte

A small bridge across the Yellowstone River in Livingston, Montana, connects a residential island with the city. More about that shortly.

My purpose in visiting Montana during June was for the centennial of West Yellowstone. In cooperation with the Yellowstone Historic Center, town officials had invited me there to speak. On June 11, 1908, the first passenger train of the Oregon Short Line, a subsidiary of the Union Pacific Railroad, arrived with visitors to Yellowstone National Park off the main line through Ogden, Utah. Essentially, the 25-year monopoly of the Northern Pacific Railway, approaching Yellowstone from the north via Livingston, had been broken. This is the story told by the Yellowstone Historic Center – and a marvelous museum it is.

Included within the complex of historical buildings are the original depot and Union Pacific dining hall designed by Gilbert Stanley Underwood. Imagine providing a palatial dining hall, built of native stone and wood, just for arriving and departing passengers. It is another reminder that our railroads once believed in the public good – in civilization, not merely profit. As of 1908, two major railroads served Yellowstone National Park; by the 1920s three more could make that claim. Now the closest Amtrak trains are the *Empire Builder* and *California Zephyr*, stopping 300 miles to the north and south, respectively. As of 1997, southern Idaho at least had the *Pioneer*, and then that train was cut by Amtrak.

Believe me, the people of the greater Yellowstone region are taking notice. West Yellowstone is just one among several communities asking that its trains be restored. In my speech June 11, I was delighted to support their proposal. The point is that it hardly took any prodding from me.

A woman working at the Gallatin Gateway Inn, just south of Bozeman, spoke for dozens of people I met. Several times a year, she drives the 600-mile roundtrip between Bozeman and Whitefish to put her children on the *Empire Builder*. Her parents pick them up in Edmonds, then also put them on the train heading back. Why don't you just fly them from Bozeman, I asked? Do you realize how much that costs, she replied? And think of my parents having to drive to the airport. That is 60 miles roundtrip for them – and most of the time in horrible traffic. In Edmonds, they live just a few minutes from the station. Although my drive to Whitefish is far longer, at least it is stress-free.

All Aboard Washington has pointed out repeatedly that the long-distance trains are more than end-to-end services just for tourists. Each train serves all kinds of corridors, in this example, the Whitefish to Edmonds "corridor." Think where Montana would be without the *Empire Builder*. In-

deed, think how southern Montana has suffered since the loss of the *North Coast Hiawatha* in 1979. No wonder Montana wants that route back – and southern Idaho, the *Pioneer*. Neither train is a luxury; rather each is a necessity. When the tourists are gone, the residents remain. Most of Montana's bus service has already evaporated, and now the airlines are leaving, too. Butte is just the latest to lose air service. Southern Idaho fears the same.

Enough of this nonsense, more people are saying. Consider another example, Ian H. Fennell, editor of the Idaho State Journal in Pocatello. On my return to Seattle he asked that I abridge my West Yellowstone speech for Insight, the paper's opinion section. And would I add something about the *Pioneer*. Accompanied by a J. Craig Thorpe painting of the *Empire Builder*, the speech appeared in the paper on Sunday July 13. "The article looked great and generated more comments than any Insight I can remember," Mr. Fennell writes. "I'd also like to know how I could start a rail advocacy group in Idaho."

Again, if this were coming just from us – from the people and organizations we already know – its significance would not be as great. Finally, our message is getting out into the culture – a hotel worker in Bozeman and a newspaper editor in Pocatello. And don't forget West Yellowstone. These are not rail fans; rather they are citizens. They cannot be accused of "loving" trains. They want trains that serve everyday needs.

Which brings me back to that bridge in Livingston. I had crossed it to the island to locate the home of my host. The Livingston Depot Museum had asked, after I spoke in West Yellowstone, that I give my lecture on railroad development of the national parks for them. One of the museum's volunteers living on the island had graciously invited me to spend the night. I was not to worry that the Yellowstone River was at flood stage; ten years ago, the river had actually crested over the bridge. With the water still five feet below the roadbed, the bridge and my rental car should be fine.

Right! An hour later, wearing a life jacket and with my hands full of luggage, I was racing back into Livingston across the bridge. Moments later it closed behind me – and stayed closed for a week – until a Bailey Bridge brought in by the Army Corps of Engineers could be built across the sinking span. As reporters gathered around me for comments, I let go with what can only be considered my best All Aboard Washington barrage. "There it is. This is now the story of our country. Our highways are shot; our bridges are falling down; our airlines can't pay their fuel bills. And what did we do with our fuel-efficient, land-saving railroads? Why, those we just threw away. Meanwhile, most politicians are too stupid to even care." Believe me, it further pre-

pared me to give a sizzling talk that evening; after all, I had come within minutes of being stranded on the island, leaving my audience at the museum in the lurch.

Afterwards, the good people of Livingston took me to dinner and gently calmed me down. But they agreed with me, as did the people of Bozeman and West Yellowstone, that a train for southern Montana is long overdue.

It is wonderful when people start waking up. All along, we have been right to believe in the passenger train – and in the need for rebuilding our railroads. To the country, the failure of a small bridge in Montana may not mean much. We know what it really means. It further explains why we are so committed to the Eastside Rail Line, for example. And why, after the Washington State Department of Transportation gets through widening I-405 at the Wilburton Tunnel, we will insist they put back the railroad. We need commuter trains on that line – and lots of them. We need to start taking better care of what we have. Once the trains are gone, they have a habit of never returning. Look at southern Montana and southern Idaho. Look at Livingston and West Yellowstone.

Certainly, when the police start handing out life jackets to cross bridges in this country, you know our transportation system is a wreck. Our politicians will then forgive us for being just a little persnickety when it comes to saving railroads. We have the country to think about, not just the Highway Lobby.

In that spirit, I thank our new friends in Montana for their hospitality. I thank Ian Fennell and the Idaho State Journal for publishing our speech. Thank you for believing in us – and inviting us to share your history. We will indeed help you get your trains back. After all, we believe in Yellowstone and your mountains, too.

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The Washington State History Museum in Tacoma is sponsoring the exhibit "The West the Railroads Made." From its website ([washingtonhistory.org](http://washingtonhistory.org)): "Learn about how this one form of transportation reshaped the West and helped create a truly continental nation. Beyond iron tracks and coal-fired engines, the story of railroads is a story of transformation. By bringing in immigrants, railroads changed the character of the region's population. By building depots, bridges and tunnels, it changed the area's landscape. By promoting agriculture, ranching and mining on a grand scale, it changed the people's way of life. Railroads brought the modern world to the West and the West to the modern world."

The exhibit is showing through Jan. 24, 2009. The museum is open 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. six days a week (opens at noon on Sundays; closed Mondays starting Sept. 1). Every Thursday hours extend to 8:00 p.m. with free admission after 5. The museum is easily accessible from Tacoma Dome Transit Station via Tacoma Link light rail.

**Talk**, from page 1

ter trains and some freight trains each day. Intermodal connections in many cities are lacking and that is something that needs to change. This includes not only intercity and transit buses serving train stations, but also more rail connections to airports.

Mica noted that he and Oberstar have a good working relationship.

Matt Rose, the highly regarded CEO of BNSF Railway, became the first CEO of a major private railroad to speak at a NARP meeting. Rose, who served on the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission, outlined the transportation capacity issues facing our country and the funding gaps that must be filled to fix the problems.

Between 1980 and 2005 rail route miles decreased 39% while gross ton miles increased 65%; highway route miles increased 7% while vehicle miles traveled increased 96%; and port container traffic increased 400% (measured in 20 foot equivalent units). Rose said the nation's rail network hit equilibrium in 2002.

The Commission's report is a call to action, said Rose. The railroads face a \$39 billion shortfall in the amount of capital they can fund to meet freight needs between now and 2035. Rose noted one way BNSF is increasing capacity at little cost is increasing train lengths on the LA-Chicago Transcon line (which is now virtually all double track or more) to 10,000 feet.

Rose emphasized the environmental value of rail over truck transport: better fuel efficiency, reduced air pollution and reduced highway congestion.

On passenger rail service, Rose stated that he'd be happy if he didn't have to run passenger trains on his railroad. But, since BNSF has an obligation to run passenger trains, the railroad is committed to providing excellent service. Passenger train operators wanting access to BNSF tracks will be required to pay for infrastructure upgrades so that freight capacity is not reduced. As CEO, Rose said it's not his job to talk about the future of passenger rail service, but it's

appropriate for him to urge government funding to fix bottlenecks and improve Amtrak's service.

BNSF is a leader in providing Amtrak trains good service. "Our dispatchers prioritize Amtrak and it's very rare for us to stab their trains," Rose said. Current on-time performance for Amtrak on BNSF is 87.7%, but "that's not good enough." The railroad wants Amtrak on-time performance above 90%. It expects to earn \$14 mill. this year in on-time incentive payments. Rose also noted that Sounder on-time performance so far this year is 99.3%.

**Flem**, from page 2

public Operation Lifesaver presentations. All rail advocates must emphasize to friends and family that trains are very safe for passengers and are good for our communities and our environment, but are huge powerful machines which cannot avoid people who get in their way. Trains cannot swerve and do take a long time to stop. Please tell folks all of us associated with railroads want them to be safe and stay alive! And you must set examples when around train tracks with the young and not so young.



To a final pleasant note: Kudos to Olympia's Pete Van Zantan, who will be manning an All Aboard Washington booth at the very popular Olympia Farmers Market. I have much material than can be passed out at such booths. Let me know if any of you would like to spread the word about passenger rail and AA WA. I'll be glad to help you. And kudos to C.B. Hall, who is doing some excellent research that will help us forward the cause of passenger rail in our state. Many AA WA members have excellent knowledge and commitment to passenger rail. Do pass on your laudable ideas and insights. They will be put to work. Active, not just passive rail advocacy is now required.

**Cusick**, from page 3

**10 reasons**

I must admit I was pleasantly surprised

by Greg Nickels' arguments in the Seattle Times titled "[10 Lame Reasons to delay mass transit](#)." His tongue-in-cheek, but poignant observations almost make me think he too is a secret All Aboard member, making transportation decisions armed with information gleaned from the vast reservoir of knowledge on these pages and within our organization.

Ouch, my arm is hurting from patting myself on my back.

This is going to be another watershed event if Sound Transit's [15-year plan](#) passes in November, but I think that our (rail) perfect storm is going to make that a possibility.

The plan is not perfect, but it addresses the needs for a more robust rail system.

The funding isn't perfect, but we've decided to hamstring the process with various tax initiatives limiting the taxing resources.

The price isn't perfect – \$13.5 billion, the basic "budget dollar amount" before all the finance charges, operational costs, and inflation are factored in (a.k.a. year of expenditure dollar amount).

The best part is that it's a transit only package. No roads included. No guessing as to who doesn't like it. The vote will tell.

For me personally, the best part is where it says "Eastside rail passenger partnership – Provides funds for a potential capital contribution to a partnership for Eastside passenger rail operation on freight right-of-way there. Sound Transit and the Puget Sound Regional Council are currently evaluating the potential benefits of passenger rail operation on this corridor."

Yes it's a bold plan, but now is the time for action. Given that the current economy might make this a struggle this year for the taxpaying public, I for one expect the economy will make a turnaround, and since this plan is not an "instant gratification" solution, there will be plenty of good times to make the plan a reality.

I'm not voting for it for the sake of my grandchildren.

Quite frankly, I plan to live long enough to see the results myself.

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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**

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- 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
- All Aboard Washington: AllAboardWashington.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

# All Aboard News

**August 9:** All Aboard Washington meeting at **noon** at **Jim Hamre's home**, 13307 104<sup>th</sup> Ave. Ct. E. on Puyallup's South Hill. Bring a potluck item. Hamburgers and beverages provided. Call or email for more information. See p. 5.

**September 13:** All Aboard Washington meeting at **noon** in **Leavenworth** at a location to be determined. We hope to have the Friday eastbound and Sunday westbound *Empire Builders* make a special Leavenworth stop for the meeting. Details: Lloyd Flem (360-943-8333) or Rob Eaton (509-548-8042) and at the August meeting.

**November 8:** All Aboard Washington annual general membership meeting at Freighthouse Square in **Tacoma**. We are moving the annual silent auction to this meeting so that we have more room. We are already collecting items or services (rail related or not) for the silent auction so be thinking about what you might donate. If you need items picked up contact Jim Hamre or Darleen Flem (contact info on p. 5). Details in the next newsletter.

All Aboard Washington welcomed the following new members in June: Elizabeth Sheppard, Longview; Marc Zaharchuk, Washington Crossing, PA; Bob Ebinger, Livingston, MT; Paul Shea, West Yellowstone, MT; Rick Hoeninghausen, Yellowstone National Park, WY; Scott Moore, Roseville, CA; Diana Seider, Livingston, MT; Richard Luckin, Golden, CO; Carsten Lien, Seattle; Scott Silver, Bend, OR; Richard Schrock, Lynnwood; and Kurt Anders, Centralia.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include Warren Yee, Al Runte, Rob Eaton, Jim Cusick, Lloyd Flem, and Tony Trifiletti.

All Aboard Washington  
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Return Service Requested

All Aboard Washington welcomes two new members to the board of directors: Ron Sheck and Rob Eaton. Ron has worked in transportation most of his career, including being the entire "rail office" at New Mexico DOT at one time. He most recently worked for WSDOT as project manager for the King St. Station rehab project and the agency's liaison to Sound Transit on rail issues. Rob is mayor of Leavenworth and has spear-headed his city's efforts to build a [train station](#) and establish a stop for the *Empire Builder*. Bill Kelley has resigned from the board because his work has taken him to California.

Do you want to be greener, save All Aboard Washington money and get your newsletter sooner (with color pictures)? Send your email address to Warren Yee (see p. 5) and we'll start sending you **WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS** as a PDF every two months in lieu of a paper copy.



Photo by Jim Hamre

Amtrak's Rich Mason, center facing camera, leads All Aboard Washington members on a tour of King St. Station after the May 10 National Train Day festivities. Rich explained what the current [restoration plans](#) are for the station's main floor to better accommodate Amtrak's and the passengers' needs. The tour included a behind-the-scenes look into Amtrak's operations. We thank Rich for taking time to provide the tour for us. It was interesting and enjoyed by all.

At All Aboard Washington's June 14 meeting at the Kelso train station we heard from



Photo by Jim Hamre

Kelso City Manager Paul Brachvogel and Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments transportation planner Rosemary Siipola. Brachvogel stated there is much interest in development in Kelso and the downtown core is seeing slow but steady progress. The city's train station is a major part of the revitalization. "Youth is fleeting; trains are forever," say the city manager. Siipola emphasized the need for strategic thinking on integrated transportation issues. She discussed area rail projects designed to reduce congestion and improve Amtrak reliability. Our thanks to local members Ron and Pat Schauer and Tedine Roos for hosting the meeting and providing lunch.

### Save the Date!

On October 25, All Aboard Washington, in cooperation with the Washington State Historical Society, will host a conference on railroads and the environment at the State History Museum in Tacoma. The tentative title of the conference is "Earth As Only a Railroad Can Make It: The World and Environmental Sustainability." Invited speakers include Gov. Bill Richardson (D) of New Mexico, whose office assures us that he is interested, and Cesar Vergara, a world-renowned industrial designer, who has accepted and will attend. Dave Ross, of KIRO 710 radio, will moderate a panel of distinguished commentators.

A registration charge, commensurate with the quality and significance of this event, is yet to be determined. Registration will include admission to the museum and its current exhibit "The West the Railroads Made," a buffet lunch and conference events.

This is a serious step for All Aboard Washington and the campaign for passenger rail. Our continued success in Olympia and the region depends on forming new alliances. Funds raised above the cost of the conference will support the work of our organization.

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