

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

Feds' stimulus for high-speed rail is low-speed

Because of bureaucratic delays, money for high-speed rail may not reach the Northwest until fall

By C.B. Hall

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Where's the money? That's the question many are asking as 30 states, including Washington and Oregon, await their shares of \$8 billion in federal stimulus funds for development of a high-speed passenger rail system, one of President Obama's signature programs.

The simple answer is that the money is sitting at the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), which hasn't yet settled on all the administrative and legal protocols that must be in place before the agency can write the checks. FRA spokesman Warren Flatau says it

owned by private "host" railroads. President Obama personally announced the first round of program grant selections in January. Washington's share was \$590 million, a good chunk of the \$1.3 billion Olympia had asked for.

Nearly a year and a half after Congress passed the stimulus legislation, and with President Obama having recently showcased the launching of the 10,000th stimulus project, high-speed rail thus finds itself on a low-speed track.

"We have the resources to be able to deliver the program in place," commented Scott Witt, state rail and marine director at the Washington Department of Transportation, in an e-mail. He added, however, that the process for getting the \$590 million "requires extensive documentation and agreements to be in place prior to distribution. Many of the agreement requirements were not available at the time of the grant project selections."

Witt oversees Washington State's sponsorship of the Amtrak Cascades service, whose trains ply the 466-mile HSR corridor between Eugene, Ore., and Vancouver, B.C. Under the HSR program, the corridor is expected — one of these days — to host trains traveling at up to 110 mph. They would make the

Seattle-Portland traverse in two and a half hours, an hour faster than today.

Witt said that a finalized list of the projects to be bankrolled by the federal grant remains a work in progress. A (See **High Speed**, page 4)

Senator Haugen speaks at All Aboard Washington meeting



Senator Haugen

State Senator Margaret Haugen (D- Camano Island) was the featured speaker at our June 12 All Aboard Washington meeting in Mt. Vernon.

Lloyd Flem introduced the senator by saying,

"There's no single person in the Legislature that's more important for rail than Sen. Haugen."

Sen. Haugen hailed All Aboard Washington as a true nonpartisan group and strong supporter of the state rail program.

She said the federal stimulus dollars for high speed rail investment in Washington, totaling \$590 million, is very exciting for us. Haugen noted that this is the largest single federal stimulus allocation received by the state and no local match is required. Future federal HSR funding will require a local match.

Our state is working very hard to build a stronger coalition with Oregon and British Columbia for rail improvements and service expansion.

She said we must continue to push BNSF to spend capital dollars the state has provided to help improve both passenger and freight service. Haugen specifically mentioned three projects in Northwest Washington that are slow to come to fruition: passing siding improvements at Stanwood and Mt. Vernon, and replacement of the Skagit (See **Haugen**, page 5)

The August 14 All Aboard Washington picnic/meeting will be hosted by Ralph and Karen Munro on their farm near Olympia, a change of location from past years. Please read the details about meeting on page 6.



An Amtrak Cascades train rolls north at Kalama, WA in February 2010. This segment of the Seattle-Portland BNSF mainline is part of the Kelso to Martins Bluff project where passenger train speeds, with proper funding, could be boosted up to 110 mph in the future.

Photo by Jim Hamre

might be the end of September before the money goes out.

The high-speed rail (HSR) program would create a new generation of passenger services in 11 federally designated corridors, most of whose track is



*From the desk of
the Executive
Director
by
Lloyd H. Flem*

**Amtrak Cascades Ridership Record;
What Train Day Visitors Want;
Riding Amtrak 509 with Prof Pezzoli;
See you on the 14th!**

The significant economic downturn that has plagued the US and much of the industrialized world did affect passenger train ridership, like it did all transportation modes, although the decreases in Amtrak Cascades ridership were modest. But since late in 2009 and continuing through the present, passenger counts on our Cascades are breaking records, month after month. Both 506 and 509 were essentially sold out on Thursday July 22. After arriving on time in Seattle on 506, the interior of King Street Station looked like photos from the 1940s, with large crowds waiting for and arriving from several trains and Amtrak Thruway buses.

Good news that increasing numbers are riding our trains; bad news that demand for intercity train service exceeds supply of available seats and trains running at many preferred times. At least the past nonsense that “nobody” wants to ride trains and “everyone wants to fly or drive” no longer has any validity. In addition, freight rail volumes, which were down during the recent recession, are again increasing.

Good news that Washington State received a significant and well-deserved piece of the Federal ARRA (Stimulus) funds for improvements on our Northwest Rail Corridor. Not-so-good is the fiscal limitations that local, state and federal governments are under to continue making investments in train service at a pace rail advocates find desirable.



A survey done on National Train Day, May 8, on written forms at the Centralia and Olympia-Lacey Amtrak stations, and give orally in Bellingham, sought out the perceptions and wants concerning intercity passenger trains. While most of those surveyed are not members of AAWA, almost all would have more-than-average interest in railroads, given their very attendance at an event called Train Day. I found relatively little difference in answers between the

majority of survey respondents who had ridden the Amtrak Cascades trains and the minority who had not.

Almost all respondents liked the Talgo-built trains and wanted future Cascades trainset acquisitions to be either identical or upgrades of the current equipment. Most respondents who had ridden the trains did so because they enjoyed the train experience and were able to avoid the hassles of I-5 driving and big-city traffic and parking.

The most important desire for the future of Northwest Corridor passenger trains was more service – more train trip offerings per day in the Northwest Corridor. Faster total trip time in the Corridor (especially evident from Centralia respondents) was also seen as important. Top speed itself, despite the headline-grabbing nature of hypothetical 150, 186,

After arriving on time in Seattle on 506 [on June 22], the interior of King Street Station looked like photos from the 1940s, with large crowds waiting for and arriving from several trains and Amtrak Thruway buses.

220 MPH – “High Speed Rail” – was NOT seen as important to these Train Day survey participants. These people, more than a random sample of the general Northwest public (most of whom have rarely ridden North American passenger trains) seem to understand that total trip time, not a few miles of gee-whiz speeds (followed by slow crawls through congested urban areas), is what counts.

But headline-grabbing High Speed Rail has had the advantage of exciting the broader general public about the potential future of North American passenger train service in a way that the workaday reality of incremental improvements in elapsed trip time, efficiency, and on-time performance does not. And yes, I hope live to see one-two-five or more in our Corridor and applaud any and all High Speed Rail advocates, up to and including Rep. John Mica (R-FL) and President Obama!

An error of omission of my part (I assume responsibility for the survey, although had input from other informed people) was my not including “trains on time” as a direct choice for future desirability. Several respondents penciled in “being on time” as a very important reason for their choosing the train...or not.

In conclusion, the Train Day survey respondents want **more train service**, with the **same equipment** we now have,

on time, and with **reduced total travel time** between cities.



On Thursday July 22 Dr. Keith Pezzoli, Principal of the non-profit Global Action Research Center, and Professor at the University of California – San Diego, along with videographer (and passenger train advocate from California!) David Wiseman and his assistant Chris Pezzoli (KP’s son), joined me on Amtrak Cascades 509 from Seattle to Olympia-Lacey to discuss passenger trains, environmental issues, sustainability, and allied topics. (Global ARC’s theme is: “We promote bioregional self-reliance and healthy communities by integrating urban and rural sustainability.”)

NARP’s DC office said I might be one for Prof. Pezzoli to work with while he did some rather intensive outreach and research on the North American Pacific Coast, from Vancouver, BC to Tijuana! Pezzoli, a very fit native of Long Island, NY, is bicycling the distance, save for our ride on 509!

Given in “past lives” I was a college geography prof, a vegetable farmer, and was the founding president of the

Washington State Farmers Market Association, Keith and I found many interests and concerns in common.

Of direct interest to All Aboard Washington: Amtrak – Seattle, led by Gay Banks-Olson, plus 509’s Amtrak and Talgo staff were wonderfully cooperative in the getting of action video of bikes on trains and the entire process of boarding and riding the Amtrak Cascades. All three of our visitors were very impressed by the distinctive “regionality” of our trains, from their design to the local origin of on-board food and beverages. As the ads say, we Northwesters are “a little bit different.” Our guests liked that!

The “take-away” for rail advocacy will be the video. (I was given free reign in discussing the origin, advantages, successes, and hoped-for future of our Northwest Corridor trains. Also I mentioned the good partnerships we enjoy here, and emphasized AAWA’s support for urban and commuter rail as well as rail freight.) This video, as well as other research products and experiences, is designed to be shared with interested parties nationwide, with particular emphasis on college students. And AAWA most emphatically needs the inputs and energies of this younger demographic!

Global ARC’s Amtrak Cascades video should be available for AAWA in the near (See **Flem**, page 4)



The View Down the Tracks

=====

with Jim Cusick

Erosion

While we have many successes in the rail scene, especially with the stimulus monies coming to the Pacific Northwest, the economy is bringing up another variation: "can't do," essentially the erosion in confidence.

What's happening is that rail systems again are under attack because "How can we be spending this money in this economy?"

Make the same comment about highway spending to those who purport to be guardians of the collective purse, and one will be told that any spending on highways is cost effective. When those same folks are asked to define how they arrived at that conclusion and to at least present their findings in the form of a ballot initiative, so that the rest of us can evaluate their ideas, there is silence.

How do I know? Well, true to form, I have jumped in on the online comment sections of the various local news organizations, to ask the road proponents just those questions. I never got on my soapbox, but instead invited them to make their case for what they believe in.

I used my real name, because for one, I am proud of the work that I did on the I-405 Corridor Program, and also that I can contribute real data to the discussion.

I found out many of those who commented don't know why they support roads. The more vocal ones were adept at cherry picking the data from Sound Transit to show why we should reject a rail solution.

But curiously, they couldn't support their own position, other than the one person's comment "Haven't you read any of Kemper [Freeman's] things?" I think he was serious. It sure gave me a chuckle.

As I've said before, the arguments **FOR** rail are right there in the DATA; all we need do is bring both sides to the forefront and rail will be the preferred choice by most people.

Even though we can be glad for the progress we've made, we must never get complacent because of the potential for those gains to be eroded, as exemplified by the following excerpt from the AASHTO Journal (July 02, 2010).

(<http://bit.ly/9JAMoy>)

House Appropriations Subcommittee Approves \$4 Billion Increase in Highway Funding

Federal-aid highway projects would see a \$4 billion funding boost for Fiscal Year 2011 under legislation passed Thursday by the House transportation appropriations subcommittee.

"The fact remains that our transportation network has great investment needs with aging highways, bridges, and transit systems and an air traffic control system in desperate need of modernization," said Rep. John Olver, D-Massachusetts and chairman of the House Transportation, Housing & Urban Development, & Related Agencies Appropriations

What's happening is that rail systems again are under attack because "How can we be spending this money in this economy?"

Subcommittee.

The Federal Highway Administration would receive \$45.2 billion in FY 2011 funding for the federal-aid highway program, which is \$4 billion more than this fiscal year and what President Barack Obama has requested in his budget.

The federal-aid transit program would be increased \$618 million.

However, additional contract authority for this program would be required. Thus, action would be needed by the authorizing committees to provide higher contract authority.

High-speed and intercity passenger rail projects, however, had funding cut nearly in half by the subcommittee. The Federal Railroad Administration would receive \$1.4 billion for these programs next fiscal year, which is \$1.1 billion less than what it received in FY 2010, but \$400 million more than requested in the president's budget. (The additional funding for high-speed rail this fiscal year came mainly from a reallocation of funds requested by the president for a national infrastructure bank proposal that Congress did not authorize.)

If we aren't vigilant, this will continue behind the scenes, and things we thought were on track will get put "on the siding."

This also brings to mind Eastside Link, and, in particular, something All Aboard director Harvey Bowen pointed out in the "Hospital station" documentation. (<http://bit.ly/aE4A8S>)

In this document, it loosely refers to the freight rail/trail corridor in the planning of the station. The problem is, it ignores the commuter rail component in its description of the infrastructure. (However, the diagrams do show a Sounder cab car to represent the BNSF profile.)

Of course, the removal of the Wilburton Tunnel on I-405 was bad enough, but if we let this issue fall too far into the background, we will find the hill too steep to climb and full of loose gravel and silt that will just have us scrambling to keep up, or worse, having it all come down on top of us.

Erosion indeed.

An intact Eastside rail line would have helped with another erosion problem.

This time, the infamous June 12th mudslide between Edmonds and Everett. This really snarled up the northbound Amtrak

Cascades situation because it was part of a "perfect storm."

A storm you say? But it was a perfectly sunny day!

Well, it was a few days earlier when we had torrential downpours that saturated many a water table. When the slide happened, it waited just long enough. That is, it came just in time for the local graduation ceremonies at the UW and the other local colleges.

This meant all the buses in the area were booked and, when the train was cancelled, there was no alternate transportation available. Amtrak didn't want to strand passengers, but their usual recovery methods were stymied by the situation. [Editor: at least seven people were taking train 510 to Mt. Vernon for the AAWA meeting; some of us were able to carpool and several just went home.]

Are there alternatives? All Aboard Washington members have come up with interesting solutions, such as having ST buses available to transport passengers around the slide, and have the equipment meet them at Everett.

Here's another wild idea (which I'm always full of)...if the Woodinville Sub were still active, train 510 could have boarded the Seattle passengers and run around the lake to pick up the Everett passengers and continued on.

The issue then would have been getting the Edmonds passengers to Everett, and possibly some freight congestion on (See **Cusick**, page 4)

High Speed, from page 1

working list includes the passenger cars for a new train and an assortment of track upgrades from Seattle south to Vancouver, Wash.

Oregon won \$8 million in the January sweepstakes, a tiny fraction of its \$2.3 billion request, and is now waiting just as Washington is. Idaho, which has no designated HSR routes, received no award.

Five states have in fact gotten ahead of the pack, receiving checks in May for relatively small projects whose regulatory threshold was easier to reach. Those outlays represented only about 1% of the \$8 billion pot, however.

Asked to explain the slow pace, Flatau says that other federal agencies, such as the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration, have well-established mechanisms for distributing federal dollars, stimulus funds included. By contrast, the FRA has historically focused on safety issues and has had to cobble together its HSR funding mechanisms from scratch.

"There's not an institutionalized process," he says. "There are a number of things that have to happen. We need to enter into grant agreements with the state recipients of the funds. That requires negotiation."

He places some of the responsibility for the snail's pace on state bureaucracies. "The states have to accomplish a number of things, including entering into agreements with [freight] railroads and Amtrak. The states have to have the capacity to manage these funds. All the parties need to have the institutional capacity — some would say the intellectual capacity — to move this thing forward."

Until recently, Flatau says, "states have not allocated resources to staff or institutionalize robust or mature rail divisions, since the focus of federal transportation investment has been overwhelmingly focused on highway development. Washington State has been a leader, certainly."

Both Oregon's and Washington's rail divisions have provided hundreds of millions of dollars for Amtrak services and infrastructure improvements since the 1990s. In all, 15 states fund Amtrak trains.

Flatau says Department of Transportation secretary Ray LaHood and FRA administrator Joseph Szabo are committed to disbursing the entire \$8 billion by September 30, the end of the current federal fiscal year. "We are trying to expedite the process. We have folks working nights and weekends."

The \$8 billion represents only the first round of large-scale federal HSR investment. An additional \$2.35 billion has been made available for a second round, applications for which are due to FRA by Aug. 6. "We hope that as we start getting into a routine, things will flow more quickly," Flatau says.

Among the kinks in the funding process has been a controversial "guidance" the FRA issued in May. The document stipulates that host railroads must, without any dollar limit, underwrite all track improvements necessary to meet performance standards — which mostly means keeping trains on schedule — for the HSR service in question. The blank-check demand has rankled railroad executives, one of whom has reportedly described it as "a potential calamity" for the rail industry. Even the National Corridors Initiative, a pro-HSR advocacy organization, has called for the guidance to be scrapped.

"The prescriptive, punitive nature of the proposed FRA regulations are and will be non-starters for any normal business person who has to carefully assess projects for risks to his company, or face the wrath of his stockholders," the group editorialized on its website.

Issuance of the performance-standards guideline "may have been precipitous," Flatau concedes, adding that LaHood and Szabo met with several major-railroad CEOs recently "to assure them these guidelines would be revised." A spokesman for the BNSF Railway, which owns the high-speed route between Portland and Vancouver, B.C., declined to comment for this article, citing the ongoing nature of the negotiations.

Recent press coverage quoted LaHood as saying the issues would be resolved by about June 24, but no further reports on the negotiations have surfaced. Flatau says the revisions will be readied "in the near term."

"The i's have to be dotted and the t's have to be crossed," he adds. All of which leaves many interested parties as helpless as would-be passengers waiting for a late train.

"We recognize that the FRA has been until recently a regulatory agency not involved in funding," says Lloyd Flem, executive director of All Aboard Washington, the state's passenger rail advocacy organization. "So we've been patient with the apparent slow process in writing the checks. But it's time now to put people to work, and we urge the FRA to quickly do what is required to get our Washington state projects moving."

Flem, from page 2

future.

I believe this was a good day for all concerned.



On page 6 are details of our annual August picnic. All are strongly urged to attend, whether you arrive by train at Centennial Station and are shuttled to Triple Creek Farm, or come by road vehicle to the Farm. The setting will be matchless, the company great, with lots of pro-passenger rail energy.

If convenient, bring potluck to share. RSVPs are appreciated but not required, but strongly recommended if you are coming to Oly-Lacey by train. See you on the 14th!

Cusick, from page 3

the mainline between Snohomish and Everett.

Do we have all the answers? No, but we can do our best to provide **POSITIVE SOLUTIONS** to problems we encounter, even as we act as the ombudsmen, keeping a critical eye on things.

Amtrak Cascades notes

Cascades ridership is continuing its strong growth, which started last fall. June ridership totaled 71,830, the highest June in *Cascades* history. This is 13.9% above June 2009 and 2.5% above June 2008. For the first six months of 2010, ridership totaled 398,410, 17.3% above 2009 and 8.1% above 2008. Part of the increase can be attributed to extension of trains 513 and 516 from Bellingham to Vancouver, BC in August of last year and to the Vancouver Olympic Games in February. Amtrak's nationwide ridership is also on pace to set a new record this year.

On July 8, WSDOT issue the Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Pacific Northwest Corridor between the Canadian border and the Columbia River. The comment period ends Aug. 9, 2010. To view the 118 page PDF of the report go to <http://bit.ly/cxt0kc>.

Wireless Broadband service is coming to the *Cascades*. In June, Talgo awarded a contract to Nomad Digital to deliver and operate a wireless broadband and live real-time passenger information system on the five Talgo trainsets. This is part of the ongoing refurbishment of the trainsets. Nomad says it will use all available 3G networks to give passengers the best quality Wi-Fi service.

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All are evening numbers, except Lloyd's, which is available 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily.

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 All Aboard Washington: AllAboardWashington.org
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 Amtrak: www.amtrak.com
 Amtrak Cascades: www.amtrakcascades.com
 Sound Transit: www.soundtransit.org

Haugen, from page 1

River bridge at Burlington.

Haugen said she is a realist. We need to first compete with the automobile before talking true high speed rail; get people interested in and used to riding the train as their first choice.

Some of the challenges ahead include providing operating funds for existing and coming expansion of passenger rail service. Haugen committed to making sure the dollars are there.

The per gallon gas tax will eventually have to be replaced as its revenue stream continues to decrease because of higher fuel efficiency, declining or slowed growth in miles driven and the move to alternates such as electric cars. Rail will be there to compete for its share of funding.

The need is great for more grade separations and crossing closures. Separations are expensive and it is tough to gain public support for closures. Haugen is pushing legislation to speed the closure process while still addressing the public's concerns.

She reminded everyone that improvements made for passenger rail service also benefit freight rail service.

It will be a while before we see improved passenger rail service east across the Cascade Mountains to central and eastern Washington. However, we do need to continue providing more funding for freight rail improvements in eastern Washington.

During question time, the issue was raised of BNSF shutting down its main-line tracks to trains carrying passengers for 48 hours every time a small mudslide comes down on the tracks. This most often happens between Seattle and Everett, but has occurred in other Northwest Corridor locations. You can't expect the public to consider passenger rail service as a serious and reliable alternative to the auto if these shutdowns happen on a

regular basis with little geologic substantiation behind the closure. Of course, everyone agrees safety of train passengers is always of paramount importance. However, BNSF needs to address closures strictly on the issue safety. The railroad also needs to finally develop a permanent solution to keep slides off the tracks. Sen. Haugen agrees this is an important issue that needs to be addressed with BNSF. AAWA Executive Director Lloyd Flem is working on the issue.

Our second speaker was Mike Pracht, CEO and president of US Rail Corp, which acquired the assets of bankrupt Colorado Railcar, builder of FRA compliant diesel multiple unit (DMU) trainsets. DMUs are a cost effective option were ridership numbers may not support larger locomotive hauled trains.

They are planning to upgrade the car designs with more stainless steel components, improved transmissions and EPA Tier 4 engine capable of 125 mph operation. US Railcar and other manufacturers are working with FRA gain approval for crash energy management systems that are equivalent the current 800,000 pound buff strength requirement. Talgo and most other foreign manufacturers use CEM to provide for passenger safety in the unlikely event of a collision.

DMUs would be strong candidates for providing commuter rail service along the Eastside line east of Lake Washington and north of Everett to Mt. Vernon or Bellingham.

Loren Herrigstad reported on a HSR meeting he had attended in Vancouver, BC. He learned BNSF plans to have the federally mandated Positive Train Control system installed along the Northwest Corridor by 2012. The system will virtually eliminate the possibility of collisions between trains.

Claire Bowen reported on AAWA's participation in the Seattle Green Fes-

tival, held at the convention center June 5-6. She, along with her dad Harvey, Jim and Pat McIntosh, and Stephanie Weber staffed our booth. We made contacts with thousands of visitors, pushing our "passenger trains are green" message. Our booth was adjacent to the Cascade Bike Club's booth and we educated them on the ability to take your bike on the Amtrak Cascades.

King Street Station restoration moves into next phase



Above, the enclosure for the stairs and escalators to Jackson St. has been removed, along with the stairs and escalators. This was not a part of the original station. The open stairway build as part of the original building will be restored.



Inside, the ugly false ceiling has been removed, revealing the original ornate plaster ceiling. The light fixtures remain, for now. For more details on the current construction project, including slide shows of the work, go to <http://bit.ly/9ZBps1>.

Photos by Jim Hamre

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All Aboard News

August 14: All Aboard Washington's Annual Summer Barbecue meeting. It will be **11:00 AM – 4:00 PM** at **Ralph & Karen Munro's Triple Creek Farm** at 5041 Houston Drive NW just west of **Olympia**.

Come join us at this annual summer event, this year at former Washington Secretary of State Ralph Munro's farm near Olympia. Ralph and Karen will kindly provide the burgers and basics. Those attending are welcome to bring potluck salads, desserts, and other specialties to share.

If you're outside the Olympia area, we encourage you to take Amtrak train 500 from the south (returning on train 507 or 509), or either Train 501 or 11 from the north (returning on Train 516 or 14). Shuttle transportation will be provided from/to the Olympia-Lacey Station. RSVP for shuttle service and direct questions to Lloyd Flem; see page 5.

Driving directions from I-5 north or south to Olympia: take Exit 104 (US 101 – Shelton/Aberdeen). Go west 3.4 miles on US 101 to the third exit (Mud Bay Road, Evergreen State College). Travel north toward Evergreen State College onto Evergreen Parkway NW. Go 0.4

miles to 17th Ave N.W. Turn left and go southwest onto Houston Drive for 0.3 mi. Look for 5041 at the forest edge, and continue past a couple of small houses until reaching picturesque Triple Creek Farm. If needed, call Lloyd Flem's cell 360-870-6286.

September 11: Train Meeting & Trip to Portland, OR. Join us for our first-ever **on-train meeting and trip on the Amtrak Cascades to and from Portland**. We will be riding *Cascades* 501 south and returning on train 508 in the evening. We will try to secure a group coach for us all to ride in together, but you will be responsible for purchasing your own tickets. We will work with Amtrak staff to make sure you're boarded at the right coach with us, whether you get on at Seattle or further south. Once we get to Portland, you'll have a choice of "shore excursions"...almost like a cruise ship. Right now, we plan tours to Powell's Books, on the MAX and Streetcar systems, and an opportunity to tour Brooklyn Roundhouse and its steam engines. Book your Amtrak tickets now (trains sell out!), and we will open tour RSVPs (especially for Brooklyn Roundhouse) in August. Contact Lloyd Flem; see page 5.

All Aboard Washington welcomed the following new members in June and July: Dave Tomiko; Wayne Snoey, Covington; Lowell Dightman, Olympia; and Heidi Yurk, Bellingham.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include: C.B. Hall, Zack Willhoite, Loren Herrigstad, Lloyd Flem, Ralph Munro and Jim Cusick.

A big thank you to C.B. Hall for all his work in planning and organizing our All Aboard Washington June meeting in Mt. Vernon.

The Sound Transit board of directors, at its July 22 meeting, authorized the purchase of four additional train slots between Seattle and Tacoma from BNSF. The perpetual easements will expand Sounder service on a staggered schedule, with the first additional train beginning operation in July 2012, followed by a second in the fall of 2014, a third in the summer of 2015, and a fourth the following year. The expanded service will add four peak direction, peak hour trains with flexibility to run reverse commute and midday service based on ridership demand.