



All Aboard Washington
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Why should we care about passenger rail in the midst of a pandemic and a severe economic recession? Because it is the best way to rebuild an existing and sustainable transportation system that serves, and brings economic recovery to, communities of all sizes throughout the state.

Passenger Rail: The Missing Link

Crossing the Cascades between Western and Central Washington is more hasslesome than ever. I-90 is clogged in the summer and treacherous in the winter; flights are expensive and infrequent. In the midst of our state's economic recovery, it's more important than ever that Washingtonians have affordable, reliable options for essential travel. That's why All Aboard Washington (AAWA) is promoting state-supported East-West passenger rail service through the Yakima Valley.

Ellensburg, Yakima, and the Tri-Cities were served by passenger trains between Seattle and Spokane until 1981. Presently, Ellensburg and Yakima receive no service, and Pasco trains go between Spokane and Portland at inconvenient times. This lack of daytime service doesn't help Central and Eastern Washingtonians who need to travel across the Northwest to visit family, get to medical appointments, and conduct business. Imagine if we could utilize existing train tracks to restart train service throughout the Yakima Valley that is less expensive than flying, more comfortable than airporter buses, and more reliable than winter driving. With your support, AAWA can help make Yakima Valley train service a reality.

Unprecedented Challenges

The year 2020 will long be remembered for the challenges we have faced:

- Uncertainty surrounding the effects of Initiative 976
- The COVID-19 pandemic and its effects: limitations on travel; working from home; a sudden and deep recession; and drastic cuts in all areas of national and local budgets
- Immense levels of partisanship and hostility in the political arena
- Social and political unrest

Unique Opportunities

Despite these challenges, we hold hope for a better future. We have already seen our society come together in positive ways that would have been unimaginable even two months ago.

Citizens, businesses, and organizations in rural and urban communities of all sizes throughout the state have an unprecedented opportunity to work together to shape the future of our society and our world. We can all work together to build a sustainable future that benefits all of us.

Economic recovery must be everyone's first priority, focusing on utilizing existing assets more efficiently. All Aboard Washington has already laid the groundwork for this, through our work toward returning passenger rail to central and eastern Washington via Stampede Pass.

It's Time to Shape the New Normal

Our world will never get back to exactly the way things were, but travel will return. When it does, we believe that passenger rail can be a linchpin of a sustainable, locally-oriented transportation system that serves communities of all sizes throughout the state.

Such a system will be a lifeline for [people who need access to medical care](#) and other important travel. Those who cannot fly, can't afford a car, or are unable to drive, are unable to travel at all without passenger rail service.

In spite of the current [severe drop in ridership](#), the existing Amtrak *Cascades* service is essential. Passenger rail service should be expanded across the state NOW as an important component of the post-COVID economic recovery plan.

More people are demanding alternatives to driving and flying than ever. High-Speed Rail (HSR) is desirable in the long-term, but adding more *Cascades* service now will move more people in more communities sooner than waiting for HSR. More service now will create a greater demand for faster service later.

AAWA's Successes

All Aboard Washington has redoubled our efforts to represent you, rail passengers, since the Amtrak 501 tragedy of 2017 in which Jim Hamre and Zack Willhoite, two of our most active volunteers and board members, died. Since that time, AAWA has:

- Gotten funding from the state legislature for a study of returning passenger rail to central and eastern Washington via Stampede Pass
- Been represented on the Statewide Transportation Priorities and Needs Study Advisory Panel
- Built cooperation with local, regional and national rail advocacy, environmental, business and community groups
- Represented the interests of rail passengers with local, state and national elected officials, and with government agencies
- Planned and conducted outreach events (some postponed due to COVID-19) in Bellingham, Blaine, Olympia, Pasco, Seattle, Tacoma, Yakima and other communities throughout the state.
- Improved quality and increased frequency of publicity, print and social media communications

We have assembled an outstanding team to lead our efforts to return passenger rail service to central and eastern Washington via Stampede Pass:

- Gary Wirt, Yakima, AAWA board member and East-West Committee Member
- Mark Foutch, former mayor of Olympia, AAWA board member and East-West Committee Member
- Patrick Carnahan, AAWA board member and East-West Committee Member
- Luis Moscoso, former state legislator, co-founder of the Legislative Rail Caucus, and AAWA's Government Affairs Director

Make it Happen 1: Talk to Your Legislators

[Contact your legislators now](#) and emphasize these points:

- For many people, especially in rural areas, Amtrak is their only transportation option
- As we look toward our recovery, we need transportation solutions that produce less pollution and reduce our carbon output
- Our highways are overcrowded and have a [low return on investment](#)
- We need intercity passenger rail services now [while we wait for High-Speed Rail](#)

Ask your legislators to:

- Restore the full Amtrak Cascades schedule, including
 - 6 round trips between Seattle and Portland
 - 2 round trips between Seattle and Vancouver, BC
 - 2 round trips between Portland and Eugene
- [Restore daily frequencies](#) to the entire Amtrak national network
- Support restoring east-west passenger rail service via Stampede Pass

Make it Happen 2: Help AAWA

AAWA's mission is to represent you. We need you to tell us what your community's transportation priorities are, and we need to convey those priorities to your neighbors, your elected officials, the press, and to social media.

Most of what we do happens thanks to dedicated volunteers, but we rely on a very small paid staff that has continued to work on your behalf throughout the pandemic.

Please [become a member or make a donation](#) today!

Stay safe and stay well,

Harvey Bowen
President, Board of Directors
All Aboard Washington