



# WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

APRIL/MAY 2015

www.AllAboardWashington.org

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

## AAWA again hosts Legislative Rail Caucus

All Aboard Washington hosted its second annual reception for the members of the Legislative Rail Caucus (LRC). The February 12 reception took place in the John L. O'Brien House Office Building.

Co-Chairs Rep. Luis Moscoso (D-Mountlake Terrance) and Rep. Matt Manweller (R-Ellensburg) had urged LRC members and other legislators interested in rail – both passenger and freight – to attend. Seventeen legislators were in attendance, including Rep. Judy Clibborn (D-Mercer Island), House Transportation Committee chairwoman, and the only senator to attend, Sen. Judy Warnick (R-Moses Lake). Three Democratic senators planned to attend but were called to a caucus meeting.

AAWA Executive Director Lloyd Flem joined our dozen other members in welcoming the assembled legislators to the noontime reception. He thanked them for their strong bipartisan support

for both passenger rail – particularly the Amtrak *Cascades* – and for freight rail – particularly our short line railroads that are vital to farmers and other shippers throughout the state.

Flem noted that he has heard from rail advocates in Colorado and Pennsylvania wanting to know about our LRC and how it came to be formed.

Rep. Moscoso and Rep. Manweller – who will be our guest at our May 9 meeting in Ellensburg – both spoke positively about preservation and expansion of rail in Washington State. AAWA will continue to push for expansion of the *Cascades* after the planned addition of two more Seattle-Portland roundtrips in 2017, including daytime service to central and eastern Washington. (Shouldn't the *Cascades* service actually cross the Cascades in addition to appearing on the eastern horizon when traveling the Northwest Corridor?)

The state Senate has passed its version of a transportation bill that would expand spending mostly on highways, but it also includes some funding for transit and ferry capital projects. Unfortunately, the \$15 billion [Senate proposal](#), while funding a variety of short line projects contains almost nothing for passenger rail. The only item in the bill the helps passenger

rail – though very important – is \$33 mill. for continued slide mitigation projects along the BNSF mainline Seattle to Everett. AAWA will continue to urge the House of Representatives to include robust funding for passenger rail expansion in its transportation proposal.

## A message from our AAWA president

By Karen Keller

It's been a busy two months since I was elected president of All Aboard Washington in January. Most of my time has been focused on creating a survey for our members and former members to learn their opinions of our association.

We have contracted with Phoenix Projects Consulting Services of



**Pres. Keller presiding over our Mar. 14 meeting.**

Photo by Warren Yee.

Bend, Oregon to help us carry out a **SWOT** analysis. You will soon receive a letter via US mail or an email asking you to give our Board of Directors your opinions in four areas: Where are we **Strong**, where we are **Weak**, what are **Opportunities** for us, and what are **Threats** to our association? There are also several other questions on the survey. Please reply by the deadline of **May 1, 2015**. The results of the SWOT will have a major impact on our planning for the future of AAWA. Be watching for a summary in an upcoming newsletter. You can also access the survey right now at [allaboardwashington.org/swot/](http://allaboardwashington.org/swot/).

By way of introduction, I come from a railroading family. My grandfather was an engineer for the Northern Pacific. I have many happy memories of watching trains steam by his home, Grandma holding tight onto the grandkids' hands. We listened for the whistle, felt the vibrations on the rails, and waited to wave at the engineers, firemen, brakemen, and conductors as if this 'show' was just for us. I'm a supporter of steam preservation, volunteering with the SP 4449 in Portland on excursions and during the annual Holiday Express. I am a retired teacher who stills subs several times a month, (See **Message**, page 4)



Top, Rep. Moscoso, right, talked about the importance of rail as Rep. Manweller looks on. Bottom, AAWA's Lloyd Flem welcomes the legislative members to our reception.

Photos by Jim Hamre

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

**Legislative Reception II;  
A Little Supreme Victory;  
Support Our NW Corridor!**

All Aboard Washington's second annual reception for members of the Legislative Rail Caucus (LRC), held on February 12, was again a success. As at last year's reception, seventeen legislators, even with their very busy schedules, took time to join a dozen AAWA members for light snacks and to support the rail mode as an essential part of Washington State's transportation mix.

AAWA members present had opportunities to chat with the legislators about rail. LRC Co-Chairs Rep. Matt Manweller (R-Ellensburg) – who will be our May meeting guest – and Rep. Luis Moscoso (D-Mountlake Terrace) had urged their colleagues to attend and again showed their strong support for the importance of rail and for working with AAWA to this end. It was very rewarding to me and AAWA's officers to experience the fine bi-partisan support for more and better passenger train service in our state.

Bruce Agnew, long-time AAWA member and head of the Cascadia Academy, spoke on plans for the still-active Snohomish County portion of the Woodinville Subdivision (the Eastside Rail Line) and the need to preserve and restore rail on the now-truncated King County portion. Efforts are underway to at least temporarily put the brakes on more destruction of this potentially valuable and irreplaceable rail transportation corridor.

While most AAWA members support investment in other transportation modes, including bus, bike and pedestrian, our LTC Reception allowed us to focus directly on rail with legislators. Their presence on February 12 showed evidence of interest specifically on intercity rail in ways that Transportation Advocates Day does not. (Important to note that some legislators who support rail were not able to attend our reception due to other commitments.)



A recent partial victory for good passenger train service in the form of a unanimous decision of the US Supreme Court is somewhat helpful in ensuring

that Amtrak's on-time performance on lines owned by the Class One freight railroads can be improved.

The Class Ones, through their national lobbying vehicle, the Association of American Railroads (AAR), had received a ruling from the DC District Court, that Amtrak as a "private corporation" should not be able to participate in deciding how the freight railroads provide service to Amtrak. That Amtrak is a de facto government agency, not a private corporation, was the Supreme Court's decision. Good. But the details or "metrics" on the level of responsibility for Amtrak's being on time are still subject to negotiation.

Following the DC Court's original decision, Amtrak's on-time performance dropped significantly. Let's hope the recent decision by the Supremes, is a

***While most AAWA members support investment in other transportation modes, including bus, bike and pedestrian, our LTC Reception allowed us to focus directly on rail with legislators.***

piece of the way forward for on-time issues. NARP was instrumental in support of Amtrak's position, filing a Friend of the Court brief. It is unfortunate that it is essential for us to continuously battle to just keep the rather skeletal system of national intercity passenger trains we now have. Keep advocating for passenger trains.



Our Northwest Rail Corridor is a relative bright spot in North America's intercity rail system. The Washington Legislature has given good bi-partisan support for passenger (and freight) rail for over two decades, WSDOT has for nearly that entire time, done an excellent job is administering the legislative direction and has been dedicated to building our Northwest Corridor. This good support and good work were substantially why our state did very well as a recipient of a share the Obama Administration's ARRA's rail money. Corridor partner Oregon has been able to make fewer investments and received a very small AARA rail grant. But Oregon rail advocates and some legislators have continually worked to uphold Oregon's end of

the corridor.

We will continue to hope than pro-passenger rail Oregonians can prevail in keeping and growing the service south of Portland. In that regard, there is an excellent letter signed by now-ex-Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber (D) and Washington Governor Jay Inslee (D) praising the Amtrak Cascades. The letter is in the Winter 2015 issue of the Amtrak Cascades "OnTrak" magazine This letter, among other affirmative points, includes, "Intercity passenger rail offers an environmentally friendly, safe, and productive travel option." AAWA totally concurs with this strong gubernatorial support.

Canada's major metro areas have excellent rail transit and regional rail services. But intercity rail suffers north of the 49<sup>th</sup>, both from the meager support of the Canadian Federal Government and, in the case of our Northwest Corridor, from the province of British Columbia. BC simply has not made investments relative to the values of the North Corridor's international passenger train service that Washington or even Oregon have made.

Vancouver is a magnificent world-class city. It would seem to be in the interest of the millions of southwest mainland BC citizens to bring pressure to their provincial and national governments to make it easier for international visitors to visit and enjoy this great Canadian city and its surrounds by investing in this most pleasant, green and safe means of getting there. And BC citizens would equally have better train service for business or pleasure when traveling south to their American neighbors.

But we Washington rail advocates need not feel smug. While Amtrak ridership has enjoyed continued growth nationally in recent years, ridership on the Cascades has dropped a bit But it's still a good ride with good service. So why the drop off? Reasons are several: The 2013-14 severe winter hurt connections to/from the *Empire Builder*. Oil and coal trains, along with continued increases in other freight trains, have hurt on-time performance. (Increases in rail freight generally is something most passenger rail advocates applaud; viewpoints are mixed on the huge growth and potential impacts of the fossil-fuel trains.)

Also, major infrastructure construction has caused delays, but will bring good results for both passenger and freight trains in 2017. Even cheap bus fares on an express Vancouver, BC-Seattle-Portland route may have cost some patronage. And of course the mudslides –

(See **Flem**, page 4)



**Flem**, from page 2

mostly between Seattle and Everett – with BNSF’s mandatory 48-hour passenger train annulment following any slide, has cut into Cascades and North Sounder ridership.

But in my view a greater cause than any of the above reasons is the public perception that the trains are “always late” or “usually cancelled in the winter.” I believe at least some of the ridership decline has come as a result of the feeling that train unreliability is considerably more severe than it really is.

So what can we passenger train advocates do? First, concede that late and sometimes cancelled trains are problems, but quickly point out that most of our Northwest Corridor trains operate and run reasonably on time most of the time. Next inform people that all involved – BNSF, Amtrak, WSDOT, Talgo, rail labor, and our Legislature – are working to improve reliability and on-time performance. The \$33 million proposed by the Senate Transportation Committee to help mitigate the mudslide problems north of Seattle on the BNSF mainline is a worthy legislative investment.

Finally, as individual rail advocates, sell friends, family, work colleagues – anyone who’ll listen – on our trains. After over two decades of generally dependable and well-received Amtrak Cascades service, there are still hundreds of thousands of Northwest Corridor residents who have never considered, are not really aware of, have no idea how to go about getting a ticket, or know how to ride our trains!

**We are a Passenger Rail Advocacy organization. As individuals, for goodness sake, let’s do some one-on-one advocating!**



AAWA members: You’ll soon be receiving a mailed SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) survey of our organization. Please fill out and mail it to our consultant or do it [online](#). Our goal is to work toward making AAWA a better organization for you, our members. The SWOT analysis will be a guide to this end.

A final word: Thanks to all the people who, without much recognition, have frequently done mundane but important chores to help All Aboard Washington run rather smoothly. Stuffing envelopes is not as “glamorous” as working with legislators, members of Congress, WSDOT, Amtrak, or Talgo leadership, but is also vital to AAWA’s well being and mission. Thanks again!

**Cusick**, from page 3

(darkest), the areas with the highest density.

What’s missing? Why is that segment of the rail line on the east side of Lake Wash-

ington showing a gap?

What am I missing?

While my esteemed associate at All Aboard Washington, Lloyd Flem, is fond of the saying “Praise and Push,” I’m likely to say it a bit stronger to our legislative allies: “Take No Prisoners!!”

You are following the right track and might be immersed in the politics of trying to balance the various methods of solving our transportation issues. Don’t apologize for pushing the obvious: More rail alternatives in the Puget Sound area.

While I watch this point of view get suppressed with the pejorative “all rail proponents are foamers and railfans,” many decision makers fail to realize that the citizens are ahead of the curve on this one.

As embarrassed as I am in the policies that have gotten the Eastside Rail Corridor pulled up, in favor of a more costly Express Bus on the freeway system (I-405), I will make this bold prediction:

If the next Sound Transit ballot measure does not include commuter rail on the corridor, and instead puts “BRT” as the option, ST3 will FAIL in the Eastside subarea.

If the Sound Transit board thinks the baubles and trinkets they will hang on the next measure for all the other sub-areas will carry the vote, then I wish them luck.

Trust me.

The people want rail.

And not just west of the Cascades.

In fact, a major complaint for travel outside the Puget Sound area is the timing of the trains to Eastern Washington.

And that’s only for the places people know the train goes to.

When the *Empire Builder* was on its modified schedule for the past year, where it was leaving Seattle in the early afternoon and getting to Leavenworth, Wenatchee, Ephrata and most importantly, Spokane at a reasonable hour of the day, it became obvious that more and more people were looking for daytime service to the Dry Side.

The other question is “Why can’t I go to Ellensburg or Yakima?” Well, the tracks go there. It is an active rail line. Rumor is, Union Pacific is looking to exercise their trackage rights for the Stampede Pass route.

Say, maybe the

State of Washington can help out!

The Stamped Pass tunnel would need work to allow container trains to fit through it. The route could be upgraded with modern Centralized Traffic Control (electrified, even?), and in return the citizens could restore passenger service to more communities over there.

You know. The ones that show up on the map in red ... where the people live!

Think of the possibilities!!

**Message**, from page 1

plus have been a weekly volunteer at Olympia/Lacey’s Centennial Station since 2007. You’ll see me on the trains fairly often, traveling to meetings or on adventures with friends.

I believe in passenger rail as an enjoyable, economical and efficient travel option. I don’t hate cars – I love my car. But I happily support transit, ferry, bicycle, light rail, streetcar and heavy rail alternatives for those who cannot, should not, or choose not to drive.

I look forward to meeting all of you at future events, if we have not already had the opportunity to do so.

**How our federal representatives voted to support Amtrak (or not) in March**

The US House of Representatives debated a four-year Amtrak reauthorization bill on March 4. There were two key votes during the debate. One was Rep. Tom McClintock’s (R-CA) amendment to eliminate **all** Amtrak funding. This amendment was defeated 242-147. The authorizing legislation, H.R. 749, was approved by a vote of 316 to 101, a strong mandate and an encouraging sign of a Republican-controlled House that agrees in principle with the White House that America needs trains. The below chart shows how our ten House members voted on McClintock (positive is **against**) and the final bill passage (positive is **for**). Let your representative know how you feel about his or her votes. (Rep. Smith was excused for a doctor appointment.)

Cong Dist	Party	Last Name	First Name	McClintock			HR 749		
				Pos	Neg	NV	Pos	Neg	NV
1	D	DelBene	Suzan	1			1		
2	D	Larsen	Rick	1			1		
3	R	Herrera Beutler	Jaime			1			1
4	R	New house	Dan	1			1		
5	R	McMorris Rodgers	Cathy			1	1		
6	D	Kilmer	Derek	1			1		
7	D	McDermott	Jim	1			1		
8	R	Reichert	David	1			1		
9	D	Smith	Adam			1			1
10	D	Heck	Denny	1			1		

**All Aboard Washington Officers**

Karen Keller, Lacey - President ..... 360 918.8234.. karenk@allaboardwashington.org  
 Jim Hamre, Puyallup - Vice President ..... 253 848-2473.. jimh@allaboardwashington.org  
 Harvey Bowen, Seattle - Vice President .... 206 322-2729.. harveyb@allaboardwashington.org  
 Rocky Shay, Federal Way - Secretary ..... 253 925-2085.. harmons@allaboardwashington.org  
 John Carlin, Edmonds - Treasurer ..... 425 778-4529.. jcarlin@allaboardwashington.org  
 Zack Willhoite, Puyallup - Membership & IT Director ..... zackw@allaboardwashington.org  
 Lloyd Flem, Olympia.. Executive Director .. 360 943-8333  
 LloydFlem@allaboardwashington.org  
 620 Boundary St SE, Olympia 98501

Jim Hamre, Puyallup - Newsletter Editor ... 253 848-2473.. jimh@allaboardwashington.org  
 Warren Yee, Seattle - E-newsletter ..... 206 300-6918.. warreny@allaboardwashington.org

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

**Important Addresses and Phone Numbers**

U. S. House of Representatives:  
 Washington, DC 20515  
 U. S. Senate: Washington, DC 20510  
 Capitol Switchboard (all members): 202 224-3121  
 State Legislature: State Capitol, Olympia 98504  
 Hotline for leaving messages: 800 562-6000  
 Amtrak Reservations/Information: 800 872-7245  
 All Aboard Washington: AllAboardWashington.org  
 NARP: www.narprail.org  
 NARP Hotline: www.narprail.org/news/hotline  
 Amtrak: www.amtrak.com  
 Amtrak Cascades: www.amtrakcascades.com  
 Sound Transit: www.soundtransit.org

This sign (found by Jim Hamre in Denver Union Station) has appeared in Amtrak



stations around the country. AAWA member Bob Hettrick took Amtrak up on its offer. Here are excerpts of his letter to Amtrak. Interestingly, though Bob

did not have any serious complaints about his trip and offered a number of compliments, Amtrak sent him a \$500 voucher!

“On the eastbound *Empire Builder*, leaving Everett Feb. 13 to Chicago, the meals and service in the dining car were good. I did miss the real china, eggs “any way you like them,” and the wine tasting experienced on previous trips. I was assigned to space in the transition sleeper. Service provided by the sleeping car attendant, Gul A., was exceptional. Operating crews were all courteous and helpful.

“On the southbound *City of New Orleans*, leaving Chicago Feb 15, to Memphis, assigned space in the transition sleeper again, I was directed there by a member of the operating crew. I never saw the sleeping car attendant at any time during the trip. My ticket was never scanned, which would have led to considerable problems on the return trip had I not called Amtrak to make a change in my return date. The agent was able correct the problem and restore my reservation.

“Upon arrival in Memphis, the station agent was very helpful in getting a taxi for me since the city was basically shut down due to an ice storm. As a result of the storm my planned rental car was not available.

“On the northbound *City of New Orleans*, leaving Memphis Feb. 19, assigned

space was again in transition sleeper. I was directly to the car by a member of the operating crew, who did scan my ticket this time. I never saw the sleeping car attendant during this portion of the trip. Breakfast and service in the dining car were good.

“The westbound *Empire Builder* left Chicago on Feb. 20 about four hours late, due to mechanical problems. Since this equipment had arrived in Chicago nearly 24 hours earlier, I wonder why it was not checked out upon arrival and mechanical problems corrected instead of waiting until departure time the next day. Time was made up en route and arrival in Everett was only about two hours late. Operating crews were courteous and helpful. Meals and service in the dining car was good. I was in the regular sleeping car. Service provided by Ryan was satisfactory, but he did not offer any help getting my overnight case downstairs upon arrival in Everett.”



Photo by Bob Lawrence

The dedication of the permanent Tukwila Sounder/Amtrak station took place on Feb. 18, 2015. Above, Sen. Patty Murray (D) cuts the ribbon as political leaders and Sound Transit executives look on. The “temporary” station had been in use since 2000. The new facility serves all Sounder trains and the Amtrak Cascades. It has 233 parking spaces, bike lockers, electric vehicle charging stations and a bus transit center. Forty parking spaces (near the south end of the park and ride) are dedicated Amtrak customer spots where you can park for more than the 24 hours Sound Transit generally allows at its facilities.



Photo by Jim Hamre

Above is a not-so-positive view of the Tukwila Sounder/Amtrak station on March 14: about a dozen passengers on platform 1 were sent scrambling when Amtrak Cascades 513 arrived unexpectedly on track 2 because of track work just south of the station. Getting between platforms is no easy task. You go down the stairs or a long ramp, cross under the tracks at the north end of the platforms and scramble back up the stairs or ramp on the other side. WSDOT and Amtrak have realized for some time this is a problem.

Kirk Fredrickson, WSDOT Rail Division’s Cascades Operations Supervisor says the two are working on a solution. WSDOT is joining Amtrak’s national Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) deployment and they have asked that the Tukwila Station project be fast-tracked and completed as quickly as possible, no later than the end of summer. The final design is done and the conduit is installed. The construction contract is being finalized.

The real-time signs and automated PA announcements will initially be activated via a text message from the train conductor, giving passengers advanced notice of which platform the train will arrive on. Passengers won’t have to be stressed at the last minute with a move to the opposite side. It will also minimize dwell times and help keep the Cascades on-time. WSDOT is working with BNSF to ultimately tie PIDS at Tukwila into the railroad’s dispatching system so information will automatically display when the dispatcher sets a train’s path.

All Aboard Washington  
P. O. Box 70381  
Seattle, WA 98127

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U. S. POSTAGE PAID  
PUYALLUP WA 98371  
PERMIT NO. 468

Return Service Requested

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New Renewal

Address Change

\$ 200 Leadership Membership

\$ 100 Contributing Membership

\$ 75 Sustaining Membership

\$ 50 Family Membership

\$ 25 Individual Membership

\$ 18 Student/Fixed Income Membership

Extra Contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please send me my newsletter through e-mail only.

Note: if you move, let us know in advance and save us the fee for address correction service.

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip\_\_\_\_\_

Phone\_\_\_\_\_

Email\_\_\_\_\_

## All Aboard News

**April 11, 2015:** All Aboard Washington meeting from **11:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.** at **Basil's Kitchen**, Embassy Suites Hotel, 15920 W. Valley Hwy, **Tukwila**, adjacent to the Sounder/Amtrak Station. We have invited a local Amtrak person as our speaker. Use the Amtrak *Cascades* to and from this meeting. Note that we have changed and shortened the time of the meeting. We'll see how this works as it allows members traveling from the south on the *Cascades* to not have to wait for several hours for their train after the meeting adjourns.

**May 9, 2015:** All Aboard Washington meeting from **noon-3:00 p.m.** at **Rodeo City Bar-B-Q**, 204 N Main St, **Ellensburg**. Our featured speaker will Rep. Matt Manweller (R-Ellensburg). If you are interest in trying to be matched up with a carpool, contact Lloyd Flem (info on page 5).

**June 6, 2015: Northwest Rail Advocates meeting** at the **Glacier Park Lodge, East Glacier Park, MT**. This is our annual joint membership meeting with NARP Northwest Division and the Assoc. of Oregon Rail and Transit Advo-

cates. The meeting will take place between the morning arrival of the eastbound *Empire Builder* and evening departure of the westbound train. Make your Amtrak reservations, and if you want to extend your trip, hotel reservations soon. Availability at Glacier Park Lodge is limited but there are a number of motels in the village, many within a half mile of the hotel and the Amtrak Station; some have station pickup available. Information on hotels/motels is on the AAWA website. Registration for the meeting will be mailed and available on the AAWA website by mid-April. For more information, contact Jim Hamre (info on page 5).

All Aboard Washington recently welcomed the following new members: Ernest Vogel, Des Moines; and Peter Diedrick, Olympia.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include Bob Hettrick, Bob Lawrence, Warren Yee, Kirk Fredrickson, Zack Willhoite, Karen Keller, Jim Cusick and Lloyd Flem.

**Amtrak** has morphed National Train Day, held in May the last several years, into

### [Amtrak Train](#)

[Days](#), series of community events throughout the year that will be held around the U.S. Many feature the Amtrak Exhibit Train. No events are scheduled for the Northwest in 2014.

**WSDOT** has created a [map](#) that gives a quick overview of all the Northwest Rail Corridor projects from Blaine to the Columbia River (with the status of each) that will support the operational improvements for the Amtrak *Cascades* and the additional two Seattle-Portland roundtrips that will be added in 2017.

The **Clark County Historical Museum** has opened its newest exhibit, The Northwest's Own Spokane, Portland, and Seattle Railway. This permanent interpretive display will be housed at Vancouver's 1909 Amtrak Station. The SP&S was jointly owned by Great Northern Railway and Northern Pacific Railway. It served as the railroads' access to Portland from the east. All three are now part of BNSF Railway.

