



WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2011

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

WSDOT and BNSF ink final agreement to allow construction to start on projects that will improve Amtrak Cascades service

An agreement signed on July 28, 2011 by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and BNSF Railway clears the way for work to begin on rail projects that ultimately will improve Amtrak *Cascades* service between Seattle and Portland.

The agreement means the state can begin initial work this fall using part of the \$781 million in federal grants awarded to our state in the past two years. This money is part of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA – stimulus) high speed rail grants administered by the Federal Railroad Administration.

Building bypass tracks and making upgrades to existing tracks shared by Amtrak and BNSF will result in additional frequencies on the *Cascades* and the

worth nearly \$400 million that are expected to generate 1,000 jobs through 2017. The first project will occur in Everett, where two new tracks will be built for freight trains entering Delta Yard, taking them off the mainline and out of the way of passenger trains. These added tracks will eliminate a substantial bottleneck. Though this project is not between Seattle and Portland, it will improve reliability of Portland-Vancouver, BC trains 513 and 516, which currently seem to suffer the most delays of any of the *Cascades* trains.

"The immediate benefit of this agreement is jobs – from engineers to site supervisors to construction workers," said Transportation Secretary Paula Hammond. "The longer-term benefit is that improvements in the rail corridor will reduce travel times and improve the on-time performance of passenger rail, which provides a viable transportation alternative along the West Coast."

The agreement sets up a clear contractual relationship between WSDOT and BNSF. It outlines mutually agreed upon requirements and performance measures, including project schedules and budgets, contracting methods, procurement and purchasing processes, and budget and billing procedures, among other things.

"We're pleased with this progress and our long standing relationship with WSDOT," said BNSF Chairman and CEO Matt Rose.

"This is an important step towards improving the trackage infrastruc-

ture to help meet current and future demands for both passenger and freight rail service."

BNSF has been working with the state of Washington for two decades in a public-private partnership that has expanded passenger services while maintaining the (See **Agreement**, page 4)

Sounder update from Sound Transit's Martin Young

Our featured speaker at the June 11 All Aboard Washington meeting was Martin Young, Sound Transit's operations manager for Sounder commuter rail, a position he has held for 13 years.

Young pointed out that Sounder service is a partnership with BNSF and Amtrak. BNSF provides it's infrastructure (greatly upgraded with tax monies) to operate the trains on, as well operating crews and dispatching. Amtrak provides storage for the trains in Seattle and maintenance of the equipment.

Sound Transit is participating in the installation of Positive Train Control between Everett and Tacoma, and extending to the ST-owned line between Tacoma Dome Station and Lakewood. PTC will provide a higher level of rail operations safety, including prevention of train collisions, over speed events and work zone incursions by trains. Sound Transit will pay a proportionate share of the federally mandated PTC installation. ST's cost should be between \$35 and \$45 million. Amtrak, WSDOT and BNSF are also participating in the project.

The PTC request for proposals is going out soon. Installation in the Northwest Corridor is to be completed by July 2014, with testing complete by January 2015. Full regular use of PTC is projected to start in May 2015.

Sound Transit will be ordering additional cars and locomotives to support gradual expansion of Seattle-Tacoma Sounder service over the next several years. Three MPXpress locomotives from MotivePower of Boise will soon be ordered in conjunction with an order from Altamont Commuter Express, which runs between San Jose and Stockton, CA. Additional coaches will be ordered in 2013 in conjunction with an order from Utah Transit Authority's FrontRunner service. The tenth south line round-trip will start in October 2013.

Mudslides! It was a bad winter for Sounder (and Amtrak) service. Mudslide events cancelled 70 Sounder trips between October and March. There were (See **Sounder**, page 4)



Amtrak *Cascades* 501 at Sunnyside Beach in Steilacoom on June 26, 2011. The scenic run along the Tacoma Narrows will be no more when the Pt. Defiance Bypass project is implemented in about 2016. The reroute is required by BNSF as a condition to increase the number of daily Seattle-Portland round-trips beyond the current four. The bypass project will also provide more reliable and faster *Cascades* service.

Photo by Jim Hamre

service will be faster and more reliable. The improvements allow BNSF to continue providing its excellent freight service. The funds will also be used to purchase eight new locomotives and one additional trainset.

The agreement means BNSF can begin construction this fall on projects



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

Amtrak Cascades: Looking Good, Looking Forward; Thanks UW and UP; Best Wishes Andrew, Jeff and Vickie

Washington State's passenger rail program and our successful and popular Amtrak *Cascades* trains have substantially escaped being the whipping boy that high speed rail and rail generally have become elsewhere as a result of the increasingly ideological divisions that have infected American politics in recent years. If one ignores the anonymous unpleasanties that have emerged as a result of the proliferation of Internet blogs, a reasonable level of bipartisanship remains here in our state in this era of economic tough times. The state Legislature's transportation committees continue to demonstrate a cooperative attitude in moving our state's transportation systems forward. And the Legislative Committee on Economic Development and International Relations (LCEDIR) seems equally able to work together, as was evident on July 27.

While it can be lamented that the state's Amtrak *Cascades* program hasn't moved forward as fast as was originally planned (the passage of I-695 gutted funding for passenger rail and other state transportation programs), through no fault of the Legislature or State Executive, our trains and rail program continue to get national praise. The April 2011 TRAINS magazine, the theme of which was "fast trains" in the US, featured an eight-page color "standing ovation" for the *Cascades*. "Amtrak *Cascades* has shown the nation how to build higher speed rail – and do it right," introduces the article. The August 2011 TRAINS separately grades several Amtrak trains. The *Cascades* get an A, with special praise for the Talgo equipment.

Other publications, other people have also said good things about our trains and the State's rail program. The significant piece of funding from the \$8 billion Federal ARRA high speed rail program speaks louder than words, one might also say.

Two recent meetings underline the interest for our passenger trains. The Pa-

cific Northwest Economic Region's (PNWER) late June conference in Portland held a very well attended workshop on passenger rail. (PNWER includes public and private sector representatives from the American Northwest, Alaska and Western Canada.) Cascadia's Bruce Agnew (also an active AAWA member) is very involved in PNWER and organized the rail session, chaired by Ralph Munro. Leading legislators from Oregon and Washington, BNSF, UP, Amtrak, WSDOT, ODOT, and freight and passenger train user groups commented. Among others, representatives of AAWA and AORTA (our Oregon counterpart) briefly addressed those assembled. I had the August TRAINS article duplicated and distributed as an adjunct to my "praise and push" remarks.

Under the direction of Washington Lt. Governor Brad Owen, and his most-able staff man, Antonio Sanchez, the biparti-

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san LCEDIR met on July 27 at the elegant Rainier Club in the heart of downtown Seattle. (AAWA's four-person delegation arrived by Sounder train and Metro bus.) The singular topic was high speed rail in the Northwest and its economic development potential. Leading off was WSDOT's Scott Witt, who summarized the State's current and near-future passenger rail program. Important presentations were made by representatives from Spain, where the largest investments in high speed rail outside China are well underway. Representing the Spanish firm Talgo and Talgo's important role in the success of the Amtrak *Cascades* was Talgo America CEO Antonio Perez and Talgo Northwest advocate Ralph Munro. Concluding the hearing were advocates Bruce Agnew (Cascadia), AORTA's Floyd Smith and Donald Leap, and myself (AAWA).

My presentation was an updated reprise of a lesson I delivered to economic geography classes at the University of Wisconsin – Platteville a generation ago. In essence the "linear density" (many large and smaller cities along a narrow corridor from Vancouver BC to Eugene OR) was/is a textbook case for passenger train service. To counter the few regional nay-sayers from the Northwest, I demonstrated that we have densities nearly equal to the densest parts of Eu-

rope (in this case, Southwest Germany), but contrary to another myth, Europeans – SW Germans most certainly – are very prosperous with high private car ownership and top air service. The contrast with SW Germany is its dramatically greater number of passenger trains, including high speed trains, and that trains have replaced short hop fights (SeaTac-Portland types) in full cooperation with Lufthansa, the excellent German airline. While Bruce Agnew focused on the economic development aspects, I did mention Centralia's very strong interest in bringing people to their city by train.

I was approached afterwards by several guests and LCEDIR members, with good questions and interest in my "lesson." Thanks to Loren Herrigstad, who prepared the "PowerPoint" for my presentation and that of Bruce Agnew.

One speaker felt we in Washington ought to be bragging a bit more about our passenger trains. I totally agree. While still modest in scope and speed, as TRAINS says, we are "doing it right."

The entire hearing, over three hours in length, is available at <http://tinyurl.com/JuneLCEDIR>. I've also been asked to make our case at a future AAWA meeting. (No fear: It's only eight minutes!)

The broad based affirmations for passenger trains in the Northwest at the PNWER conference and the LCEDIR hearing were heartening at a time when the news from the hot, humid Washington (DeeCee) is much more troubling.



In 1960 American passenger trains were dropping in numbers and quality; private motor vehicles were becoming the overwhelming choice for land transportation; government policies at all levels favored suburban sprawl; and "ample, free and convenient parking" everywhere was almost considered a "divine right."

The lead story in a 1960 issue of the University of Washington Daily exemplified the era. The story registered outrage at the institution of a parking fee of (gasp, shudder!) twenty-five cents on campus! How unfair that people actually had to pay a quarter to occupy valuable campus real estate for a day!

The assumption then was the anyone of substance did and should drive everywhere. During the same time period sprawling suburbs were built with no sidewalks. It is claimed pedestrians in parts of Southern California were actually stopped and questioned for ... walking!

To the present: UW Administration, (See **Flem**, page 4)




The View Down the Tracks

=====

with Jim Cusick

Happy Days Are Here Again... 

The skies above are clear again... 

Okay, maybe not so much on that second part, after the latest weather forecast.

Let's celebrate and strike up the band, get the gigantic scissors and cut the big ribbon at the opening of the new Edmonds Sounder station area! Yahoo!

Now that the project to upgrade the platform area, bus facilities and parking at Edmonds is complete, it is now possible to walk, bike **or drive** from Dayton Street to Main Street on beautifully landscaped walkways and driveways.

No longer will it be necessary to use the platform to walk, bike **or drive**.

Given the issues facing the local transit agencies it was great to see completion of this part of the project.

Aaron Reardon echoed that sentiment at the ribbon cutting ceremony, saying that after dealing with budget shortfalls as chairman of the Sound Transit board and as a Community Transit board member, "as much as we love the Process here in the Pacific Northwest," it was a real pleasure to be able to celebrate a move forward with the completion of this project.

Hmmm, they say elephants never forget, and things on computers are forever, so let me peruse my past newsletters ...

Let's see ... Ah, here it is, in the December 2003 View Down the Tracks:

"In an election pamphlet I received from Aaron Reardon, the newly elected Snohomish County Executive, he made the point that his opponent (Dave Earling,



July 8 ribbon cutting for the improvements to the Edmonds Sounder/Amtrak station platform, transit and parking areas. *Sound Transit Photo*

the comment as 'electioneering hyperbole.'

Hmmm, Aaron is the current chair of Sound Transit.

He also noted at the celebration that Sound Transit is the one organization around here that is accomplishing things.

Wait a minute, that sounds familiar ... Oh yeah (as I open my files and shuffle through my papers, or is that mouse through my directories?), in my September 2007 column were these words by me "...note, Sound Transit is the one multi-county regional agency where our elected officials are accomplishing much..."

Well, how about that?

Joni Earl, at the next Sound Transit meeting, give Aaron a nudge, and let him know that we at All Aboard ... well ...

We knew that!

And we thank you and your staff for that.

Aaron Reardon...[said] that after dealing with budget shortfalls,... "as much as we love the Process here in the Pacific Northwest," it was a real pleasure to be able to celebrate a move forward with the completion of [the Edmonds] project.

I'm on board with I-1125 and Rep. Mica

Kemper Freeman has put his money behind Tim Eyman's latest initiative, I-1125, an endorsement to be proud of.

Now, I'm no legal scholar, but reading over the initiative's wording, it seems we'd be splitting hairs over the "highway use" of the I-90 bridge (or any other "WSDOT property"). Remember, Sound Transit is leasing the "unused capacity" of the structure, not "unused freeway lanes."

How does that work? Because Sound Transit is paying for what is referred to as the R8A option. There will still be 6 general purpose lanes and 2 carpool/transit lanes when Eastside Link is on the bridge. In fact, the HOV lanes will be available in **both** directions 24 hours a day.

Eyman also wants state representatives to be on record for any toll increase. Tolls must be a statewide agreement.

Sounds like a typical Eyman Initiative.

Why are there two subjects involved?

Why not just make it either "Let's make sure our representatives go on record for their transportation funding decisions" or "Let's kill Sound Transit's East Link Project."

Let's say it passes, and major roadway improvements can be funded via

tolls or other taxes and the Legislature must vote on them.

If you were from Eastern Washington, you might be hesitant to vote "Yes" on a toll because you face the possibility of having a major project in your district be subject to the same tolling requirements.

For instance, the I-82 bridge over Selah Creek between Yakima and Ellensburg would cost \$27 million in today's dollars. Not a whole lot, you might say, but it only sees 20,000 vehicles per day.

That means over a 30 year period, the users are only paying 25% of the cost. If we had to build a bridge like it again, it could be subject to tolling. This scenario is possible for any bridge or major structure.

After all, if someone in one district doesn't think it's fair to pay the whole cost of a major freeway upgrade in someone else's district, then it's assumed the representative of the other district feels the same way.

In today's climate, that would mean it would be very unlikely any tax or fee increases would happen.

So as I look at the consequences of that, it appears road money will dry up, people will see the value of rail transit, and we'll return to a more balanced transportation system.

Great Idea!

I know that I-1125 seeks to make sure road tolls only go towards roads and, quite frankly, I'm okay with that. Make sure the toll is set so as to have it return the same "farebox recovery ratio" as does other non-highway transportation.

After all, Washington State Ferries customers pay a fare, and cover 65% of the cost. Given we're in the start-up phase of our rail systems, we aren't there yet, but a healthy passenger rail system should show above 50%. Amtrak is at 84%.

It's only fair that users of a major roadway pay at least that in tolls. Then allocate the gas tax contribution according to the "ridership" of a given route.

What that would do is free up more gas tax revenue for local road improvements. Each municipality could do its major repair and upgrades as they see fit without asking the voters for more money.

That way, each municipality doesn't have to take taxes from other sources to subsidize their road improvements. Unless people want to vote on a major (See **Cusick**, page 5)

Agreement, from page 1
ability to move freight throughout our region.

When all the projects are completed, two additional Amtrak *Cascades* daily round-trips will be added between Seattle and Portland, for a total of six (plus the Seattle-Los Angeles *Coast Starlight*). The improvements are also intended to reduce travel times and improve on-time performance from the current 62 percent to 88 percent.

Returning to the present, with chronic mudslides and other disruptions in the rear-view mirror, the *Cascades* rebounded in the second quarter of 2011, surpassing both monthly and quarterly ridership records reached in 2010. More travelers than ever are choosing the train for their trips between Vancouver, BC and Eugene, OR.

After the rough start in the first three months of this year, ridership for April, May and June between Vancouver and Eugene reached 231,194 passengers – the highest second-quarter total since the *Cascades* service was launched in 1994. Second-quarter ridership numbers increased 8 percent, compared with last year. June had the highest ridership increase of the three months with 78,839 passengers, up 10 percent over the previous June.

Visit the WSDOT's high speed rail website: www.wsdot.wa.gov/Funding/stimulus/passengerrail.htm for more information about the *Cascades* program. WSDOT also recently revamped the Amtrak *Cascades* website: www.amtrakcascades.com. Check it out.



Sound Transit's Martin Young speaks at the June 11 All Aboard Washington meeting in Tukwila. Photo by Jim Hamre

Young, from page 1
44 separate slides. ST has worked to implement a full passenger communications plan in the event of service disruptions and offers alternate bus service when needed. The agency is working with BNSF and other partners on refinement of BNSF's "48 hour rule." This policy requires that passenger train service be suspended for 48 hours after a slide, no matter how small it is. Young says ultimately the trouble prone slopes need to be stabilized or managed more tightly. Measures could include buttresses, walls, vegetation management,

drainage improvements, catchment ditches and slide warning fences. All Aboard Washington strongly supports dealing with the slide issue in a way that improves service reliability while maintaining safety. Our proposal is called Flex and Fix. (See our April/May 2011 newsletter.)

The D St. to M St. rail construction project in Tacoma has started. It will connect the existing Sounder terminus at Freight-house Square to the former BNSF Prairie line to South Tacoma and Lakewood, crossing over Pacific Ave. on new bridge. This project has been very challenging from both an engineering and a community acceptance standpoint. The grade on the connection will be as steep as 2.85%. Sounder service to Lakewood is planned to start by the end of 2012.

Sound Transit is moving ahead with final design for the permanent Tukwila Sounder Station. The station will be a joint facility with Amtrak and ST is working with Amtrak and WSDOT on the design. This project has also presented challenges. The design must fit with the cities of Tukwila and Renton's ultimate design of the Strander Blvd. extension and bridge over the BNSF and UP mainlines.

Young noted that Sounder carries the equivalent number of people as one lane of I-5 during peak commute times.

When asked about more special event and weekend service, Young said BNSF is already allowing more of this type of service that authorized in the contract. Additional service would have to be negotiated with the railroad, plus there are additional costs that would need to be funded.

Flem, from page 2

which has apparently now taken basic courses taught in their excellent economics department, not only charges significantly more for parking, but also gives financial incentives based upon rational allocation of scarce resources.

For Husky football games, parking fees decrease based upon the number of people in the car. (Totally rational: Finite space for parking; pre-and post-game traffic congestion is bad; car pooling uses less space per game attendee and should thus pay less.) It gets even better: Buses from point south, north, and east pick up several thousand fans, who, with a game ticket, ride no-fare to Husky Stadium. (The buses are not "free" but are paid for by the UW Athletic Department. Much more economic and socially responsible than the UW buying ever more costly NE Seattle land to serve as football fan parking with even worse traffic congestion six or so times a year.

My point: There have been improvements in public policy where cars and transit are concerned. And despite a few loud reactionaries, public policy in behalf of passenger rail has also improved in the

past two decades in our state of Washington and the country at large.



A few years ago, Amtrak's *Coast Starlight* was derisively called the "Starlate," because it nearly always was ... and often by many hours. These delays were nearly all on UP tracks south of Portland. Since, the Union Pacific has invested up to \$500 million of their privately-generated funds in the railroad's far-flung infrastructure. A result of this is UP's freight service (the reason they exist, of course) has improved considerably in velocity and efficiency, and the intercity passenger trains dispatched and run on UP tracks now have a commendable on-time record.

Passenger train advocates need to inform all concerned that UP's investments have yielded much improved service and that Amtrak passenger trains on UP tracks, emphatically the *Coast Starlight*, are much less often late than in years past.



I am pleased to be receiving, by email, the excellent "Transportation Issues Daily" from Larry Ehl, formerly WSDOT's Federal Relations manager and now a private analyst/reporter, and the frequent "Federal Transportation Update" from Allison Dane Camden, WSDOT's current Federal Relations Manager. Both reports yield candid, objective information on happenings in Washington, DC concerning transportation, including considerable information on rail and transit. (Go to www.transportationissuesdaily.com to subscribe to Larry's newsletter.)

From DC the bad news is the extreme partisanship that has infected the Federal Government will likely have a negative effect on transportation policies and funding. The good news is non-Federal Government major interests, from the US Chamber of Commerce to Big Labor, are urging DC to think more in terms of our county's transportation needs and less of the ideological/partisan games now dominating the news.

Transitions in ideas, policies, projects and people involved in the world of rail are happening, as they do in all other worlds. Transitions in people at DOT's Rail and Marine Division involve the moving on of Andrew Wood, now working on high speed rail for Amtrak out of Philadelphia; Jeff Schultz going to the major engineering and planning firm Parsons-Brinkerhoff's Hartford, CT office; and Vickie Sheehan, who'll be applying her considerable professional and people skills elsewhere, as WSDOT, like so many public entities, has had to endure reductions in staff.

I have truly enjoyed Jeff, a fellow geographer and friend for decades, as well as Andrew and Vickie, whom I've had the privilege of knowing but a few years, as we worked in concert to help bring more and better passenger trains to Washington State and the Northwest. Sincere best wishes as you three good folks move forward.

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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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 Sound Transit: www.soundtransit.org

Cusick, from page 3

Roads package that asks just that ...

Oh yeah, we had that chance with I-745. Thank you, Mr. Eyman.

You remember I-745. That's the one that would have 90% of any tax money collected for all transportation related items be earmarked only for road improvements.

Smartly, the voters rejected that one. Allocating sales tax monies based solely on the type of purchase made is ridiculously complex and expensive, not to mention the question of sanity.

So, my question for Eyman is, if you are supposedly representing the voters, and 57% of the region's voters said **YES** to Eastside Link, how do you justify your statement in Danny Westneat's column in the Seattle Times where he asked you if this initiative precluded building light rail in the I-90 bridge, and you replied YES.

What voters are you purporting to represent?

Certainly not a majority.

However, a kindred spirit exists in the House Transportation and Infrastructure committee chair, Rep. John Mica (R-FL), who apparently thinks no infrastructure improvements should be performed, even if they use a Road Warrior's favorite source: the Gas Tax.

Read his lips, No New Taxes, Not No How!

With vehicles getting better gas mileage, resulting in the collection of less gas tax, the effect is that federal transit and highway spending will be cut by 34%.

When asked (by a rail advocate), about the provision in the plan for eliminating High Speed Rail funding, he said "When you see the price of one car on the road, new highway construction through metropolitan areas, or even our rural areas, you become an advocate of transportation alternatives."

Okay, according to Rep. Mica, I guess that means that when we get the farmers back on dirt roads, then we'll see the true value of rail travel.

In the July 2011 issue of issue of Rail-

way Age magazine, in response to editor William Vantuono's online editorial about Rep. Mica and Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee chairman Rep. Bill Shuster's (R-PA) plan to privatize Amtrak's NEC, was this paragraph I thought interesting:

"We believe with private, local, state and federal involvement, we can lower federal subsidies, improve service and routes, and actually expand employment and development."

The first question that comes to my mind for Mica, Shuster and others who compulsively go after Amtrak ... Don't you have something better to do?

But beyond that, though, why not exercise that same train of thought for our Interstate Highway system?

Bring in the competition.

Isn't that part of the Republican platform? Government BAD, Private Enterprise GOOD.

Put your money where your mouth is.

Privatize it.

I'd hate to mistake you for some socialist from ...

The Soviet Socialist State of Whaa?

"As one component of a comprehensive plan to improve mobility and air quality and decrease traffic throughout the [region]," citizens had voted for increasing the region's existing rail network. "The ... project was originally targeted for completion in 2030, however, in 2004, local elected officials ... suggested accelerating the implementation of the transit elements of the regions 2030 long-range transportation plan to 2015. In November 2006, [residents from the affected counties] voted to increase their sales tax by one-quarter of a cent, enabling accelerated delivery of these projects."

"We are fortunate to live in a region with visionary leaders with titles such as elected official, business or community leader. ... These visionaries not only saw the need, they acted by making a string of hard decisions; decisions that are beginning to pay off. The payoff is being seen with expanded

economic growth while maintaining [our] unique quality of life." (from the June 2011 issue of Metro magazine.)

Who the H-E-doubletoothpicks are these wild-eyed, (no-doubt) socialist minded people?

Obviously, only socialists would want red-blooded Americans to give up their cars!

No doubt, a BLUE STATE. I'm sure they voted for some radical to represent them in the US Senate.

Let's see ... Sen. Mike Lee (R)? Sen. Orrin Hatch (R)?

This is confusing.

What? This project is the FrontRunner commuter rail system and the TRAX light rail system in ... **SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH?**

Oh, for crying out loud.

Oh yeah, I forget we aren't like them up here in the PNW, and we sure don't want to be like those European folks, or New York, or Chicago, or Washington DC with their mature rail transit systems.

Well we aren't like any of them.

Maybe the question is: **who the H-E-doubletoothpicks are we?**

Empire Builder stations: good news and bad news

Good: The Sandpoint, ID Amtrak station appears to be saved. It had deteriorated to the point where Amtrak and BNSF closed the building. The station site was further compromised by construction of a new highway crammed between the station and Sand Creek. Amtrak, BNSF, the City of Sandpoint and Idaho DOT have reached an agreement to keep Amtrak service in downtown Sandpoint and rehabilitate the station. For more details: www.sandpointtrainstation.com/blog/.

Bad: The Minot, ND station and platform were severely damaged by flooding of the Souris River. The Minot stop is closed through at least the end of August, though the *Builder* has resumed full service after it's most recent suspension between Havre, MT and St. Paul because of the flooding. It has been a bad year for the *Empire Builder*. Since December, blizzards, avalanches, flooding and derailments have caused numerous service suspensions and disruptions, and poor on-time performance.

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All Aboard News

September 10: All Aboard Washington meeting from **1-4 p.m.** at **Olympia-Lacey Centennial Station**, 6600 Yelm Hwy SE. This "meeting" will be different, for sure! From the courtyard of the station, we can watch the dozens of BNSF and UP trains roar by (being thankful the freight they haul is not on I-5!), enjoy the friendly atmosphere of the classic, community-built and all-volunteer-staffed depot, but mostly experience some excellent live rockin' sounds of the locally-based **Mud Bay Blues Band**, including guest vocals by Thurston County Port Commissioner and AAWA Board member **THE George Barner!** Dancing to the music on the courtyard paver bricks is not required but strongly encouraged. For those under 45 or over 75, folks between those ages will be present to assist you with the 50s and 60s ambience. (An advance party of AAWA people attended a recent gig at the Olympia VFW Hall. The Mud Bay Blues Band is GOOD!) No admission charge but a **donation of \$20 or more per person** is requested. Good music, good company, snacks, soft drinks/juice and support for our organization's continued efforts to bring more and even better passenger train service to Washington and the Northwest. Hopefully, lots of Thurston county folks will

join the festivities. For out-of-towners, Amtrak trains from north and south arrive and depart at convenient times.

Sincere thanks to the late Gary M. Paradise of Tacoma, who was a member of WashARP/AAWA. Unbeknown to us, Mr. Paradise had declared AAWA to be a beneficiary of his veterans life insurance policy. With a minimum of procedural effort, Prudential Insurance has sent AAWA a check that will significantly aid our continued efforts to improve and expand passenger rail service in Washington and the Northwest. Mr. Paradise, who passed away a few months ago, had attended a couple of our meetings, but had more often been a quiet supporter of our efforts.

If any of our members know Mr. Paradise's family, please inform Lloyd Flem so we might directly thank them for Gary's thoughtful generosity.

All Aboard Washington welcomed the following new member in June: Charles Davis, Grants Pass, OR.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this news letter include Lloyd Flem, Jim Cusick, Barry Green, George Barner, Zack Willhoite, Martin Young, and Warren Yee.

Amtrak's 40th Anniversary train coming to the Northwest

Amtrak celebrated its 40th anniversary on May 1. As part of the celebration Amtrak has put together a 40th Anniversary Train that is touring the country. It

contains three exhibit cars and a souvenir car. The exhibits trace the company's history with displays of photos, uniforms, china and memorabilia while also offering a glimpse into the future. One of the favorite exhibits is the locomotive horn display, complete with sound effects. The anniversary train will be in Seattle October 22-23 and in Portland October 29-30. AAWA and NARP will host an information table in Seattle. Look for more details in the next newsletter. Go to www.amtrak40th.com for more on the event.

American Society of Civil Engineers issues scathing surface transportation infrastructure report

A new study released July 27 by the American Society of Civil Engineers finds that the increasing deficiency of our nation's roads, bridges, railways and transit will accelerate the decline in American families' standard of living. The report, *Failure to Act: The Economic Impact of Current Investment Trends in Surface Transportation Infrastructure*, states that without sufficient investment in the nation's infrastructure:

- household incomes will fall by more than \$7,000 over the next 10 years
- U.S. exports will fall by \$28 billion over the next 10 years
- U.S. GDP will be suppressed by as much as \$3.1 trillion by 2020

The report also estimates that an investment of \$1.7 trillion by 2020 is needed to bring our nation's surface transportation systems up to tolerable service levels. View the report: <http://tinyurl.com/ascereport>.