



WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

DECEMBER 2013/JANUARY 2014

www.AllAboardWashington.org

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

Rep. Luis Moscoso speaks at AAWA meeting

Mayor Bonnie Canaday welcomed All Aboard Washington to Centralia at our Nov. 2 general membership meeting at the city's Amtrak Station.

Our keynote speaker was state Rep. Luis Moscoso (D-Bothell). Moscoso is vice chairman of the House Transportation Committee.



He stated it is directly a result of AAWA's work, specifically mentioning Lloyd Flem and retired Secretary of State Ralph Munro, that he decided to form a bicameral

Rail Caucus in the state Legislature. Within 24 hours of word getting around of his intent to form the Rail Caucus, Moscoso had five legislators contact him. He hadn't even formally formed the caucus yet.

Despite the nearly two decade growth of passenger rail as a part of our state's transportation system, it is still relegated to too minor of a role. Moscoso emphasized the need for a more robust passenger rail system to help address our transportation issues. He specifically noted the strong potential for the former BNSF line on the east side of Lake Washington to be one component of an improved transportation system in that corridor.

As an example of issues being addressed, Moscoso and a wide ranging

group of political and community leaders have made fact finding trips to various ports in Washington and British Columbia, as well as to BNSF's growing shipping center in Quincy.

Moscoso stated that it's critical that the Rail Caucus be bipartisan. There has not been as much cooperation on transportation as there needs to be. We need to keep the extremes out of our state transportation policy.

AAWA's interests in growth of the Amtrak Cascades and passenger rail in general will be considered in his efforts going forward.

Moscoso has asked former Republican state Rep. Mike Armstrong of Wenatchee to aid the caucus because of Armstrong's expertise on transportation.

He is also working with Gov. Jay Inslee (D) to get him more engaged on rail issues.

The scope and framework of the Rail Caucus are still being developed so a list of members is not yet available.

We have Moscoso's assurances that that he will work to take rail, both passenger and freight, forward in our state as the Legislature continues to consider a transportation tax package. All Aboard Washington will be there to assist in his efforts. To learn how you, our members, can help, see Lloyd Flem's page 2 column.

Our second speaker was Bill

Deutscher of the Western Washington RR, a new short line now operating Tacoma Rail (former Milwaukee Road) trackage from south Chehalis to Blakeslee Jct on the north side of Centralia and on to Maytown. They started on Jan. 1, 2013 and have 23 miles of track on a 5-year lease. (See **Moscoso**, page 3)

AAWA reaches Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement with Cascadia

by Loren Herrigstad

For years, All Aboard Washington and the Cascadia Center for Regional Trade and Economic Development have been working together on improving passenger rail in the Northwest. Cascadia and its director, Bruce Agnew, have been with us championing the Cascades service as it was launched in the 1990s, fighting hard to keep the second pair of Cascades trains running all the way to Vancouver, BC when they were threatened with stiff Canadian Customs processing fees, and Cascadia is currently working with us on both the Eastside TRailway and on preserving the historic ex-Great Northern Blaine Station and securing it as a stop for the Cascades as well.

Cascadia's original and decade-long Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant is expiring at the end of this year though. The Cascadia Center and Bruce have decided to leave their current sponsor, the Discovery Institute, at that time to start the new Cascadia Academy.

Cascadia has neither its own membership base, nor independent non-profit status or a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt IRS designation. It does however have donors and grantors that it could bring to the table for projects of common interest with us. So, it only makes sense for All Aboard and Cascadia to explore options and see what type of working arrangement our two organizations could develop, given Cascadia's new realities.

Your All Aboard Washington board and Cascadia have developed what is called a Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement, which your board approved at our Annual General Membership meeting in Centralia on November 2nd. Under this agreement, Cascadia brings in donations and grants to fund shared (See **Cascadia**, page 5)



Nearly 40 people attended the All Aboard Washington general membership meeting at Centralia's Amtrak Station on Nov. 2. Photo by Jim Hamre



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

RAIL ADVOCATES: INPUT, OUTREACH, EDUCATION NEEDED!; Geography Education?

At the certainty of being redundant, I again plead with readers of this column, nearly all of whom are rail advocates at some level, to give constructive pro-rail input to transportation decision makers, and to engage in outreach and education to others about the advantages of and need for a larger role for rail in our state, the Pacific Northwest, and throughout North America. (I acknowledge our non-Evergreen State and Canadian members. You should reach out in your own states and provinces too!)

For Washington state readers: Please access allaboardwashington.org or see details in the box on page 4. The first four statewide organizations are still accepting comments. The Seattle Streetcar Survey has officially ceased getting public input. One hopes the wide public support for the George Benson Streetcars being a part of the growing system of streetcars in Seattle will be heeded by SDOT and the Seattle city government.

Complaints have surfaced that recent transportation funding proposals from legislative bodies are nearly all for mostly highway investments. Rail in particular is mentioned little, if at all, in some proposals. This is in part our fault!

While our Legislature may have a few ideologues who see the only role for transportation at the state level is to build more road capacity, there is less extreme partisanship in our Washington than in DC. But when legislators and other decision makers hear from interests who see highway capacity as the only answer to their transportation problems, with a much smaller chorus of ferry, and mostly-Seattle-based transit, bike and ped advocates, they will make attempts to follow what they hear. Also, most of those who are part of the ferry-transit-bike-and-ped chorus also usually “forget” intercity rail, passenger and freight, as well. WE must speak out for rail to a degree we evidently have not in recent months.

While I believe most AAWA members

Rail in particular is mentioned little, if at all, in some proposals. This is in part our fault! ... WE must speak out for rail to a degree we evidently have not in recent months.

“know what to say” to transportation decision makers, if you would like some broad-based ideas, contact me (see p. 5). Your inputs should be yours however, not just a rendition of “Lloydspeak.”

So now, if you have not done so, let the Senate Transportation Committee, the House Republicans, WSDOT, and the Transportation Commission read some good pro-rail advocacy from you. Recently published data from a Commission survey show considerable public interest in modally-balanced transportation, but again, intercity passenger rail is essentially absent. (See graphic at left prepared by Sightline for a comparison between the state Senate proposal and the Commission survey results). Let’s make it at least measurably present.



We rail advocates also need to reach out and to educate beyond just transportation decision makers to others who provide or promote transportation. I believe intercity passenger trains are essentially “forgotten,” rarely through malice, just through habit or indifference. This is nothing new, but it does

frustratingly continue. The good news is, when informed, people sometimes do respond.

A couple of positive examples: The High Speed Ground Transportation Association was to meet in Las Vegas a number of years ago. They promoted only flights and rental cars to travel to this conference and around the unsustainable neon metropolis. I politely mentioned that advocates for high-speed rail ought to at least mention access by the then-operational Amtrak *Desert Wind*. The President of HSGA answered me, “Your points are well taken and in the future we will have to be more careful to alert attendees to rail alternatives. I absolutely agree we should have been ‘walking the talk...’”

Another affirmative response came from the Washington State League of Women Voters, whose brochure announcing a meeting at Seattle’s Convention Center, probably the most rail, transit and ferry accessible site in the state, mentioned only driving and parking. But an LWV spokes-person, in response to my note, thanked me, did a mea culpa, and said they would cite other transportation modes to access future meetings.

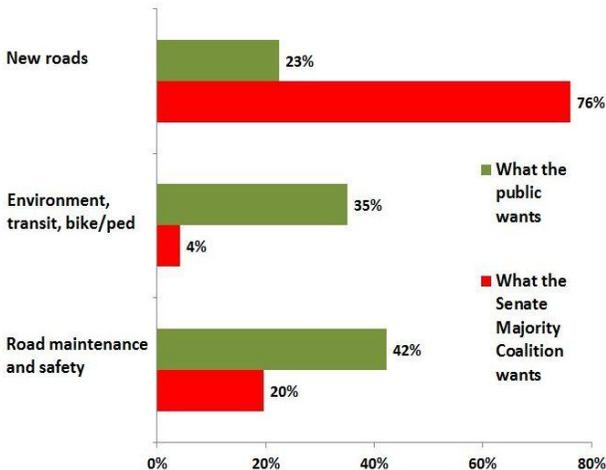
But my apparent successes are by no means total:

A number of years ago the Washington State Rideshare Organization Fall Workshop at a big hotel at 1400 6th Avenue in Seattle advised, “Parking is under the hotel, in garages, and surface lots. Shuttle service is available from Sea-Tac Airport.” (Rail? Bus? Ridesharing???) I have no record of response to my note by WSRO.

The truly superb Washington State History Museum on Pacific Avenue in Tacoma is a treasure for our state. But, alas, as of this late November, the Museum’s website cites only driving directions and parking options, totally failing to mention the Tacoma Link light rail and numerous buses, which stop at the Museum’s front door! My contacts with the Museum have thus far resulted in no change in the driving and parking-only references.

Some fine traditional downtown hotels in such as Spokane, Portland and Seattle widely promote parking and, in some cases, their willingness to shuttle guests from regional airports. Before those rare occasions when I have stayed at those hotels, I’ve asked whether they would also shuttle one from the much-closer Amtrak station. After “checking with supervisors” the answer is often yes, but

(See **Flem**, page 4)



Sources: Washington State Transportation Commission Survey (Oct. 19-Nov. 3, 2013) and Transportation Proposal Balance Sheet, Senate Majority Caucus Coalition (Nov. 11, 2013)

Graphic from a [Sightline Daily](http://SightlineDaily.com) blog post; based on how one would spend \$100



WITH
JIM
CUSICK

Jim's column will return in the next issue. You'll just have to wait till then to find out where Jim took the picture of this track



(from last issue's column) and trains that are running over it.

Transportation Commissioner Dan O'Neal speaks to AAWA

By Lloyd Flem

At AAWA's October 12 meeting in Tukwila we were privileged to have Dan O'Neal, chair of the Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC), as our featured speaker. O'Neal is eminently qualified to serve as Chair of WSTC, with



particular interests in rail. He is on the board of Greenbrier Companies – headquartered in Lake Oswego, OR – which, as many rail advocates know, is a noted rail car

leasing and manufacturing firm. He has chaired the Puget Sound Freight Mobility Roundtable and other freight mobility organizations. Dan also had national responsibilities as Chair of the Interstate Commerce Commission from 1977-80 and also was transportation counsel to the US Senate Commerce Committee under the leadership of the late Sen. Warren G. Magnuson (D-WA).

O'Neal's presentation was augmented by PowerPoint slides, which began by illustrating the many important functions the WSTC performs. Of great interest to those attending was the State Transportation Plan, academic studies, and public outreach sponsored by the Commission.

An eye-opener for our members was that the state gasoline tax was highest, in relative dollar terms, in the 1930s and has declined steeply since. Also, while the State Transportation Budget for 2013-15 was nearly \$9 billion, it is less than 11% of the total State Budget.

Future transportation needs of Wash-

ington cannot be met with only motor fuel taxes, which are declining as vehicles get more fuel-efficient and we are actually driving less per capita than a decade ago. In addition, by state law, such taxes may only be used for highways and car ferries, eliminating them as a source for rail funding. The conclusion is that Washingtonians must decide whether a prosperous future warrants their willingness to invest in transportation.

The goals of the Transportation Plan, which looks forward to 2030, is both comprehensive and multi-modal in nature. (The Transportation Commission is no longer just a "Highway Commission"!) The specific strategies for passenger rail, as presented by O'Neal, include:

- Continued High Speed Passenger Rail investments in our Northwest Corridor
- Attention to improvement of both north-south and east-west service
- Transportation investments coordinated with land use policy, siting decisions, demand management, and transportation needs
- Separating road/rail grade crossings

The illustrated presentation ended with an invitation to participate in the Voice of Washington State Survey on transportation. (See my column on page 2 for some results from that.)

Dan's answers to a wide variety of questions relative to the Commission and rail were answered candidly and to the considerable satisfaction of rail advocates attending. His professional experience with the rail mode and his understanding of the importance of rail were obvious during the Q & A part to the presentation.

O'Neal's program fully reinforced AAWA's perception that WSTC is a proponent of modally-balanced transportation of which rail is a significant part.

Diesel Engine RFP Issued with a Surprise

By Anthony Rudmann

The Illinois Department of Transportation issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to purchase 32 new diesel locomotives for intercity passenger service. While the RFP was expected, it surprised observers by seeking an option to purchase up to 225 additional passenger locomotives.

The Illinois RFP base order is a multi-state effort with 23 locomotives earmarked for Illinois and the Midwest Coalition, 6 engines for the State of California and 5 locomotives for the State of

Washington. Manufacturer proposals must conform to the newly adopted PRIIA standards and Buy America requirements. The base order is funded by the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

But the "optional locomotives" portion of the RFP seeks 50-75 engines of "similar configuration" and 125 to 150 locomotives with a "long distance configuration." While there is no identified funds for the optional equipment, it is anticipated that Amtrak, any state or private operator could purchase locomotives through the final contract. The New York State Rail Plan envisions the purchase of engines and passenger cars for the Empire State so the final contract resulting from the RFP might be a vehicle for New York equipment acquisition.

It is expected that the RFP will draw responses from both domestic and foreign locomotive manufacturers. According to the Federal Railroad Administration, selection of the manufacturer will occur in early 2014 and delivery of the "firm order" engines is planned for 2016. The original date for submittal of manufacturer bids was early October but is now scheduled for November 27. The RFP is available at www.dot.il.gov/procurement/MSLocomotiveProcurement.html

(Reprinted from the September/October 2013 ESPA Express, published by the Empire State Passenger Association.)

MOSCOSO, from page 1

The railroad connects with BNSF, Tacoma Rail and the Puget Sound and Pacific, which runs to Aberdeen and Bremerton from Centralia.

Currently, their primary source of income is rail car storage, with 163 cars stored. The railroad could also store the orphaned Talgo trainsets that Wisconsin reneged on purchasing should the state of Washington proceed with a purchase from Talgo. The trainsets would not be needed until Cascades service expansion occurs in 2017.

The Western Washington railroad is working to grow its business beyond car storage. The first carloads moved were outgoing grain shipments. They have two seasonal customers for fertilizer and are working to develop transloading business.

At the meeting we reelected to the board of directors: George Barner, Mark Foutch, Jim Langston, Jim McIntosh, Rocky Shay and Warren Yee. Rejoining the board after previously serving is John Carlin, who has also been appointed our new treasurer.

The board discussed and approved a fiscal sponsorship agreement with the Cascadia Center. See the page 1 article for full details.

Flem, from page 2

junior staff at these fine hotels seem puzzled by my question. Also troubling to me are meetings by WSDOT and ODOT which deal explicitly with the states' rail programs have met at times and/or in places inconvenient, even impossible to access by the mode they are supporting and administering, while of course driving and parking are explained in meetings' publicity.

But the booby prize was won by Amtrak or perhaps NARP. The late Noel Hancock, an active WashARP/NARP member, was appointed to the Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee, a role he took very seriously. Prior to his travel to an ACAC meeting in DC, he was asked, "Which airline will you be arriving on?" Noel, who was as gentle and decent of a man as ever rode any mode of transportation, quietly informed either Amtrak or NARP he was traveling the entire distance by train ... of course. My answer to whomever made that inquiry would have been a bit less gentle!

My positive response record, maybe 40%, would be a very good MLB batting average, but not an acceptable completion rate for an NFL quarterback. But I'll continue to work on getting institutions, particularly those which should be promoting or at least mentioning the use of our existing intercity, regional and urban transit trains to do so.

But you, fellow passenger rail advocates, need to also continue to work on those institutions who provide and promote or even suggest transportation options. When reasonably available, the rail option should be mentioned. And, say, if a meeting is not rail accessible, I suggest a change in time and/or location!



Once again, AAWA members need to mobilize a public education campaign promoting the good trains that serve our Northwest Corridor. (Not to ignore our grand national network trains such as the *Empire Builder* and *Coast Starlight*, but the point below deals more with the Corridor.)

Despite two decades of good efforts by WSDOT-Rail, Amtrak, All Aboard Washington, and on occasion, other places, publications and communities, otherwise well-informed residents of and visitors to Washington State still seem unaware or "forget" that intercity passenger trains are a travel option between Vancouver BC, Seattle, Portland and Eugene. Even here in Olympia, a place full of well-informed,

Rail Advocates: Provide Pro-Rail Input

Important organizations in our state, and, in one case, Seattle, are asking for public input on transportation, including rail issues and policies. Five entities want your input. It's very important that these groups hear from rail advocates.

- 1) The Senate Transportation Committee (STC) had a state-wide series of "listening sessions" where members of the public gave short testimony on perceived local transportation needs. Rail advocates were few at these sessions. But STC has established: Senatetranspofeedbackforum.org. This on-line forum did not mention rail as a choice! On questions 5 and 6, politely weigh in on the value of passenger and freight rail to your area and to the state.
- 2) The House Republican (HR) caucus survey reflected views that again omitted rail as a solution the Washington transportation needs. Opportunities for pro-rail input are found following questions 3, 4 and 7. Some HRs support rail as part of our state's transportation mix, but those views are absent from this survey. Use: Houserepublicans.wa.gov/our-solutions/transportation to provide evidence that rail is important to Washingtonians.
- 3) The Washington State Rail Plan 2013 (Plan) obviously involves rail. The Plan is 168 pages. Tap in: Wsdot.wa.gov/Rail/staterailplan.htm. This is another opportunity for both praise and to suggest changes/additions to the Plan.
- 4) The Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC) survey, while multi-modal, does not consider rail. Go to the following link: Voiceofwashingtonsurvey.org. Follow the on-line survey directions.
- 5) Seattle Center City Connector Streetcar Survey. This survey asks for detailed choices concerning the technical development of a 1st Avenue (NOT Waterfront) Streetcar for Seattle. Not considered in this survey is putting to practical use the classic George Benson streetcars that proved to be a popular success on the Waterfront. Most rail advocates and the general public have strongly expressed desire to retain these streetcars. A fully retrofitted Benson car will cost \$2 million less than a new modern car and would seat 50% more passengers than contemporary vehicles. The link: www.surveymonkey.com/s/centercityconnector.

All Aboard Washington members and all who favor rail being a vital and growing part of our state's future transportation should let the above transportation decision-makers know your views.

highly-educated and publicly-involved people, I often encounter folks who lament that they cannot take a train to Seattle or Portland and wish that they could! Here I am gentle in telling these information-innocent souls that there are five round trips daily to each at convenient times. I then attempt to get them Amtrak schedules and sometimes AAWA materials.

My charge to all of AAWA is to again reach out more into our communities and to people with whom we associate with basic information about the existence of our Amtrak *Cascades* (and the *Starlight* and *Builder*). And as we do so, we need to give a tactfully-presented short course on how to get tickets and the simple essentials of Train Riding 101. A large percentage of the population simply doesn't know these things. For the increasing numbers of you active in the "social media," this is where you can prevail in working on these educational goals.

The latter part of AAWA's December 14 meeting at Olympia-Lacey's Centennial Station will deal with means of educating a not-yet-well-informed public about our trains. Some of you:

Prepare to "volunteer" for specific tasks in this regard!



The News Tribune and The Olympian of November 18 featured a lead front page story about the traffic congestion on I-5 near Joint Base Lewis McChord. Communities west on I-5 from JBLM to Lacey want \$820 million to add lane capacity to the highway. While I won't dispute the need for some capacity increases, absent from the article, by Brynn Grimley, is any references to alternatives to driving as at least part of a mitigation of the traffic problems. How about more emphases on buses, vanpools, and yes ... rail, as tracks – needing upgrades to be sure – run through JBLM. Reasonable rail advocates should not oppose highway capacity increases when justified (here, paid for in large part by USDOD?), but we need to stress that adding more general purpose lanes should not be the only answer to surface transportation needs.

Now, how many sharp-eyed readers picked up the above – "Communities west on I-5 from JBLM to Lacey" – and **NOT** "south to Lacey." Writer Grimley got the directions wrong, as 90+% of the public does. JBLM is east of Lacey, not north! What then is north of Lacey? A portion of Kitsap →

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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

County significantly west of Bremerton! So what is south of JBLM? Well, Yelm, and Mossyrock.

As an old-time geography teacher, I maintain the lack of elementary map skills and the geographic comprehension that



arises from the ability to understand spatially variable information as found on traditional maps are at least a partial cause of mistaken conclusions about transportation infrastructure, flows, and investments.

Just two examples: The simple but profoundly revealing map of rail infrastructure (including regional bike trails, done in 2006) gives a compelling case for preserving the Eastside Line in rail and NOT destroying it for yet another bike trail. (Most rail advocates do not oppose another bike trail per se; just not ONLY a bike trail which means rail will then likely never return.) Legislators who were shown the 2006 map were unanimous in favoring the preservation of the tracks. The map spoke that loudly.

Vocal opponents of public rail investments in our state repeat the false cliché that "We don't have enough population density for passenger rail here." A look at a map of population distribution in Washington state shows we not only have sufficient density of population along our I-5/BNSF

main corridor to justify existing and significantly increased investment in passenger rail service, the amount and spatial pattern of density is a textbook case for passenger trains! This density and pattern is remarkably similar to that of uber-prosperous southwest Germany from Frankfurt to Munich, which enjoys about 65 passenger train round-trips per day.

This does not even consider that transportation investments, whether road, rail, airports or waterways, create development and associated population density. Glance at maps of US population and economic development before and after the railroads moved west from the Mississippi. I wonder if Mr Lincoln was told not to authorize the expansion west because there "wasn't enough density?"

Hope to see many of you on December 14 at Centennial Station.

Cascadia, from page 1

work we would both undertake on the Eastside TRailway, Blaine Station, or other efforts both organizations agree to, running those donations through AAWA for tax-exempt purposes, while we at AAWA maintain fiscal stewardship and oversight so that such donations and the activities they fund do not endanger AAWA's status as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization with either the State of Washington or the IRS.

As both your Executive Director, Lloyd Flem, and I are well south of Seattle while Bruce is based in the Seattle area, this agreement helps to give us and our shared efforts with Cascadia a new and more involved presence with the Eastside TRailway and Blaine Station. Not only can we react to developments faster having Bruce closer to these projects, but together we can maintain more intensive contacts with key elected officials and decision-makers, making more real progress on these efforts than either of our organizations could working alone, as well as raising funds needed for this important work from interested donors.

We look forward to a very productive

2014 working with Cascadia and Bruce Agnew under this new agreement. If you have questions about the agreement or our work with Cascadia, or want to get more involved, please contact either Lloyd Flem or myself (see p. 5 for contact information). The agreement is posted to our website at allaboardwashington.org/docs/FSACascadia.pdf.

For additional details on our partnership with Cascadia, see the article in the October/November 2013 **WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS**.

ODOT Talgo trainsets update

At the Assoc. of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates meeting on Nov. 16 we learned from Hal Gard, ODOT Rail and Transit Administrator, that ODOT has accepted ownership of one of the two Talgo trainsets the agency has purchased. The process stretched out because of insurance and liability issues that needed to be resolved between ODOT, Talgo and Amtrak. The second trainset should be accepted soon. At least one new trainset was to be in service for the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

In early December a revised service pattern will go into effect between Portland and Eugene. The northbound midmorning Cascades will shift to a midafternoon departure. The late evening southbound departure will shift to an early morning departure. ODOT needs to boost ridership and will try the revised schedules for a year to see how they do. The Portland-Eugene Cascades service must show substantial ridership growth by 2015 or risk being eliminated by the Legislature. Gard continues to look at ideas to provide more stable funding for the Oregon service. Currently it is funded by gas tax collected from fuel sold for things like lawnmowers and from vanity license plate fees.

Interesting fact: ODOT funding for the two Talgo trainsets came from ARRA stimulus money left over from under-budget highway construction projects that USDOT allowed to be flexed to rail purposes.

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All Aboard News

December 14: All Aboard Washington holiday gathering from **noon-4 p.m.** at **Centennial Station**, 6600 Yelm Hwy, **Lacey**. Program will feature David Smelser, ARRA Cascades Program Manager for WSDOT. We will also have a legislative and Congressional outlook for 2013 for passenger rail. Cost is \$10 per person cash or check for pizza, salads/veggies and beverages. Holiday snacks and baked goods will be available for a donation to AAWA. The Centennial Station volunteer hosts have been invited to join us.

Use the *Cascades* or the *Coast Starlight* to and from the meeting.

January 11: All Aboard Washington business meeting from **noon-4 p.m.** at **Basil's Kitchen**, Embassy Suites Hotel, 15920 W. Valley Hwy, **Tukwila**, adjacent to the Amtrak Station. Program will feature several key state legislators, just prior to the start of the 2014 session. Please RSVP to Harvey Bowen, if you can (contact info p. 5). Put "Jan 11 RSVP" in Subject or Body of your email.

Use the *Cascades* to and from the meeting.

All Aboard Washington recently welcomed the following new members: J. David Gale, Auburn; Robert and Mary Lambert, Lake Forest Park; Jim Schwing and Cynthia Murray, Ellensburg; Mike Gerke, Seattle; Thomas Stenger, Tacoma; and Elizabeth Phinney, Olympia.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include: Lloyd Flem, Loren Herrigstad, Zack Willhoite, Warren Yee and Karen Keller.

Amtrak overhauls ticketing website

By Karen Keller

Have you noticed the changes to the Amtrak web site? Four levels of ticket prices are now displayed together: SAVER, VALUE, FLEXIBLE, AND PREMIUM. For those of us "of a certain age" who assumed that senior fares were always the lowest, this is no longer the case, Saver Fares are the lowest available fares and include deeply discounted offers (14-day advance purchase, flash fares, web only). Saver Fares are non-refundable but can be canceled with the ticket value saved as credit on an eVoucher that can be used for future Amtrak travel. The Saver Fare is not available on all trains and buses. Value

Fares offer several refund options and Flexible Fares are 100% refundable without any refund fee. When calling Julie, it's now best to ask if you are getting the lowest fare available. For example, coach one-way from Olympia to Los Angeles FLEXIBLE price is double the cost of VALUE. It pays to compare! Discounts such as for NARP or AAA members can be claimed by clicking on the Other Discounts tab before starting the ticketing process.

Amtrak has now developed, in conjunction with Google Maps, an interactive, near-real time tracking system for all of its trains. Go to the main Amtrak.com website and on the left just below the ticketing box is the link to the map. It opens to a map of the U.S. showing all the Amtrak routes and markers for each train currently operating. You can click on a particular train to get up-to-date status information or you can zoom in to a particular region where there is a number shown, indicating multiple trains operating in close proximity to each other.

