

Eastside Rail Line Victory Edition



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"Moving forward... On Rail."

The Battle for the Eastside Rail Line: Phase Two

By Alfred Runte

As many members of All Aboard Washington have expressed, what a difference the past year and a half has made. In November 2006, we faced the distinct possibility that the Eastside Rail Line (the BNSF Woodinville Subdivision from Tukwila to Snohomish via Bellevue) would be lost. On May 12, 2008, the Port of Seattle agreed to the final terms of purchase of the line from BNSF and announced that public hearings on the line's future will begin this summer. Our challenge now is to convince the Port and King County that use of the railroad should not be delayed. Whatever argument might be made for the adjoining bicycle trail, passenger rail service should come first.

However, from what we are hearing on the political grapevine, proponents of the trail are hoping to stall the rail

approve a bond issue, it should obviously include the establishment of passenger rail service.

This is why your support for All Aboard Washington remains critical; in politics, there is no such thing as a "safe" decision. Government is always in the habit of changing its mind. Rest assured that we are on top of the situation, but there are many ways for King County and the Port to stall. Gasoline at \$4 to \$5 a gallon this summer will be a plus for pushing for rail service. As gas becomes less and less affordable, the rail line's use as a transit corridor looks better all the time.

Our opponents still hope we will tire of the battle and simply go away. As they know, our financial obstacle is one of perception. As an activist, educational organization, we lack the perceived detachment of a think tank. We did not ponder the situation; rather, we

King Street Station: ready, set, go (finally)!

By Ron Sheck

Expect considerable work activity at and around Seattle's historic King Street Station this summer. Roof work on the station is planned to commence in July under the direction of the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). After two years of negotiation the City of Seattle and BNSF Railway reached an agreement in February for sale of King Street Station to the city. At a public ceremony on March 5, the transfer documents were signed by Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels and BNSF Railway Director of Government Affairs Andrew Johnsen. The mayor and Seattle City Council Transportation Committee Chair Jan Drago signed the \$10.00 check to the railway to consummate the purpose. The Mayor noted that although the agreement provided for a sale price of \$1.00, the City's accounting system could not write a check for less than \$10.00; what a deal for the Railroad, ten times their anticipated gain!

The transfer of ownership of King Street Station to the City of Seattle also led to a reshuffling of responsibilities for renovation of the station. Since the late 1990s, the Washington State Department of Transportation has been the lead agency for this work. WSDOT assembled a financing package totaling \$19.2 million from a variety of sources: state appropriations; Amtrak; Sound Transit; the Federal Transit Administration (FTA); the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); and the South (See **King Street Station**, page 7)



From This...

The Eastside Line, left, which has been used by BNSF only for local freight service, near downtown Bellevue. On the right is a vision of the potential passenger carrying capability of the Eastside Line in the future.

Left, photo by Jim Hamre; Right, art by J. Craig Thorpe



To This?

improvements. Julia Patterson of the King County Council has already proposed a bond issue exclusively to fund the trail. Naturally, All Aboard Washington would oppose that as contrary to our understanding that the rail line has equal priority. If voters are asked to

took a stand. The moment we did we were no longer just "thinking." Having made up our minds, we were no longer considered "objective." The principal funding agencies pay for process – for assessing public opinion and filing re- (See **Battle**, page 6)

Ken Uznanski, WSDOT Rail Office manager, receives All Aboard Washington's Tom Martin Award. See page 8.



*From the desk of
the Government
Affairs Director
by
Lloyd H. Flem*

Serious Federal Rail Funding – A Start; Train Day 2008; Operation Lifesaver – Yes!

Washington state members of AAWA have received my letter asking you to contact your US House member to support HR 6003 and HR 6004, a pair of important pro-passenger-rail bills. Very good news on HR 6003, the “Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008,” which would reauthorize Amtrak and accomplish much more, including building high speed rail. HR 6003 passed the Railroad subcommittee on May 14 and the full Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) committee on May 22. What was particularly encouraging about the full committee passage was its unanimous bipartisan support.

Not only T&I Chair Jim Oberstar (D-MN) and Railroad subcommittee Chair Corrine Brown (D-FL) but Ranking T&I Republican John Mica (FL) and ranking Railroad subcommittee member Bill Shuster (R-PA) wrote statements of strong support. Mica had traditionally not been supportive of Amtrak, but endorsed HR 6003, with its significant Amtrak funding, in large part because the bill included specific language to require the USDOT to seek proposals for the development of high speed rail in the Northeast Corridor and across the country. Mica, like Chairman Oberstar, has been particularly impressed by the fast trains serving western European countries. In addition, Shuster said, “One way to address road and air congestion is by expanding our rail passenger system – especially high speed rail.”

The small but noisy anti-passenger rail fraternity’s arguments against public investments in passenger rail are now weaker than they have ever been. Shockingly high and rapidly climbing motor fuel costs; deteriorating commercial air service; and serious environmental, traffic congestion and safety concerns all join to make “More passenger trains!” an obvious answer. And now one called for by a wide range of people, rather than just those of us traditionally attuned to the realities of America’s transportation

needs and possibilities. The Amtrak Cascades and Sounder, as well as intercity and urban passenger rail operations nationwide, are undergoing an unprecedented boom in ridership and revenue.

Now, fellow rail advocates, just because this bit of HR 6003 progress has happened in DC, that does not let us off the hook on contacting our House members. Reread the letter we sent for details of HR 6003, note the contact numbers, and communicate! Although passenger rail is seen as a higher priority for public and private investments than any time in decades and elected officials are more aware of the rail option than before, they are inundated with work, requests, issues and, for most, reelection!

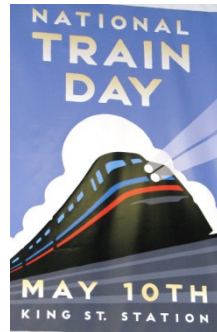
Another means of contact, albeit less effective than a letter, is to phone 1-800-697-1581, NARP Code 1189, and proceed as voice-directed to access your

Shockingly high and rapidly climbing motor fuel costs; deteriorating commercial air service; and serious environmental, traffic congestion and safety concerns all join to make “More passenger trains!” an obvious answer.

House member on HR 6003. Now, let’s act...and inform me of responses you get from your representative.



Some of you attended the first annual National Train Day, for us held at King Street Station on May 10. Seattle’s Train Day was designed essentially as a fun family-type celebration. Some dedicated rail advocates felt there might have been more emphasis on trains as transportation and less Disney, but the day was very well planned and conducted by Am-



trak employees, led by Dan Engstrom and Gay Banks-Olson. Us older folks delighted in the evocative swing, pop and jazz played by Seattle’s Purple Passion Jazz Band. Classic tunes, many from late 30s and 40s – the era of the Greatest Generation, included trains and train riding themes. AAWA Prez Tony T and I enjoyed coming up with the year, composer, and principal artist or band who were originally responsible for these gems of American popular culture. The local Radio Disney station’s show, in appealing to a much

younger crowd, featured recorded G-rated “pre-adolescent rock.” The kids present and even some mid-year-olds and seniors enjoyed the well-scrubbed show, including a rowdy seventy-something gent who did the limbo and later grabbed a senior lady to dance the jitterbug to the swing music. He had so much fun he missed his departing train!

AAWA was closely involved and was given the opportunity to deliver much of the “serious” Train Day message. My short speech (predictably) asked attendees to contact their local, state and federal elected officials about increased investments in passenger trains. The need was strongly emphasized by the almost World War II-sized crowds waiting for and arriving on existing Amtrak trains. I also presented our Tom Martin Award, that given for exceptional work to advance the cause of passenger rail service in the Pacific Northwest, to Ken Uznanski, manager of the WSDOT Rail Office. Ken, with a relatively modest staff and funds, has led the implementation of what is nationally, even internationally, seen as one of the best rail corridor Amtrak services in the US. The AAWA Board and Amtrak execs at the state and national level emphatically endorsed our honoring Ken with the award bearing the name of the late Tom Martin, a dedicated founder and benefactor to our organization.

AAWA’s Dr. Al Runte of Seattle, one of America’s foremost railroad historians, keynoted the formal program with his passionate review of the importance of rail in building our country, its vital role as a preserver of resources and landscapes, and the need to reestablish rail’s prominence in the 21st Century. (Al’s verbal performances are **GOOD**. I made certain Al’s speech occurred after mine; I may be a competent public speaker, but following Al would be like a competent local rock band following the Rolling Stones in live concert!)

Our large AAWA info table was granted the best possible location. All Train Day attendees and nearly all arriving Amtrak passengers enter from King Street. We were placed immediately in front of the main King Street entrance and scores, probably well over a hundred people, stopped to chat, get our literature, and hear of the need for more passenger trains and the value of All Aboard Washington. I considered it very important that we share our table with Operation Lifesaver, the very valuable group (See **Flem**, page 6)



The View Down the Tracks

=====

with Jim Cusick

Entitlement?

Do you think the government should be responsible for providing people with transportation without them paying the full cost? Free enterprise good, subsidy bad. Don't want to encourage people to feel they are entitled to it, after all.

Gosh darn transit riders. It's common knowledge that transit doesn't pay for itself.

However, from reading this column, you should also know that the 1.5 cents per mile that auto drivers pay, when applied to the specific road where the gas is burned, doesn't come close to paying for the freeways they drive on.

The problem is that the cost of urban freeways is so high that the gas tax only supplies 10% of the cost. Who subsidizes the rest? All the people who burn gas at all the other places and at all the other non-congested times, that's who.

Of course, what seems the obvious way to make things fair by having the users of said facility pay their way is something that deserves the dreaded "Shrammie." It seems that KOMO's Ken Shram feels entitled to drive his car anywhere he wants without having to pay his fair share. His "award" went to Matthew Kitchen of the Puget Sound Regional Council for his study suggesting tolls as a method of congestion relief.

Gosh Darn Liberals. Always wanting to stick it to drivers. Good thing Ken Shram is there to protect us from those bad people.

Wait just a Gosh Darn minute! I thought Ken Shram **was** the liberal side of the KOMO/KVI commentator duo juxtaposed with the conservative John Carlson. I'd expect our conservative, market driven friend to be the champion of tolls, wait a minute, I mean the champion of unfettered driving privileges.

Just a Gosh Darn minute, what do auto drivers think they are entitled to? Just who thinks they are entitled to what? I'm getting confused. Maybe John and Ken have the answer.

Choo Choo?

May 10th was National Train Day.

We at All Aboard are known as supporters of Modern Passenger Rail service.

So how do you celebrate the completion of the Transcontinental railroad with the driving of the Golden Spike at Promontory, Utah in 1869?

Have a party, of course!

At Seattle's King Street Station there were games for the children (provided by Radio Disney), live music, and speeches by Lloyd and Al. Amtrak staff and passengers alike were entertained, informed and hopefully motivated.

Part of selling Train Day included "Getting your Choo-Choo On" to bring in a light-hearted approach, and it was designed to engage the younger generation. However, I have found that the youngsters have already embraced train travel. Just spend some time at KSS and see the passenger makeup of the *Cascade's* customers. It's the older ones (my age) that seem to have abandoned train travel.

However, let's put the dry political se-

The problem is that the cost of urban freeways is so high that the gas tax only supplies 10% of the cost. Who subsidizes the rest?

riousness aside for a moment, and let's just look at what the gut appeal is. Train travel is fun. It's relaxing. The sights, sounds, and physical sensations have a certain appeal.

However, while rail isn't a transportation mode that is unique in its attraction of "fans" it does have a certain difference that makes it unique.

Think about how the different modes engage different people.

For those fans of things automotive, they have their favorite professional as a model.

If you favor fast driving, you can buy a tamed down street version of a race car and (in your own mind) you are Mario Andretti.

If you own a truck, you can trick it out like a big rig and you too can play Smokey and the Bandit.

If you are a fan of flying, and can't afford your own Dreamliner or F-22 fighter, you can get yourself a pilot's license and live out the tame version of Top Gun or maybe be another Charles Lindbergh.

If you've always wanted to captain that big ship, you buy a small boat and just like that, you are Columbus or maybe Captain Jack Sparrow (another fantasy, no doubt).

However, if you enjoy trains, you can't just buy a smaller version of the real thing that you can fit that squatty body of

yours into and just go anywhere. It's the only mode that you need to supply the infrastructure to experience things the way the professionals do. Casey Jones didn't have to also lay the track to make his mark.

That's probably why people like to capture the experience on video audio and sometimes just soak up the atmosphere. People of all ages and types enjoy trains and they have that desire to reach out and touch them.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

However, that presents its own set of problems. While traveling by train is one of the safest forms of conveyance, being in close proximity to trains on the outside can be very dangerous.

The recent unfortunate fatalities in Auburn, Kent and Bellingham have been reported as the result of the victims trespassing on railroad property.

While this is technically correct, since the railroad right-of-way is private property, we know the victims did not put themselves in a dangerous situation out of maliciousness, but they paid the ultimate price.

Many incidents are due mostly to ignorance. The danger of being too close to the railroad tracks is not apparent to most people because we just don't have the same number of trains we used to.

We know that playing in the street is dangerous, but we haven't internalized the concept that a train can appear from any direction at any time on any set of railroad tracks.

We wouldn't think of playing or walking down the middle of a major arterial during the times it's almost empty (like the middle of the night). So why do we think it's okay to walk on railroad tracks when we don't see a train in the immediate vicinity?

There are a few other simple things that you can share with your not so train-savvy friends to keep them safe. Help them with a few visualizations.

One of them has to do with why people think they can beat a train to a railroad crossing. Computer simulations bear out the reality, but it basically has to do with the size of the train. The human brain does not seem to accept the fact that something as big as a house can move at a high rate of speed.

For that matter, trains can be dangerous even at a low speeds. It might be a fun experiment (for you but probably not for them) to have your friends walk at full speed into the side of a house (about 3-5 (See **Cusick**, page 6)

Eastside Rail Line: pre-2006

By Jim Cusick

It seems like such a logical idea.

The tracks exist on a right-of-way providing a continuous corridor parallel to I-405.

That's what the Puget Sound Region Council thought when they commissioned the study resulting in their 1992 report titled "Eastside Commuter Rail."

That study took what was then Metro's route 340, which started at Aurora Village, headed to Bothell, around the east side of Lake Washington, coming through Renton, and terminating in Burien.

Their plan was to truncate route 340 in South Kirkland and substitute commuter rail service from there to Renton. This resulted in a ridership count of around 700 per day.

Even though the costs used in that study were higher due to the technology available at the time, they came to the conclusion that this was a feasible commute option. If a direct connection at Tukwila to what would become the future Sounder service were explored this became an even more promising plan.

During the 2000 I-405 Corridor Program study, someone (editor: Jim Cusick) brought up this study and asked staff to explore a more extensive and more current analysis.

Since the I-405 Corridor Program's geographical boundaries only extended to Woodinville in the north, they could not add the Snohomish to Woodinville portion to the study. However, the staff's analysis at that time resulted in ridership numbers of 2800 per day.

At that time, BNSF was not approached so it was not known what a sales price might be, with only the purely speculative \$300 mill. being suggested.

Unfortunately, this analysis was not carried further to the cost-benefit stage of the program, since the City of Renton and the Kennydale Neighborhood Association made a formal request to the I-405 Executive Committee that the BNSF corridor be dropped from consideration. The fears they expressed were based on some mistaken assumptions of what the impact of commuter rail would be in their areas.

Since the program was set up so that any municipality had veto power over what was looked at, this put Eastside Commuter Rail back in limbo until All Aboard Washington took up the fight in November 2006.

Eastside Rail Line: Olympia Efforts

By Lloyd Flem

Having been part of this saga for well over a year, I'll only hit some of the more memorable highlights of my part in the successful preservation, by AAWA and a few others, of the BNSF Woodinville Subdivision (the Eastside Rail Line), an irreplaceable rail corridor that should be a major

means of moving people and focusing affirmative urban development for decades to come. Most of my work centered, as it usually does, with state elected officials and transportation agency professions, mostly in our Capital City. I did venture north several times to do presentations before regional electeds, community groups and appointed transportation bodies, and did considerable outreach with Central Puget Sound decision makers, but much of my efforts were in Olympia.

Late in 2006, accompanied by long-time AAWA member and then Olympia Mayor Mark Foutch, I met with Doug MacDonald, then WSDOT Secretary, and Paula Hammond, now State DOT boss. Mark and I presented the case for preserving the intact rail line. MacDonald said our logic and evidence to preserve the tracks were sound, but "You are the only ones who care." And the state would "save \$25 mill." by not preserving the line. The \$25 mill. was the estimated cost of adjusting the multi-BILLION dollar I-405 widening project to save an intact rail line. Do the math. We spend billions to add mostly single-occupant-vehicle capacity to existing pavement, yet cannot find less than one percent of that amount to preserve a parallel transportation corridor which would have the potential to move as many people as the highway widening in a safer, more environmentally-sound means! Transportation priorities grotesquely imbalanced, to say the least.

Bottom line was BNSF, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), King County Executive Ron Sims and even Sound Transit had everything all decided. Tracks would be ripped out and the \$25 mill. in state money "saved" would go to BNSF to help pay to improve the Stampede Pass tunnel for expanded freight capacity. This on the same line 15 years ago BNSF used the precise "It has no value and should be permanently abandoned" language now being used to describe the Eastside Line! I told my friends at BNSF they were proven wrong in seeking abandonment of the Stampede Pass Line and they might now be wrong in tossing away the only north-south rail route paralleling the waters edge BNSF main through King and south Snohomish counties, with its vulnerability to geological and human-induced severing. And of course the Eastside Line, following a series in legal and financial machinations that came to naught, was to become "The Granddaddy of all Trails!"

In late November 2006 I met with leaders of the House and Senate Transportation Committees, two of whom favored our position but were again concerned with costs of saving the line. Our AAWA King-Snohomish cadre was by this time gearing up an educational campaign and it became obvious many people "cared" about saving this priceless rail line once informed about it.

I took our case to the Legislature early

in 2007 and found a few key legislators were open to our position. Our leading exponent in the House in 2007 was Rep. Deb Wallace (D-Vancouver), who shared our concern that the destruction of the Eastside Rail Line was not only an ill-considered scheme, but contradicted state policy of preserving rail infrastructure. Other House members shared Rep. Wallace's beliefs, prominent among them Rep. Jay Rodne (R-North Bend.) A strong bill, HB2344, which singled out preservation of the Eastside Line was introduced, but pressure by the "everything is all decided" interests listed above managed to remove most of the meat from the bill, leaving only "saving rail corridors is a good idea and inform neighbors about the rail corridor" remaining. This then rather innocuous bill, with but one dissenting vote in the House Transportation Committee, died in Rules, as is the fate of many bills that make it part way through the law-making process.

But the very act of hearing concerns of us who took seriously the state's policy of preserving intact rail corridors was a win. Most legislators were stunned to learn we were about to throw away a transportation corridor capable of serving the most rapidly-growing, most rapidly-congesting area in the Pacific Northwest! I was in DC (lobbying in behalf of BNSF!) the day the "everything is all decided" crew hit Olympia. While working the Nation's Capital, I stunned several of our US House members who were also unaware our state and King County, with their lip service to a "green future" and "balanced multi-modal transportation" had advanced such a contradictory plan.

My AAWA colleagues and other allies continued the strong educational campaign in King and Snohomish counties during much of 2007. Sound Transit's Prop One had failed and that agency has begun to look at the Eastside Line for possible commuter rail use as part of "Plan B." The media, from political right to left, were strongly supportive of the position of preserving an intact Eastside Rail Line. Our position, that minimally the corridor needed to be used for rail as well as trail, was embraced by King County Councilman Larry Phillips and supported by several of his colleagues.

Public education and support continued through the summer and fall of 2007. By December those who'd formerly said "Trail!" were now saying "Trail and Rail." We had moved the nature of the debate our way.

More legislators were aware of the Eastside Rail issue by the 2008 legislative session. I worked for reintroduction of HB2344 and decided to get bold, and, with the enthusiastic sponsorship of Rep. Rodne, added an amendment to explicitly have the state replace the track removed at the Wilburton Tunnel to accommodate widening I-405. The Republicans on the House Transportation Committee supported their (See **Olympia Efforts**, page 6)

New Strategies employed to save Eastside Rail Line

By Chuck Mott

Over the past twenty years, All Aboard Washington has focused most of our rail advocacy efforts in Olympia and Washington, DC. Lloyd Flem has led the fight to put rail on a level playing field, gavel-to-gavel, in the state legislature and he has also lead highly focused efforts numerous times in the halls of Congress. This is important work and he continues to do it. But too often effective efforts to change attitudes and directions, and to promote and advance passenger rail service fall far short. This is because strong special interests often thwart good rail legislation even though it is in the public's best interests and has their overwhelmingly support.

Last year our efforts failed to get the state legislature to save the Eastside Rail Line for future rail passenger commuter service. King County Executive Ron Sims publicly announced a deal to build the "Granddaddy of All Trails" on the "soon to be torn up trackd" on BNSF's rail corridor. Maybe, thirty or forty years from now, Sims said, this strategic transportation corridor could revert back to rails, notwithstanding there is virtually no historic precedent of trails going back to rails in this country once the tracks are removed. The simple fact is, once the rails are gone, they are gone forever! The board of All Aboard Washington clearly saw this situation in the fall of 2006 and decided a major public effort would be needed if there was any hope of saving the Eastside Rail Line. We contracted Dr. Al Runte to lead our uphill efforts to save this strategic and valuable transportation corridor.

Tom Payne (chairman of GNP Railway) and Jim O'Farrell (senior Sales & Marketing vice president, Talisma Corporation) consulted with key officers and board members of All Aboard Washington to create a tightly disciplined team to plan strategies necessary to create public awareness and build support to save the rails.

Team members testified before the Sound Transit Board, asking for support to save the Eastside Rail Line but, except for adding a \$20 million study to the Roads and Transit Prop One measure on last November's ballot, Sound Transit's board ignored our calls to save the line for future passenger and freight rail service.

With no one else ready to save the rails, All Aboard Washington sent a letter to BNSF President Matt Rose offering to acquire the line through a charitable donation.

At the same time, a much publicized bus tour, carrying local and state officials, business executives and interested citizens, and heavily covered by the TV, radio and newspaper news media, was conducted to show the strategic and important connectedness of the rail line to all of the major population and commercial centers on the

east side of Lake Washington. On the day of the tour, the Seattle Times carried a key op-ed by Jim O'Farrell calling attention to the fact that without rail passenger service on the line, businesses and employees would soon leave the area because of growing, massive traffic congestion on I-405.

The BNSF executive department, on the day of the bus tour, publicly declined All Aboard Washington's offer to acquire the line, citing its exclusive agreement to conduct negotiations with the King County executive.

Nevertheless, broad media coverage on that warm summer day in July 2007 and in subsequent weeks, moved the issue forward in the public arena. Al Runte and I were interviewed regularly on talk radio and on TV, providing sound arguments in support of keeping the rails. We said, "The rail right-of-way is generally 100 feet wide and can support both rails and trails. We are, therefore, not opposed to constructing a trail along side of the rails."

In August 2007, several All Aboard Washington team members meet with Port of Seattle Director Tay Yoshitani to discuss potential port interests in acquiring the line. The team had heard several substantial rumors that King County's exchange proposal with the Port of Seattle, to swap the county-owned King County Airport and other property for the Eastside Rail Line (which the port was to buy from BNSF) was in the process of unraveling. The swap proposal did, in fact, soon collapse. While the Port of Seattle executive was non-committal, he agreed to share All Aboard Washington's proposals and ideas with his staff.

In the meantime, Al Runte, Tom Payne and Jim O'Farrell presented proposals for saving the rails with financial investment people; eastside civic leaders; chambers of commerce leaders; and major eastside businesses, including Microsoft, Goggle and other software companies. Strong interest resulted, with key meetings and important communications increasing among Puget Sound leaders and decision makers in business, commerce and government. Then, in November, the Port of Seattle announced it would proceed with acquisition of the Eastside Rail Line. In December, the entire All Aboard Washington team attended the Port of Seattle Commissioners meeting to witness their unanimous approval to purchase the line and keep the rails intact – at least for now.

The fight to save the Eastside Rail Line is not over. But if All Aboard Washington had not chosen to lead public efforts in 2007 the rails would soon be gone. We have saved the corridor for now! Much credit goes to a number of individuals who worked tirelessly in our campaign to save the line. Al Runte's strong leadership was especially key in working with the media.

President Tony Trifiletti did yeoman ser-

vice in keeping things organized, timelines and action items addressed, and holding commitments on track and on time.

J. Craig Thorpe produced several important illustrations, commissioned by Bruce Agnew of the Cascadia Center, depicting what trains, stations, trail and parking facilities would look like in all major Eastside communities.

Jim O'Farrell and Tom Payne produced heavy duty data and solid financial planning and held meetings with major companies, civic leaders and the financial community asking for their support.

Lloyd Flem worked key legislation supporting the Eastside Rail Line and met continuously with key legislators, WSDOT officials and staff in the governor's office to inform them of the progress of our efforts and to get their support.

Tom Payne's GNP Railroad, with very able assistance from Doug Engle – in action independent of All Aboard Washington – has been successful in getting Snohomish County Council approval to support his proposal to start commuter rail service between Snohomish and Bellevue.

Bruce Agnew, with tireless assistance from All Aboard Washington Director Loren Herrigstad, has held several important forums to heighten community and news media interest in saving the Eastside Rail Line.

We also want to acknowledge that another organization, Eastside Rail Now, worked effectively with our organization in getting grassroots support.

All Aboard Washington is particularly grateful to Talisma President Dan Vetrin and Senior Vice President Jim O'Farrell for their very valuable time, effort and financial support in this project.

I personally want to thank Dave Ross, KIRO 710 morning radio talk show host, for his interest in All Aboard Washington's effort's to save the Eastside Rail Line. He allowed me the opportunity to discuss this important issue several times on his popular morning program. I want to similarly express my gratitude to Keith Erwin, reporter for The Seattle Times, for his great interest in fairly, factually and accurately representing our organization's views to the vast readership of this major Northwest newspaper. And also, thanks to Jeanette Knutson, a very capable reporter for the Woodinville Weekly, as she faithfully and consistently reported this developing story with very fair coverage of our efforts.

All Aboard Washington also appreciates the fact that BNSF has recently completed major negotiations with the Port of Seattle on an agreement that leaves all the track in place at this time, except for the short portion taken up to allow removal of the Wilburton Tunnel under I-405.

In conclusion, I want to thank all the members of the board, the directors club, the officers and the entire membership of (See **New Strategies**, page 7)

Battle, from page 1

ports. Because we continue to demand that the Eastside Rail Line be preserved, it remains difficult asking for outside support.

Simply, we must carry on the fight ourselves, trusting that our allies will increase their contributions. This reemphasizes why our achievement remains extraordinary: except for those few, dedicated contributors, we funded the campaign on our own. Still we won. We built mightily toward the day when All Aboard Washington will be a household name. And we are already a name with the press.

The point now is to have operating passenger trains. Only their absence keeps alive the hope by some that a trail can displace the railroad. Once the trains are in place, their use and popularity will prove all that we have said over the last year and a half. So please, All Aboard Washington members, give as generously as you can. Phase 2 will be no easier than Phase 1, but remember, you have already saved the tracks. If your first contribution was made out of fear of losing them, your next contribution can be built on pride. Thanks to you, we turned back a true juggernaut of regional ignorance. Just keep the pride flowing in.

Flem, from page 2

fully supported by freight and passenger railroads, rail labor, public agencies dealing with rail and public safety, and groups like ours. Dave Agee of BNSF manned our table for Operation Lifesaver. Given the several recent fatalities involving people who tragically trespassed in front of Amtrak and BNSF trains (ten so far this year in Washington alone) Dave's message and information on practicing safe and reasonable behavior on or near train tracks looms high in importance. I was pleased many people took OL literature and am proud to be associated with such a vital cause.



I consider Operation Lifesaver of sufficient import to work with Bob Boston, State Coordinator for OL, in setting up an OL presenters class for AAWA members on Tuesday 10 June from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the BNSF Offices, Puyallup Avenue, Tacoma, directly across from the Tacoma Dome Transit Station, and an easy walk from the Tacoma Amtrak Station and termini for Sounder, Tacoma Link and express buses from Seattle and Olympia. An ideal site.

The instructor will be Dave Agee, our OL colleague at Train Day. Classes are designed to be small, five to seven is an ideal number. Five of us are currently signed up. Room for two more. Please inform me by Monday evening 9 June. First two contacting me will be in the 10 June class. Hopefully other AAWA members will show sufficient interest in this very worthwhile endeavor

to warrant added classes. To "graduate," we will each give a ten-minute presentation to fellow class members. Then we need to get out to the public and spread the word concerning safe behavior around railroad infrastructure. Trains are the safest mode of travel for passengers. Rail fatalities occur to those on foot and bikes, and in motor vehicles who exercise tragic choices around train tracks. Victims are not only the persons injured or killed and their loved ones, but the dedicated and conscientious train crews who, through no fault of their own, are operating these powerful and wonderful machines when the tragedy occurs. Operation Lifesaver seeks to educate people on not making these tragic choices. AAWA needs to be part of this education process.

For information on Operation Lifesaver visit www.oli.org and www.wutc.wa.gov/waol. Both sites have great resources and information for kids and adults.

Cusick, from page 3

mph). Blindfold them so they can get the full effect. Help them out by pulling them alongside the house. Sounds brutal, but even at the slow approach speed of a train arriving at the station, the train is not encumbered by the small mass of a pedestrian. A train [crew] cannot just "slam on the brakes" and instantly stop.

Another variation can be experienced if you and your friends get a chance to ride any northbound Sounder trains. Ride up in the cab car and sit at the front on the side opposite the operator. From that perspective, it's easy to see how much the train overhangs each side of the tracks. Another reason to pay attention to that yellow warning stripe on the platform.

It's quite alright to enjoy trains, as well as cars, planes and boats. However it's not fun anymore when you crash your car or your plane, or sink your boat, and it's not fun to get hurt by a moment of forgetfulness around trains.

Be careful around trains, because the living make for more return customers!

Olympia Efforts, from page 4

fellow R, Jay Rodne, whereas most of the majority Democrats followed the lead of their Chair Judy Clibborn (D-Mercer island) and opposed my amendment. Again, getting the idea heard in open committee was a win. On 26 January, a "forum" with King County, the Port of Seattle and BNSF was held by the House Transportation Committee. That the debate had been moved in our direction was obvious. The three parties by then not only advocated dual use, but said (most of) the rails would remain in place, and offered copious praise to each other for their "Vision" in saving this important transportation corridor! (It was hard to keep from

giggling; WE had won, even without passing the bills we worked for.)

On 1 February a very tough bill, SB6800, which would not only save the Eastside Line but would financially punish any public agency that would rip up tracks, was introduced by Senate Democrats Steve Hobbs (Lake Stevens), Eric Oemig (Kirkland) and Mary Margaret Haugen (Camano Island). I met with and praised the three senators and went to work lobbying for it to their colleagues and to House members. This tough bill passed out of the Senate Transportation Committee, but was not heard on the House side. In reality, a few NIMBYs effectively were able to override the broader public interest. Not the first nor the last time. But still again, such a bill being heard and strongly supported when voted on was important.

We remain concerned that a February 2007 WSDOT proposal to remove all tracks between Renton and Woodinville to build the trail and to "save \$25 mill." at the Wilburton Tunnel was still floating around. We fear some might still consider this proposal "official state policy." We and allied legislators will work to ensure that is not the case.

Helpful was SHB3224, sponsored by freshman Rep. Liz Loomis (D-Snohomish), a "study the situation" bill. It passed the Senate 49-0 and had but two dissenting House votes. It mandates Sound Transit and PSRC determine the feasibility of passenger rail on the Eastside Line. What rail advocates must do it remain closely involved in this study and not allow anti-rail conclusions to precede the study's objective work, as occurred in previous studies.

Finally, what of our original bill, HB2344? It passed the Legislature, but ended up being less than innocuous. Even the humble "Saving rail corridors is nice..." language was removed, leaving only the idea that the existence of a rail corridor needs to be part of a real estate sale disclosure. Evidently, even a recodification of established state policy favoring the preservation of rail corridors was too tough for some sensitive folks!

But all things considered, we won this round. In late 2006 the tracks were effectively gone, essentially forever. By spring of 2008, the bulk of the informed public supports preservation of the Eastside Rail Line for passenger rail use, sooner rather than later. The decision makers have awakened to the value of this rail corridor thanks to AAWA and some others, who fought for the long-term public interest. (I am less impressed by those who were AWOL when the going was tough and whose motto is the all-too-common "What's in it for us... today?") However, this match has several rounds. We won this one, but the other side isn't yet knocked out. Rail advocates must keep up our guard and keep punching as needed, in Olympia and all points northeast.

King Street Station, from page 1
Downtown Foundation.

Ron Sheck became the WSDOT project manager in 2002 and since early 2006 worked closely with Trevina Wang, the SDOT project manager. WSDOT carried out renovation work between 2004 and 2006 that included: opening up of a long closed off portion of the waiting room; renovation and upgrading of the restrooms; opening up of windows along the upper level of the waiting room; replacing metal doors and windows in the waiting room with new wooden ones; replacing the exterior canopies on the south and west sides of the station; cleaning up of the granite entry at Third Avenue and King Street; and a total restoration of the Compass Room to its original 1906 appearance in time for the station's 100th Anniversary on May 10, 2006. WSDOT and five other sponsors (Amtrak, Sound Transit, King County Metro, SDOT and BNSF), supported by a generous contribution from Nitze-Stagen, celebrated the centennial with eight weeks of public events that culminated in July 2006 with the launch of the fourth Amtrak *Cascades* roundtrip between Seattle and Portland.

King Street Station has seen considerable growth in passenger traffic in the past decade. The launch of the *Cascades* service in 1998, which has grown to four round-trips between Seattle and Portland with some trains extending to and from Eugene; reequipping of the Seattle-Vancouver round-trip with Talgo sets; and the inauguration of the Seattle-Bellingham round-trip (which later this year will be extended to Vancouver, BC for the second round-trip on the international route) are all developments which complement the long distance service provided by the *Coast Starlight* and *Empire Builder*. Sound Transit began weekday Sounder commuter train service in the fall of 2000 with two round-trips between Tacoma and Seattle; that service has now grown to six round-trips with two more coming in September. In late 2003, Sound Transit began Sounder service between Everett and Seattle and currently provides three weekday round-trips; a fourth will be

added in September. Seven Amtrak Thruway bus round-trips now serve King Street Station with service to Vancouver, BC, Bellingham, Wenatchee, Spokane and intermediate points. About 7,000 passengers board trains at King Street Station every weekday on either Amtrak or Sound Transit service.

SDOT is moving ahead with renovation work at King Street Station. In March, WSDOT executives accepted a proposal from SDOT to transfer control of the renovation project and funding to the City of Seattle. That transfer is being finalized and when agreements are signed between Amtrak and the City work will proceed. The first piece of work will be replacement of the roof with tiles that will match the original green ones. SDOT will do an advance purchase of the roof tiles and expects to bid out the construction work in July.

A volunteer group is restoring the clock and it is expected to again be running this summer. SDOT has lit the neon King Street Station sign facing Jackson Ave. that WSDOT had restored and reinstalled in 2004. Other renovation work, both inside and outside the station, will follow after the roof restoration is completed.

Underway adjacent to the station is construction of an Odor Control Facility by the King County Wastewater Management Division on the site of the former Station Master's Garden, immediately south of King Street Station. The facility will be underground and allow for restoration of most of the surface for public use when construction is completed in 2009. However, no funding currently exists for that restoration work. Parking is being removed and partial street closures will take place beginning in June. Pedestrian traffic to and from the Weller Street bridge will be rerouted through the Qwest Field north parking lot immediately west of the station.

Nitze-Stagen is moving ahead with its plans for redevelopment of the north parking lot. Their project is a mixed use development that will include housing, retail and underground parking. Work is expected to begin in 2009 with completion in 2011. Lots of construction will be taking place in and

around King Street Station the next three years; this will impact access, traffic and parking. While discomfort and inconvenience will affect travelers and those working at the station, the long term gain will be a safe, secure, attractive, welcoming and beautifully restored station in a greatly improved neighborhood.

For more information visit:
www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/Rail/KingStreetStationRenovation/
www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/Rail/KingStreetStation/
www.seattle.gov/transportation/kingstreet.htm

New Strategies, from page 5

All Aboard Washington for their loyal support and particularly for their added financial support. It should be noted that financial giving increased in 2007 almost 60% from 2006. That being said, we need your continued financial support this year in order to carry on this fight. We have retained the capable services of Dr. Al Runte to lead our organization in the public arena as executive director, in addition to our long time Government Affairs Director Lloyd Flem. Your generous donations directly support the effective efforts of these two very capable men.

I have come to the inescapable conclusion, if our passenger rail advocacy organization wishes to be effective today and in the future, we have to function as successfully in the public forum as we already do in the legislative arena. Our success in saving the Eastside Rail Line proves that!



Photo by Bob Lawrence

Ribbon cutting for phase 1 of the Mukilteo Sounder station on May 30. Rides were free that day to the Mariners game. Week-day service began June 2.

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 Amtrak: www.amtrak.com
 Amtrak *Cascades*: www.amtrakcascades.com
 Sound Transit: www.soundtransit.org

All Aboard News

June 14: All Aboard Washington meeting in **Kelso**. Meeting will take place from **10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.** (between arrival of train 501 and departure of train 506). The meeting will be in the train station meeting room on the lower level. A catered sandwich bar will be provided. Pay \$10 at the door (cash or check only). The Kelso city manager and the local council of governments transportation planner will be our speakers.

August 9: All Aboard Washington meeting at **noon** at **Jim Hamre's home**, 13307 104th Ave. Ct. E. on Puyallup's South Hill. Bring a potluck item. Hamburgers and beverages provided. Call or email for more information. See p. 7.

September 13: All Aboard Washington meeting in **Leavenworth**. The meeting **may** be held in conjunction with a groundbreaking ceremony for the Leavenworth Amtrak station. Details will be in the August/September newsletter.

All Aboard Washington welcomed the following new members in April and May: Kim Weers, Woodinville; Peter Krier, Seattle; Sam Davidson, Seattle.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include: Ron Schauer, Ron Sheck, Lloyd Flem, Tony Trifiletti, Chuck Mott, Al Runte, Warren Yee, Jeff Schultz, Bob Lawrence and Craig Thorpe.

Do you want to be greener, save All Aboard Washington money and get your newsletter sooner (with color pictures)? Send your email address to Warren Yee (see p. 7) and we'll start sending you **WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS** as a PDF every two months in lieu of a paper copy.

All Aboard Washington
P. O. Box 70381
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Photo by Jim Hamre

Lloyd Flem, left, presents Ken Uznanski, WSDOT Rail Office manager, with All Aboard Washington's Tom Martin Award at the May 10 National Train Day festivities at King Street Station in Seattle. The plaque presented to Ken reads:

All Aboard Washington presents its 2008 Tom Martin Award to Kenneth Uznanski Under Ken's leadership the Washington State Department of Transportation Rail Office runs one of the most successful state-level intercity passenger rail programs in the United States. His steady and cooperative style in working with all stakeholders has helped ensure the program's success. Ken is accordingly recognized as one of the most respected national leaders in state rail development. We thank you Ken for your vision and wish you well as you continue to help shape passenger rail in Washington State and indeed the nation.

Lloyd noted that Amtrak Pres. Alex Kummant had recently sent WSDOT Secretary Paula Hammond a letter praising Ken for his work on behalf of passenger rail service, both locally and nationally.

Ken, when accepting our Tom Martin Award, stated the Amtrak Cascades are the best passenger rail service in the country but we have a long way to go to make them the public's preferred mode of travel.

Northwest Rail Corridor Briefs

The *Coast Starlight* finally resumed full through service on May 7 across the Oregon Cascades, where a massive landslide had closed down the Union Pacific Railroad since Jan. 20. However, Amtrak continued its previous policy of not allowing passengers to purchase tickets on northbound train 14 from Eugene north because of previous on-time issues even though the train's performance had improved substantially beginning last October. Northwest rail advocates continued to press Amtrak officials on this issue, pointing out that on-time performance of the train has been over 70% since full service resumed. On May 28, Kurt Laird, Amtrak's superintendent for the Northwest, directed ticket sales on train 14 be reopened for points between Eugene and Seattle, effective May 30. Opening sales on train 14 is critical to helping meet the surging demand in the Northwest Corridor. Most weekend *Cascades* trains between Portland and Seattle sell out at least several days in advance. On Sunday June 1, for example, all northbound *Cascades* had no seats available out of Portland and even train 14, with only a couple days notice, had few seats available.

And more travel options are now also available in the corridor. Effective May 12, ODOT has added Thruway bus connections from Eugene, Albany and Salem for the Bellingham-Portland trains (513 and 516), and WSDOT has added Thruway bus connections from Bellingham, Mt. Vernon and Everett for Seattle-Eugene trains 500 and 509. (This is WSDOT's first Thruway bus service, something All Aboard Washington has been advocating for many years.) Before May 12, there were no real train options for same day travel between Eugene and Bellingham. Now there are two! WSDOT and Amtrak still plan to extend trains 513 and 516 to Vancouver, BC later this summer.

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