



WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

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A Not-for-profit Consumer Organization
"Moving forward... On Rail."

A BNSF view of rail issues in the Northwest

D.J. Mitchell, BNSF Assistant Vice President of Passenger Operations, was the featured speaker at All Aboard Washington's April 13 meeting in Tukwila. His presentation was done in an informal question and answer format. Here are his thoughts from the many excellent questions asked of him.

BNSF will cooperate with all government agencies when they want to add or expand passenger rail service but government must bring the funding for the service to the table.

The railroad has committed to WSDOT that the potential added coal trains that may travel the Northwest Corridor will not have an impact on the Amtrak *Cascades'* reliability. The contract requires BNSF to guarantee at least 88% on time performance or be penalized.

Discussion of an extension of Sounder service from Lakewood to Olympia would need to be initiated by Sound Transit. Future additional passenger service (commuter or intercity) must not have a negative impact on BNSF's freight operations.

BNSF has modeled a third Seattle-Vancouver, BC *Cascades* round-trip (midday). The biggest area of concern is after crossing the Fraser River. This area is basically industrial track, making passenger operations more problematic.

Mitchell said top passenger train speeds of 90 mph could be accommodated on tracks with freight trains in areas between Nisqually and Vancouver if

WSDOT is willing to pay for it. There are three main issues:

- Speed differential between 90 mph passenger trains and 60 mph freights. Need to look at signal spacing of 2.5 miles vs. the current 5 miles. It takes 30 miles of track space for an Amtrak train to pass a freight train going in the same direction without impeding movement of either train. An Amtrak train consumes 7 miles of track space as it moves along at speed.
- Different track standards are needed for passenger and freight trains, such as superelevation in curves.
- The need for a higher level of surfacing tolerance – smoothness and rail gauge, for instance.

Above 90 and up to 110 mph, BNSF would require a separate track exclusively for passenger trains.

BNSF will probably be the only major freight railroad to meet the 2015 deadline for Positive Train Control installation, though the railroad will still need a year of reliability testing.

Daytime Amtrak service to eastern Washington: it's the state's call. The Stampede Pass route would need major capital improvements while the Stevens Pass route is near capacity through the Cascade Tunnel.

Finally, the mudslide question was asked. This past winter was devastating with over 200 slides between Seattle and (See **BNSF**, page 5)

In 2013: It's Amtrak's *Empire Builder*

By Mark Meyer

When you think of the *Empire Builder*, what is your perception? Is it a tourist train, a socially necessary conveyance, a comfortable way to travel, a combination of all of these or something else? Or, does the equipment define the train for you? Is the *Empire Builder* the Superliner version of today, the domeliner that had more dome seats than any other train of the 1950s and 1960s, the original heavyweight equipment drawn by steam engines when it first debuted, or anything in between?

Perception is not always the same as preference, and perception always does not reflect reality when speaking of passenger trains; this can be affected by time, generation, and personal experience. As an example, I recall a few years back when a person well-versed on the history of the *North Coast Limited* (operated mostly by the Northern Pacific Railway) rode the Superliner *Empire Builder* for the first time. He opined about the trip with the primary complaint being that there were no dome cars, and added he was glad there was no such version (Superliner) of the *North Coast Limited* operating today. That such (dome) cars had been gone from most Amtrak routes for at least two decades by then notwithstanding, it was obvious he equated the *North Coast Limited* with the dome version of the train.

But reality is that train existed for 71 years, and it carried dome cars for less than one-quarter of those years, and was a streamliner for less than one-third of its life. Indeed, for most who knew the *North Coast Limited*, it was a heavyweight passenger train drawn by steam engines. But many who remember the *North Coast Limited* today were not around when it was a steam train, and when it met its demise in 1971, it was the domeliner version of the train (albeit not always with cars in the Northern Pacific paint scheme), so that is the version many will forever remember – not unlike the image (See **Builder**, page 4)



The waiting room of the magnificently restored King St. Station. It probably hasn't looked this nice since the day it first opened in 1906. The City of Seattle hosted a soft reopening on April 24. A bigger celebration is planned for this summer. For more pictures: www.seattle.gov/transportation/kingstreet.htm and the AAWA Facebook page.

Photo by Jim Hamre



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

Thanks, Ray LaHood; Welcome, Anthony Foxx; Cautious Optimism and More

When President Obama nominated Rep. Ray LaHood as Secretary of Transportation, there were groans of disappointment from many supporters of multi-modal (other-than-just-more-highways) transportation, who felt a “progressive” urban Democrat was essential to help forward their aims. I then suggested the downstate, small-city Illinois Republican Congressman had worked the US House in a bi-partisan fashion, was a political moderate, and had a fairly good voting record on Amtrak and environmental issues. Let’s wait and see.

We waited and saw that from the point of view of passenger rail advocacy, Ray LaHood proved to be the best Secretary of Transportation ever. To the skeptics: How did that crow taste? While a President is of course responsible for broad Administration policy, Cabinet members can certainly put emphasis and energy into those things in which they believe. And Ray LaHood has. He has fervently supported high (and higher) speed rail, conventional intercity rail, and urban rail during his tenure at USDOT.

I was pleased to learn that at both this spring and last spring’s NARP meetings in DC, Secretary LaHood was greeted with standing ovations and loud chants of “Four More Years!” One of my favorite Ray LaHood events was just a few months ago during a US House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee hearing when a couple of anti-rail T&I Committee Republicans were aiming hostile questions and comments at LaHood. Since the questioners had been his House GOP peers, LaHood, utterly not intimidated, gave it right back at them at least as tough. Wish I’d been there in person!

Illinois was second in the amount of ARRA (“Stimulus”) high-speed rail grants. (California first.) While both Obama and LaHood are from Illinois, and that certainly did not hurt that state’s chances in getting significant ARRA rail funds, Illinois had already invested considerable state money, and by any measure, is key to improved passenger rail service in the central US. Other states which have made major investments in passenger rail service in recent years include California, our Washington, Virginia and North Carolina.

North Carolina: Whether by plan or total coincidence, Ray LaHood’s replacement (pending Senate confirmation) is the mayor

of its largest city, Charlotte. Anthony Foxx, just age 42, has a record of supporting streetcars and light rail for his city. We wish Foxx well and hope he will continue the pro-passenger-rail pattern of his state and also bring the enthusiastic dedication to rail as did his predecessor.

Thanks, Ray LaHood. Welcome, Anthony Foxx.



Following the recently-concluded regular session of the 2013 legislature, I felt somewhat optimistic about continued support for our intercity passenger rail program. In meeting with all the House and Senate Transportation Committee leadership and many key members, I encountered very few who were hesitant about the increases in state support mandated by Section 209 of the federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA). Whereas most of the costs of our Amtrak *Cascades*

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have been paid for by passengers and by operating funds from the state, Amtrak picked up some of the tab and provided some specific services (national reservation system, for example). As of October 1, PRIIA 209 will kick in and the State will have to assume a portion of what Amtrak had covered. It is essential that states take on this obligation, or, according to a letter from Amtrak President Joseph Boardman to Amtrak employees, corridor Amtrak services would cease. But, again I feel that most in our Legislature care enough about our *Cascades* to budget that required to keep the trains running.



The May 4 20th Anniversary Celebration of Olympia-Lacey’s Centennial Station was a real success. Hundreds of people, mostly from Thurston County, enjoyed the displays, three fine musical groups, sunny warm early May weather, lots of freight and passenger trains passing by, and the ambience of Centennial Station itself. Volunteer station hosts, some of whom had been involved for the entire twenty years, were particularly honored. A highlight was Operation Lifesaver’s locomotive cab simulator where children and adults got to play engineer.

The 20th Anniversary Planning Committee, most of whom are AAWA members, did a thorough job and it showed on May 4. These folks and other AAWA members

helped keep the event running smoothly.

I had hoped more elected officials and other influentials, who were given special invita-

tions, might have dropped by. But I was particularly pleased to see former Congressman and WSDOT Secretary Sid Morrison join us. Mr. Morrison was a stellar supporter of our rail program during his years in Olympia. Equally pleasing was the attendance of Rep. Luis Moscoso, who has become a top advocate for rail within the Legislature. Great to see Mr. Morrison (R) and Rep. Moscoso (D) affirmatively discussing our state’s rail future without a hint of the partisanship that in recent years has nearly paralyzed Congress and has even spread to Olympia (though I’m pleased to report the state’s transportation committees seem to be somewhat of an exception).

The cities of Lacey and Tumwater also had elected officials present. (Mea culpa if other electeds were present and I was unaware of them.) Kudos to Karen Keller and Jon Cox, who did lots of the details in planning for the event. The same two Lacey residents traveled to Portland on May 11 to assist our AORTA colleagues at their booth at what was said to be another fine National Train Day event at Portland’s Union Station. Participation from communities served by Amtrak was a new wrinkle. Large crowds were in attendance. Again, volunteers from rail advocacy and rail historical groups helped make the day run smoothly. The only shortcoming was that Oregon’s new Talgo train was not available for touring.

Bob and Mark Lawrence staffed an AAWA table at the lower-key Seattle Train Day event. Without any media publicity, visitors were sparse except for regular Amtrak passengers, including those attending a Sounders soccer game. I have yet to see the beautifully restored King Street Station. A “grand reopening” is planned for this summer, which is slated to be a far-more comprehensive event than National Train Day at Seattle’s once-again fine rail cathedral.

I had a great time talking about our passenger rail renaissance to a group of gentlemen, “Sons in Retirement,” (SIR) at Lacey’s renowned Panorama City on April 15. While P-City residents start at age 62, this was a decidedly more senior group. As the average age is 82, I was among the youngest in the room of sixty or so SIR (See **Flem**, page 4)



**Harvey Bowen, seated,
staffs the AAWA table at
the Centennial Station 20th
anniversary celebration.**

Photo by Jim Hamre



WITH
JIM
CUSICK

FWAI

Greetings fellow railfans.

Do you like trains?

Do you pine for the old days? Swing bands, steam locomotives, and service like the old days?

How do you get people to ride the train?

Do you take them out to watch trains?

Do you know every nut and bolt on every locomotive made?

Professionals in the transportation business have a word for people who appreciate and enjoy their various modes of transportation: Customers.

Think for a moment, does the automotive industry make lots of money from "Grease Monkeys and their Minions" & "Boy Racers"?

Does the private aircraft industry sell their wares to "Flyboy Fighter Pilot Wannabes"?

What do the airlines call their customers? (Hmm, maybe we should set that one aside.)

Have you seen the ads from Bayliner or SeaRay to all you "Captain Pugets"?

What they all do is encourage their customers, from the casual to the enthusiast, to enjoy and embrace their technology. (In fact, as I type this, I'm watching a series of TV shows about American Muscle Cars.)

And those industries even have the ear of their elected officials.

What airline has built its own airport?

What trucking company or automaker has built its own highway?

When was the last time you paid a fee to travel through the Hiram Chittenden Locks in Ballard in your pleasure craft?

Of course you haven't, because we are all taxed to support this. We pay property taxes to support capacity expansion at airports to better support air travel. Money from the general tax fund supports the Air Traffic Control system, as we have seen from the problems the Sequester has caused.

We pay tax on gas to go towards road capacity improvements, along with property taxes and other various taxing schemes. Where is the public debate about the \$3 million a year cost for snow removal on Snoqualmie Pass, let alone the hundreds of millions that will be spent on capital improvements to deal with it?

What happens when rail enthusiasts actually show enthusiasm for rail technology? What happens when someone makes

the argument for viable passenger rail (which like all the other modes, operates with subsidies)?

Enter into a discussion and the term will come up. The pejorative form is "Foamer," the polite form is "Railfan."

In an interview I read years ago with a shortline railroad operator back east, the issue of hiring people who are enthusiastic about rail was brought up. The manager said he liked to hire people who are railfans. He knew the need to grow and sell his business, and he wanted people who were enthusiastic about it, too, and would be happy to extol its benefits to potential customers.

While he knew he needed were enthusiastic employees who understood the serious nature of working with railroad equipment; he did not need applicants who were so enamored with the nuts and bolts that they lost sight of the job at hand ... the safety and seriousness of moving multi-ton cargo vehicles.

Those of us who believe in the serious-

Professionals in the transportation business have a word for people who appreciate and enjoy their various modes of transportation: Customers.

ness of moving passengers safely are also enthusiastic. It's what makes us good salespeople.

There have been numerous times in various forums where the discussion has ended up with proponents of rail solutions referred to as "Foamers."

In these various places, I have encouraged proponents of non-rail solutions to extol the virtues of their mode, and sell it to the rest of us, as it were.

What I find surprising is how few actually do this.

When the conversation degenerates into having rail supporters become "Foamers" I've realized that those on the other side of essentially cannot make an effective argument.

Rather than worry about the "Foamer" label, it's time to wear it proudly.

Foamers With Attitude!

Sell it, it's a good product, and if you've been paying attention to what I've been telling you, you already know that.

SOSDY?

Just a few days ago, I drug out an old laptop, flipped the glow-plug switch to "on," (checked the oil first), cranked her over a few times, and wonder of wonders it fired up. I went back to the future. I was in Windows 98. Old, but it could have been worse.

Looking back at my articles from 2004, it interesting to see what predictions came to

fruition, and what haven't. As many things that change, much still stays the same.

What has changed?

The Seattle Monorail was a big topic. It failed for various reasons, but the one positive aspect was exclusive right-of-way. It seems to be seeing a rebirth now in something called "Seattle Subway." It's a good idea.

In some areas, we still haven't seemed to have gotten over the transit modal wars.

Although I have to admit, when I see all my wonderful ideas in these old articles, suggestions on how to make efficient use of resources, create useful infrastructure, create winnable ballot proposals ... I wonder: If I'm so smart, how come I'm not rich?

It seems the arguments are still the same, but the new twist is the economy.

Before, it was just getting people to realize how much all the transportation options, including highways, cost taxpayers. Now with everyone watching everyone's pocketbook – every discussion of expenditures is followed by "Can WE afford it?" – there is a curious situation.

They say politics makes strange bedfellows, and it appears that while rail supporters feel the money spent has a better long-term return on investment when it is used on rail systems, we were willing to take things that came our way even when tied to road expansion projects.

Now since even many highway plans are stuck in limbo, we don't worry so much about money being thrown down the [sewer] drain, but there is a group that is fighting any government spending increases: our Anti-Tax friends. Any talk about having either tolls, or added gas tax to support these highway mega-projects, is on our favorite person's radar.

Now, with the latest transportation package being worked on in Olympia, the amount of money needed will certainly have to be met with more revenue. Cue Tim Eymann's next anti-tax initiative.

In my April 2004 article, when writing about the goings' on for the I-405 Corridor, I ended a discussion with the phrase "I'm sorry to say that even though I was hoping to report that Julia Patterson had better success with RTID [Regional Transportation Investment District], it appears that without some compromise, both rail and road improvements will remain in the perpetual misty limbo of the Northwest."

In the June 2004 edition, after getting into detail about the trouble our regional leaders were having about what should go on the RTID ballot measure, I made the comment "PUT A RAIL ONLY PLAN OUT THERE."

This of course contrasts with the [statement made on the Global Telematics website](#): "Adding Seattle Light Rail Would Sink a New Puget Sound Regional Roads (See **Cusick**, page 4)

Builder, from page 1

we retain of Princess Diana because we will never get the chance to see how she would look if she had lived to be the age Queen Elizabeth is now. Such perceptions are generational or frozen in time.

But not so for the *Empire Builder*, the second-longest continuously-operated passenger train in the United States. It continues today, and it continues to change. In mid-2013, the train will mark its 84th birthday. Those 84 years can be broken down a number of ways:

- The *Empire Builder* was a heavy-weight train for 18 years
- The *Empire Builder* was a single-level streamliner for 32 years
- The *Empire Builder* was a domeliner for 24 years
- The *Empire Builder* was/is a Superliner streamliner for 34 years
- The *Empire Builder* was a Great Northern (and CB&Q/SP&S) train for 41 years
- The *Empire Builder* was a Burlington Northern train for 1 year
- The *Empire Builder* was/is an Amtrak train for 42 years

It is the last three bullet points that make 2013 a year of significance for the *Empire Builder*, for it is in 2013 that Amtrak became the entity which has operated the *Empire Builder* the longest: 42 years versus 41 for Great Northern, and sometime in 2013, Amtrak will have operated the *Empire Builder* for longer than the private railroads (GN and BN) combined. The perception by many (and the number continues to increase) will be only of the train we have to-day. 2013 is the year that the *Empire Builder* truly becomes Amtrak's train.

This is how it should be. The *Empire Builder* has been an Amtrak train for nearly two generations, and the youngest generation has only seen it as a Superliner train. While historically speaking, the *Empire Builder* can boast of things such as being the first post-WWII western streamliner or the American intercity passenger train with the most seats under glass, such accolades are lost on many today who were not around during that time and/or have no exposure to different types of equipment to allow a comparison. So, one can now truly say that the *Empire Builder* of today is not only the one that anyone can experience, but that also its equipment and operator are the ones that have been in place the longest. Those who prefer to remember the *Empire Builder* as a Great Northern creation can take solace in that the GN, through its superior route, direct service to Glacier National Park, and equipping the train several times with the most modern rolling stock available, created a service that has always been the premier train between the Upper Midwest and Pacific Northwest (and that it's the only remaining train today).

As a (mostly) Amtrak entity, other considerations can be made, such as route. No longer can some claim that the *Empire Builder* "has come home" when it detours on BNSF between St. Paul and Chicago because by the time 2013 has passed, the current route through Milwaukee will have been the route used the longest. Recent funding to repair the Devils Lake, ND route has reinforced that the train's one-time route through New Rockford will continue to fade into memory.

In the end, the establishment of the *Empire Builder* as an Amtrak entity is far from defining the train, past or present. With Great Domes or Superliners, one can still take the train directly to one of the most popular national parks in America (and detrain at Glacier Park Station and walk up the flower-lined pathway to the Glacier Park Lodge – 100 years young in 2013). One can still view the Mississippi River (albeit from a different angle), the Columbia River and Puget Sound, and travel through the longest railroad tunnel in the United States. On board, one can still get three full sit-down meals a day and accommodations from a coach seat to a bedroom. En route, one will still meet skiers going to Whitefish, patients bound for the Mayo Clinic, or people who really have no other way to get to Libby or Stanley.

The components of what makes the *Empire Builder* "America's Train" are still in place, regardless of the equipment or its operator. The perception may change to reflect its "Amtrak seniority" in 2013, but the reality is that what the train does, where it goes, and who uses it and why, has remained much the same over the years.

Mark Meyer, a native of Cut Bank, MT and an All Aboard Washington member, is employed with BNSF Railroad in Fort Worth, TX.

Flem, from page 2

members. Delightful in many ways: Among them was that the men were both knowledgeable about trains in the Old Days while pleased with rail's rebirth. And none had those infernal hand-held devices to which increasing numbers of folks under age 60 are, literally, addicted.

Hats off to Mr. Bill Becht of Blaine, WA who is helping lead a two-pronged campaign to save the old Blaine rail station and establish an Amtrak *Cascades* stop in his community. AAWA will be holding our June 8 meeting in Blaine, where these topics will certainly be discussed. In addition, I hope to have a definitive answer on how rail fared in the year's Legislature. The special session started May 13 and nearly all hope it will be done before June 7.

Finally congratulations but mixed feelings as 24-year-old Abe Zumwalt, an extremely able AAWA Board member, will soon be moving to the DC area as an employee of NARP. "We want Abe here and we found him first!" was the lament of one active AAWA member. Good for you, Abe, but after working the Big Hill for rail in DC for a few years, please return to our Washington to continue such efforts. We really need more active young people like you as rail advocates.

Cusick, from page 3

and Transit Funding Package from RTID."

Well, we know how things turned out – while Roads and Transit didn't pass, the following year Sound Transit 2 did.

Let's look at the things that turned out positively.

Sound Transit's Central Link ridership report shows that every year since it has opened, the weekday numbers have consistently been above those of the year before, even Saturday and Sunday, too.

South Sounder service is at capacity.

Even with the last year of winter mudslides cancelling way too many of the Sounder North trains, the customers remain loyal, and readily come back.

What this is telling us is that riding the train is finally being woven into the fabric of the area.

With that in mind, I do want to suggest one thing to our friends in Olympia and at WSDOT: be wary of false economies. That is, long term success requires long term, consistent investment. The freight railroads have that part figured out.

While we're talking about investment, I will have to admit even I am impressed with how beautiful King Street Station has turned out.

It appears the rest of the region is too, as evidenced by the media reception.

Before we all jump on the shortcomings, we need to appreciate how far we've come.

However, I'll suggest my own items. It needs more pictures. In fact, I think they (Amtrak, the City of Seattle, etc.) should commission J. Craig Thorpe to create some really big paintings to fill in the bare spaces in some classic frames.

Along with that, train information can be displayed with modern big flat screen monitors, and we could even put them in classic frames like the paintings.

Tell your friends ... Take The Train, and from the Crown Jewel of the Pacific Northwest – King Street Station!

Ah, Kirkland...

Thankfully the news isn't bad, but things are essentially in limbo for this, too.

Once the Ballard Terminal Railroad filed suit in Federal Court, it stalled Kirkland's plans to pull up the rails on the Woodinville Subdivision. That's a good thing

However, the judge determined that Federal Court wasn't the correct place to do this (a bad thing), but instead should be filed with the Surface Transportation Board.

This one statement from the [article in the Kirkland Reporter](#) is encouraging: "However, Triplett stressed that if an injunctive relief is filed with the STB, Kirkland will not see rail removal or gravel trails until the final decision is made in the city's favor."

That's a good thing, because now is the time to make sure the evidence that supports the logical, and most cost effective transportation solution will be looked at for that corridor: Commuter Rail on the Woodinville Subdivision.

Same Old Stuff, Different Year?

Oh, and if you're interested in the answer to the question "If I'm so smart, how come I'm not rich?" I'll give you my word of advice (following in the footsteps of the guy in "The Graduate" who tells Dustin Hoffman's character the future is in "Plastics," and if I would have invested in what I was telling friends and family a few years ago, 3-D printing ... I could have been rich): "Ultra-Capacitors"

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Washington should purchase Wisconsin Talgo Trainsets

By Ralph Munro

As most rail advocates know, the then-newly-elected governor of Wisconsin turned down ARRA ("Stimulus") funding for expanding passenger rail service within the Badger State, making the two Milwaukee-built Series 8 (S-8) Talgo trainsets, designed for Wisconsin service, available. It would be in the interest of Washington State to acquire these trainsets.

The existing Talgo trainsets (S-6) that serve our Northwest Corridor have proved to be extremely reliable and popular. The major complaint concerning our trains is sellouts on holidays, much of the summer, and many weekends. Many people desiring to ride our trains cannot at times when demand is high. The Wisconsin trainsets would add up to 397 potential seats, in addition to the capacity the two new S-8 Talgos Oregon has purchased. With the added S-8 trainsets, the existing five S-6 trainsets could be combined to make four, each having greater capacity. One of new S-8s would constitute the fifth trainset which serves existing frequencies. With both Wisconsin trains here, there would temporarily be an excess of capacity some of the time. (Unlike trains elsewhere in North America, the 99%+ reliability of Talgos means a "spare" is not really needed.)

But most importantly, these new Talgos can be secured at a bargain price. The cost of "storage," when an extra trainset is not be directly needed, would not approach that saved by purchasing the two Wisconsin trainsets for only a modest amount more than one. The planned addition of two new round trips Seattle-Portland in 2017, coupled with growing demand generally, would mean but four years at most would this excess capacity exist.

While these Talgo S-8 trainsets will not meet the 100% "Made in America" criterion, the FRA will likely grant a waiver as they are a new generation of the existing, highly dependable S-6 equipment we now use. For several decades, Americans, including

government at all levels, turned their backs on passenger rail, a result being the loss much of the American passenger rail car industry. With the renaissance in passenger rail in our country, domestic manufacturing is returning to North America. But achieving the 100% goal will take a few years. I believe a waiver of the 100% goal would occur in the case of the Talgo trainsets.

Some consideration is being given to the purchase of bi-level trains. The lower, more aerodynamic profile, plus lighter weight-per-passenger-seat means much greater fuel efficiency for the Talgo trains. An independent study by Quandre/LTK concludes that Talgo would save \$323,000 per year in fuel costs compared to bi-levels. Talgo's preventative maintenance has meant virtually no down time for the equipment. Most importantly, Talgo's rapid acceleration and ability to round curves faster means substantial trip time savings. Since the very significant ARRA grants Washington received (more for intercity passenger rail than any state except California and Illinois) had as a primary justification decreased trip times, the use of bi-level trains would negate the trip-time gains the AARA funds are designed to bring about.

Our existing S-6 Talgos were designed explicitly with handicapped access in mind. They were, as late as a few years ago, better in that regard than the finest trains in Europe. The S-8 trains retain, even improve upon that access. Whereas bi-level cars have lower-level handicapped accessibility, the upper level does not.

Purchase of the Wisconsin Talgo trainsets has many advantages to Washington residents and train passengers. It would give seat capacity to help end the "Sorry, sold out" message too many would-be train riders have experienced with our existing trains, it would add compatible, even safer and more fuel efficient trains to our existing safe and efficient Talgo equipment, would ensure the decreased trip times that the AARA grants to our state mandate, and would do so at a bargain price.

Ralph Munro was Washington Secretary of State from 1980 to 2000. He chose to retire after serv-

ing with distinction for five terms. He was instrumental in bringing the first Talgo trains from Spain to Washington state in the early 90s. Today Mr. Munro is active in AAWA and represents Talgo to the legislature and other government bodies.

BNSF, from page 1

Everett. BNSF has slide data all the way back to 1914! The \$16 mill. in federal funds allocated for mitigation will help fix the six worst areas in an 8 mile stretch. For the first time local governments are engaged in the issue. A major component of the problem stems from development that has been allowed on the hills above the tracks.

BNSF's 48 hour rule suspending passenger train service after a slide is based on the rationale that it takes about that amount of time for subsurface water to work its way through the soil (and thus the soil is then again more stable). When asked about dangers to its freight crews, Mitchell responded that they are trained to handle emergency situations where passengers are not.

No additional Cascades frequencies can be added between Seattle and Portland until all the infrastructure work is done in 2017. The capacity is just not there.

On dispatching, Mitchell said that mistakes can happen but BNSF's dispatchers work hard to do a professional job. Due to many dispatchers retiring there are quite a few newer staffers. He works with the dispatchers looking for ways to improve operations to the benefit of Amtrak and commuter trains. Everyone is held accountable for the work they do.

Mitchell complimented the WSDOT Rail Office, stating they are a group of straight forward professionals. He singled out Ron Pate, Acting Director, and David Smelser, ARRA Cascades Program Manager.

Also attending our meeting was Rep. Luis Moscoso (D-Mountlake Terrace). Moscoso was first elected to the Legislature in 2010. He is starting a Rail Caucus in the House and has had about nine representatives (both Ds and Rs) come to him to join before even formally announcing the formation of it. He intends for the caucus to look at all aspects of rail: urban, regional and intercity passenger rail, as well as freight rail.

Moscoso said we need to move fast and get rail to the forefront in transportation. Our economy and (See **Moscoso**, page 6)

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All Aboard News

June 8: All Aboard Washington meeting **noon-4 p.m.** at **Paso Del Norte Mexican Restaurant**, 758 Peace Portal Drive, **Blaine**. Our meeting will center around efforts in the Blaine area and the lower mainland of British Columbia to both save and restore the Blaine train station (which is under threat of demolition by BNSF) and to establish an Amtrak *Cascades* stop in Blaine. A tour of the train station may be included at the end of the meeting. We'll order off the menu with individual settlement. We particularly encourage all of our Northwest Washington members to join us for this meeting.

July 13: All Aboard Washington business meeting from **noon-4 PM** at **Basil's Kitchen**, Embassy Suites Hotel, 15920 W. Valley Hwy, **Tukwila**, adjacent to the Amtrak Station. Please RSVP to Harvey Bowen, if you can (contact info p. 5). Put "July 13 RSVP" in Subject or Body of your email. Use the *Cascades* to and from the meeting.

August 10: All Aboard Washington picnic meeting at **Pioneer Park**, 5801 Henderson Blvd SE, **Tumwater**. Car shuttles will be provided from the Olympia-Lacey

Amtrak Station. More details will be in the next newsletter and on our website.

All Aboard Washington welcomed the following new members in April and May: Alice Merkle, Amboy; Dan Swecker, Rochester; and Elyette Weinstein, Olympia.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include Bill Becht, Ralph Munro, Mark Meyer, Zack Willhoite, Warren Yee, Charlie Hamilton, Lloyd Flem and Jim Cusick.



on display.

Photo by Charlie Hamilton

Large crowds enjoyed National Train Day in Portland, especially all the equipment



Station.

Photo by Warren Yee

April 24 reopening ceremony for the restored King St.

Moscoso,
from page 5

mobility depend on it, both in eastern and western Washington. We need a new approach to implementing transportation projects and financing them. Moscoso stated that we can't only fund education at the expense of transportation. We can't wait two, four, ten years to deal with transportation. No one gets to stand on the outside and stop transportation investment from moving forward.

Moscoso asked for All Aboard Washington's assistance in bringing focus to rail issues. AAWA stands ready to help.



Rep. Luis Moscoso speaking at the April 13 AAWA meeting.

Photo by Jim Hamre

