



# WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

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

## Strategic Planning for High Speed Rail

By Michael Skehan,  
All Aboard Washington member

If All Aboard Washington had unlimited resources and a staff of hundreds, I wouldn't even be writing this article. The reality is that our organization continues to foster more and better service for rail passengers with mostly volunteer labor and small budgets. With that said, our opportunities in the coming years to accomplish the mission are huge, so maybe this is a good time to talk strategy.

High Speed Rail (HSR) is the newest and sexiest talk in Raintown, USA. We've been touting the European and Asian experience for decades, but it wasn't until President Barack Obama put real money on the table that mainstream America took notice. \$13 billion, over 5 years, seems like an enormous pot of gold, considering the previous administration tried to drive the final stake into Amtrak's withering body. \$103 billion in pre-application ARRA ("stimulus") funding requests in July by 40 states is remarkable and may mark the turning point for a "Rail Renaissance" in this country. It's also 10 times the available revenue. As the Federal Railroad Administration gave each state a personal dose of reality after the unfettered wish list was published, the list of Track 1 (shovel ready projects) was winnowed down considerably by the August 24 submittal deadline. WSDOT is hoping for somewhere over \$400 million as the first installment of a 20 year, \$7 billion long range HSR plan that carries 3 million riders a year from Seattle to Portland or Vancouver, BC, taking about two and a half hours each way ([www.wsdot.wa.gov/freight/publications/amtrak\\_cascades.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/freight/publications/amtrak_cascades.htm) and click the long range plan link).

Our mission is to improve passenger rail service in Washington State. Evaluating the current situation, establishing our priorities and mapping the actions within our means are an essential first steps to accomplish that mission.

Supporting our current Amtrak *Cascades* service long range plan, with incremental progress defined in the mid-

range plan (same link as above and click on the mid-range plan) is the foundation from which to build. Starting from scratch or fragmenting our current resources with endless debate over pet projects will only consume time and yield few, if any, results. To fulfill the ambitious program our Rail Office and Legislature have agreed upon, and supported by AAWA, will require broad based support by citizens and legislators alike. As opportunities arise, we should continue our public education campaign as a non-profit organization, along with some serious arm twisting in the Lloyd Flem "Praise and Push" model.

Washington has asked the feds for \$1.8 billion in stimulus funding under tracks 1 and 2. Likewise Oregon wants about \$2 billion. That's about 10 times our "fair share" allotment if state population and congressional clout were the only criteria. "But were a better corridor," we cry. And so do the other 10 corridors, so that's not going to get much traction in DC. "We've paid our dues, over a billion dollars invested in the last 10 years," shout others. That's true, but when I asked the FRA deputy administrator if prior funding would be part of the formula, the answer was NO. It's what we plan to do from here on out that really matters. That means "skin in the game," as Scott Witt, WSDOT Rail Office manager, recently told me, and right now, our statewide support for a robust passenger rail program is in serious doubt.

So, where are we as an organization? I think this is only a question that can be answered by individuals within AAWA. Each person has a different level of personal involvement and a different set of values. Maybe it's time to include a poll of the membership in a newsletter or renewal mailing or possibly online at the website to reassess the level of support individual members are willing to commit to.

The core of the organization is rock solid, even as personnel changes have taken place within the rail office, legislature and AAWA itself. We've been



Top photo: Leavenworth Mayor Rob Eaton shows his enthusiasm for the first regularly scheduled passenger train service to the Bavarian-themed village in the eastern Cascades foothills in decades. He had just detrained from the *Empire Builder* with 70 other people who travelled from the Puget Sound area for the celebration. Bottom: Mayor Eaton speaks before the crowd of over 400 people as the *Builder* departs for Wenatchee and points east. Many years of hard work by the mayor and many others has paid off for the city and surrounding area. This is the most enthusiastic station opening AAWA members can recall since the rebuilding and opening of new stations in the state got into full swing some 15 years ago.

Left photo by Jim Hamre;  
right photo by Zack Willhoite

around a long time and have a good reputation with all the new players. That's a huge advantage as we move forward. Our working relationship with partner organizations is also well established and on firm ground.

Establishing priorities is something our current directors, officers and executive director need to accomplish and communicate to the membership. We (See *HSR*, page 4)



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

**Visiting the Washington State Delegation in DC; Welcome to Leavenworth!; Annual AAWA Holiday Function**

A fast trip to the Nation's Capital yielded two very full days, Sept. 15 and 16, of meetings with members of Congress, their staffs, and others of importance to the passenger rail future of the Pacific Northwest. Our group consisted of Ralph Munro, our Secretary of State for five terms (then and now de facto ambassador from Washington State), Bruce Agnew of the Seattle-based Cascadia Institute and myself. Both Ralph and Bruce are active All Aboard Washington members with a long history of support for passenger trains in Washington and the Pacific Northwest. We were joined at many of our meetings by Ray Chambers of the DC area, a Fellow of the Cascadia Institute and veteran DC lobbyist.

We were able to meet personally with Sen. Patty Murray (D), and Reps. Jim McDermott (D-Seattle), Adam Smith (D-Tacoma), Dave Reichert (R-Auburn), Norm Dicks (D-Belfair) and Doc Hastings (R-Pasco). We also met with staff people from the offices of Sen. Maria Cantwell (D) and Reps. Brian Baird (D-Vancouver), Rick Larsen (D-Lake Stevens) and Jay Inslee (D-Bainbridge Island), as well as staffers from the offices of the six elected officials we visited with.

While the message varied a bit based upon whom we met, the essential theme was urging our delegation to help ensure that Washington State would receive a well-earned piece of the \$8 billion ARRA ("stimulus") funding set aside for passenger train "high-speed" corridors. In our meetings, Mr. Munro usually led off with a brief summary of the very considerable sums our state and other public and private entities have invested in the Northwest Rail Corridor (Vancouver, BC to Eugene, OR) and the needs for Northwest Corridor infrastructure improvements and new trainsets. My bit was as self-appointed worrier, offering concern that, while Washington's history of investment, excellent Northwest corridor partnerships, and explicit fulfilling of all Federal requirements in seeking ARRA passenger rail grants would put us at or near the top of the list for those grants, big states with lots of electoral votes and, in some cases, aggressive "we want that money" campaigns, might tacitly or actively use their political clout to push Washington and the other well-qualified handful of medium-sized states (NC, WI, a couple of

others) down the list.

Bruce Agnew also asked our delegation to try to streamline the international border issues that both add significant time to train travel between Seattle and Vancouver, BC and generally inhibit all modes of travel between Washington and British Columbia.

Ray Chambers, with long experience in transportation, including rail, previewed some good ideas for future Federal rail funding that would not involve the relatively shrinking motor fuel tax trust fund.

Knowledge of the specific nature of passenger rail monies in ARRA varied among the six electeds with whom we met, but all the staffers from all ten offices visited appeared to know of our state's rail program and the grant requests from WSDOT. In that regard, WSDOT's recent efforts at informing our DC Delegation concerning those requests have been well-received.

It was gratifying to note the full support given from all we visited. We did **NOT** hear any brush-off language – "Thank you for your views. I will consider them." – received by constituents when the member of the House or Senate cares little or even opposes the position of the constituent. I believe we reinforced and placed to a higher priority the Washington, DC delegation's preexisting willingness to make certain our state gets full consideration when USDOT makes ARRA grants.

Bruce also met with Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID) to offer our support for a return of the *Pioneer* train which would pass through the populated southern part of Idaho on its way to Denver and on east.

Other meetings during the two days were with Amtrak VP Joe McHugh (with whom I have enjoyed a long and very cordial professional relationship), Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Governor Gregoire's DC representative Mark Rupp, Rupp's Oregon counterpart, and a woman from the Coalition for America's Gateways and Trade Corridors. All graciously received our message and all were very positive in response.

We traveled to DC by plane, fast and statistically safe, but much less pleasant in all respects to travel by intercity passenger train. While these cross-continent flights will continue to be practical from a time standpoint, I would hope short hop flights will be replaced by faster intercity train service, as is increasingly the situation in Europe and

East Asia.

Ralph, Bruce, and I believe our work in DC materially helped the cause of more and faster passenger train service in the Northwest Corridor. Will keep involved and keep you informed.



After years of patient persistent efforts, the dream of Leavenworth Mayor (and AAWA Board member) Rob Eaton and many others came true Sept. 25 with the inauguration of regular daily service on Amtrak's *Empire Builder* to Washington's charming Bavarian-theme city. For many years, the most requested (to my knowledge) Amtrak service improvements by AAWA members and others, other than



Representing All Aboard Washington and Cascadia Institute at the mid Sept. Congressional meeting with Sen. Patty Murray were, from left, Ralph Munro, Lloyd Flem and Bruce Agnew.

*Photo courtesy of Sen. Murray's office*

more frequencies in the Northwest Corridor, have been daytime service between the Puget Sound area and Spokane, and a regular stop in Leavenworth. Mayor Rob has noted the great importance of *Empire Builder* passengers to the tourist-oriented town of Whitefish, MT and feels Leavenworth will realize a similar result.

The full cooperation that exists among local governments, private non-profits and businesses will surely allow this Amtrak stop to be a success for all concerned.

The first eastbound train left Seattle and arrived Leavenworth 8:07 PM on Friday the 25<sup>th</sup> to considerable ceremony at both places. Besides Mayor Eaton, elected officials involved on the "first train" included Sen. Patty Murray (D), via a representative from her office, and State Sen. Linda Evans Parlette (R-Wenatchee), who has been the Washington Legislature's champion in behalf of the Leavenworth Amtrak stop. Other speakers included representatives from Amtrak, BNSF and local governments and businesses. At Leavenworth, I represented AAWA, congratulating all concerned from this forward step in passenger train service in our state.

Icicle Station, the Leavenworth Amtrak stop's name, is complete in Phase One, essential for safe and efficient operation on this BNSF mainline. Subsequent phases will include a building and other amenities. AAWA, as well as individual AAWA members, have donated to the funds needed to continue development of Icicle Station. Book your passage on the *Builder* to Leavenworth (LWA). The most hospitable citizens of the Kleinstadt will welcome you!



(See **Flem**, page 4)



## The View Down the Tracks

=====

with Jim Cusick

### Traveling should not be an Olympic Event

If you are booking airline tickets to the 2010 Winter Olympics, well, SHAME ON YOU, especially if you're an All Aboard member.

Of course you should be booking TRAIN tickets, but be aware, once people discover the advantage of the train, it won't be long before they run out of space.

Even now, one way airline flights are \$120 and up. A one-way Amtrak ticket (Seattle-Vancouver, BC) is only \$55 for that time. A bargain, indeed. In fact, almost TOO LOW, if you ask me!

Book now, because now that *Cascades* trains 513 and 516 go all the way to Vancouver, BC, they are already seeing a jump in ridership.

Granted, some are bus riders that would normally have had to go to Seattle to catch the run up to Vancouver, BC. (By the way, the bus service Amtrak sells seats for does not stop in the States.)

Think about it, the fare on the train is higher, but people are opting for the quality ride the same way commuters do for Sounder locally.

Plus, there are more parking options up the line.

Face it, the train is much better.

And don't forget, the morning/evening (510/517) trains will be Seattle, Edmonds to Vancouver, BC (and back) only during the 2010 Olympics. No "local" service. Essentially, Olympic Express trains! Also be aware, the evening return train (517) will have a later departure from Vancouver (7:45 PM instead of 5:45 PM), which allows day trips from the Puget Sound region for specific events.

The pattern now seems to be showing just as many passengers are coming down from Vancouver as are going up, but whether they are Canadians coming down to shop, or US Citizens just returning from cruises, is not really obvious.

The immediate ridership numbers point to a successful addition to options for going north.

So, take it easy, don't pay big bucks for airline flights, don't wait hours and hours to cross the border in your car. Relax, take an inviting train ride, enjoy the scenery.

Trains are the feel good mode of transportation.

### Get Your Yodel On!

By the time you read this, train 8, the eastbound *Empire Builder* will be stopping

in Leavenworth.

Yaaahooooo!

Or is that...

Yoooodllllleeeeeooooo....Hooooo!!

The little Bavarian village has fully embraced the idea of taking **the train** to come visit, stay and enjoy (and shop!).

After all, the yearly Snow Train excursions were a bit hit, so now they are banking on regular service making their town the destination of choice for Oktoberfest yodelers and the (shopping inducing) festivities around Christmas and any other time for that matter!

Ice Station awaits you, as do the shuttle buses to take you into and out of town.

Just makes me feel warm all over. Lift that stein for another brew and feel good, relaxing without the worry of driving through that snow and ice over Stevens Pass in winter.

Santa would approve.

Trains are the friendly mode of

## ***Don't pay big bucks for airline flights, don't wait hours and hours to cross the border in your car. Relax, take an inviting train ride, enjoy the scenery.***

transportation.

Isn't it nice.

We here at All Aboard try hard to send the message that trains are not only the most economical, environmentally friendly way to travel, it's also just a plain fun way to travel.

However, it's time to put a stop to this!! It's time for...

### Scary Trains!

Doesn't Thomas the Tank Engine give your child the feeling that trains are lovable? As though they were something to hug.

Don't we regularly portray trains as romantic? It's the way they are advertised; friendly and approachable. So much that they seem safe to be close to, to touch, almost.

Somewhat like how a Tiger is just a big Kitten!

Now most who read this column know how I generally have a slightly irreverent slant on the issues, but I'm also able to back them up with the facts.

Safety around the railroad is an issue that is very, very serious.

But I have to be honest, the standard approach seems to be going over people's heads.

But I am willing to think "outside the box."

Here's the deal: most railroaders know that while they have a passion for the trains they operate, they also know that the rail-

road can be a very dangerous environment.

A quote from an old head reads "complacency around the railroad will get you killed in an instant."

Rather than just keep the level of the message as "Don't go on the tracks," which is legally the only valid statement, it might be helpful to modify that to say at least "Respect railroad property."

The train is, in effect, a moving house.

Imagine you are the Wicked Witch of the East. Even with her magic, sweet Dorothy was able to deliver her to an untimely end (at least from the witch's point of view).

There is a certain romance to the idea of walking down a set of railroad tracks, and maybe trying to balance on the railhead.

Why do people think they can get away with this? Well, because if a train is coming surely they can hear it and jump off the northbound (or southbound) set of tracks, and they're home free. Well, we at AAWA know the problem with that. Trains under CTC control can be on any track, coming

from any direction. Plus, the tracks in the Puget Sound region are very busy.

A few months ago I caught the story on KING 5 News about the man who was struck by a freight train on the tracks next to Carkeek Park. KING 5 did a fairly good job reporting on the dangers involved, but watch the video of the story:

[www.king5.com/video/?z=y&nvid=373317](http://www.king5.com/video/?z=y&nvid=373317). Friends of the victim said they always hang out there, just "chilling" on the tracks.

Now, to us that's bad enough but if you go to the KOMO 4 website story the next day ([www.komonews.com/news/local/48735407.html](http://www.komonews.com/news/local/48735407.html)), they show the mourners setting up a memorial for their friend, along with a cameraman and a reporter doing an interview while **ALL ARE STANDING ON THE TRACKS!** Given that KOMO had taken the picture from above, at the overpass, the news crew is presumably from another, uninformed news organization, and certainly not from KING 5, I hope. Now that makes some observers jaded, in that if people are that stupid to stand in the exact same spot where their friend met his fate, then how much sympathy do they deserve?

What I see is a cultural lapse in perception.

The way I like to put things like this in perspective is to draw an analogy with another instance where the same actions would seem ludicrous.

Let's take the 2001 Nisqually earthquake, for instance. Right after any earthquake, there are always aftershocks. What if the news organizations dispatched their camera crews to the sidewalk right outside the Fenix Underground, in Pioneer Square? It was an old, pre-earthquake-compliant structure, where a good portion of the front (See **Cusick**, page 4)

**HSR**, from page 1

can do better in that regard. The email list of individuals getting Lloyd Flem's reports from Olympia is pretty small, compared to the total membership of the organization. Warren Yee's electronic news, filling in some of the voids between Jim Hamre's tireless work of publishing our superb newsletters, and the website kept current by Zack Willhoite are all good tools to communicate by. I'm told we have Twitter and Facebook, but as one of the old farts, I'm not sure if I'm ready for another dose of technology overload. The individuals that take the time to update the membership should be thanked the next time you see them; ask for more. Maybe you have special talents to keep the membership informed and active such as starting an AAWA BLOG.

Mapping out actions comes after steps 1 and 2 (Evaluation and Setting Priorities). Sure, we all want fast, frequent, clean and cheap trains running all over the place, so is that the message? I don't think so. **People choose options that are generally in their own best interest.** It's human nature to think selfishly. Why do all the lanes in a busy highway have an equal number of cars? Because drivers constantly move about, sensing a slight advantage to changing into the adjacent lane.

I think here's where our focus should be: **Give good reasons for the average citizen to move from cars, busses and planes to trains.** Sometimes the shift is pretty easy. Make gas ten bucks a gallon and Amtrak fares to Portland five bucks and you'll have 'em sitting on the roof. But change is more subtle than that, so it becomes our job to point out the less than obvious – sort of like trying to convince a frog that the water in the pan is getting hotter all the time.

Strategies to get a significant mode shift to rail can run the gambit from talking one on one to a co-worker planning a Portland trip to electing a pro-rail candidate who rises to power over the decades, keeping the rail vision alive. Each end of the spectrum requires the same thing – someone willing to speak up and point out the obvious. Solid facts are important when speaking out. Give people good reasons to change their habits and let human nature take its course. Perhaps another article in the newsletter would be appropriate to load the guns up with fresh ammunition.

Well, I've rambled on for too long and thank you for hanging in there with me. I guess the short answer to all this is, "keep doing what you're doing...just ratchet things up some." Since the early 90s, a lot of progress has been made. The future for passenger rail in Washington has never looked brighter. You're the real voice of the organization, so speak up, be accurate and people will listen.

**Flem**, from page 2

Not too early to consider AAWA's fourth annual December holiday gathering, again at Olympia-Lacey's Centennial Station, this year on Saturday the 5<sup>th</sup>. This year's theme, "A Trainload of Goodies," hopes to attract non-AAWA members as well as readers of this newsletter. Prepare to donate both railroadiana (I get a boot out of that word!) and quality non-railroad items for auction. A couple of very generous donations have already come in. This Holiday event has proved to be not only a good meeting, but has been a significant moneymaker for AAWA. Unlike many other advocacy organizations, which are financed by corporate and foundation grants, we rely on memberships, member donations, and events like this for nearly all our funding.

WSDOT Secretary Paula Hammond has been invited to be our guest speaker. Please put Dec. 5 on your calendar.

**Cusick**, from page 3

brick façade collapsed onto the street.

Wouldn't it have seemed totally insane to have survivors, cameramen and reporters standing right below the parts of the building remaining standing, doing an interview about their poor friends who might have been casualties in the earthquake?

Surreal would be an apt description.

What on earth would they be thinking?

Well, how much sense does it make to have done an interview on the railroad tracks, when you know that there will be a train coming, but you don't know when?

A big problem is that in certain stretches, the tracks hug the shoreline of Puget Sound.

The inviting beaches entice people to take shortcuts, crossing the tracks, or even use the railroad right-of-way as a path to and from the beach. Of course they can always hear a train when it comes and just hop out of the way!

We show a whole lot more respect for a lane of freeway. Even in the wee hours, when traffic is really light, we don't walk down a freeway lane because it might be a great shortcut.

It sounds unbelievable in one environment.

Why should we think it's okay in another?

Is it because trains seem so friendly, safe and approachable?

More recently, two women were walking their dogs along the tracks in the Richmond Beach area. Thankfully, when the train approached around a blind curve, the women and three of their four dogs had gotten off the tracks. Sadly, one dog (which was killed) wasn't budging from his position in between the rails, but at the last moment, one of the women bent down to try and pick the dog up off the tracks.

Although her injuries weren't serious, and she was able to be transported on the train to Edmonds (with the aid of a doctor on board making that diagnosis), it was a still a traumatic event for all involved. Muddy, but not bloody, the woman was expected to make a full recovery.

But the bigger question is, why did they feel it was okay to be that close to the tracks? Ignore for a moment that they were breaking the law, because this is an issue of perception.

It seems that along with the problem of being on the tracks, the woman misjudged the closeness, and the size of the train.

Most people look at the rails and don't think that the train really hangs over each side almost 3 feet.

Again, it's the perception that the environment around the railroad is almost too cuddly, too romantic, too approachable.

But it is cuddly, romantic and approachable!

**INSIDE** the train, which happens to be one of the safest ways to travel.

Should we not put pleasing paint schemes on trains?

Should we stop marketing them along the lines of the happy face of Thomas the Tank Engine?

It brings another surreal thought: painting the trains with a hideous clown face, and changing the horn to that insane cackle of say, Cesar Romero's portrayal of The Joker on the old Batman TV series.

That'd keep people off the tracks.

Keep them awake at nights, too. Especially when their little ones wake up with full blown night-terrors.

While I sometimes think the public is getting a mixed message, what's happening is that they are just not showing the railroad the **RESPECT** it deserves.

We have to look at railroad safety in a way that does recognize this.

There is one thing that stood out for me about that post Carkeek interview on the tracks, and that was that everyone in that picture should have been cited for trespassing, with healthy fines. Then, the messenger, the media, would understand the seriousness of it.

I'm not the transportation czar, and that would probably not engender cooperation from the messenger (the media). The next best thing is to have the media at least understand railroads. Understand their advantages and their dangers.

The message of train safety shouldn't just be aimed at young people. It's the adults that need it!

I might know of at least one news media member who "gets it", but there needs to be a wholesale change in perception.

I invite All Aboard members to give this some creative thought.

With our successes in seeing better passenger rail service, it's best to keep The Joker at bay!

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

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 Amtrak Reservations/Information: 800 872-7245  
 All Aboard Washington: AllAboardWashington.org  
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 Amtrak: www.amtrak.com  
 Amtrak *Cascades*: www.amtrakcascades.com  
 Sound Transit: www.soundtransit.org

**Efforts ramp up to restore southern Montana passenger rail service**

By Michael Ackley, NARP member

Montanans are deeply involved in parallel studies being done by the Montana Dept. of Transportation (MDT) and Amtrak. The MDT study is analyzing restored passenger rail service across the southern Montana route, serving cities such as Billings, Bozeman, Helena and Missoula and how connections can be made to the nation Amtrak system on the east and west ends. The Amtrak study is looking at restoration of the entire Chicago-St. Paul-Bismarck-Billings-Spokane-Seattle *North Coast Hiawatha* route, axed by Amtrak in 1979.

On August 24, 2009, Chuck McMillan, a retired Amtrak engineer from Helena, and I met with Virginia Sloan, field director from Sen. Jon Tester's (D-MT) Kalispell office; Jim Lynch, director of MDT; and Zachary Radford, legislative aide for Sen. Tester from Washington, DC. We met at Missoula City Hall to inform Radford what we've done with our grassroots efforts to bring back passenger rail service to the southern route and the latest news on the Amtrak and Montana DOT feasibility studies. The studies are to be completed on Oct. 15.

Over the past year Chuck McMillan; Dave Strohmaier, Missoula city councilman; Barry Green, NARP Montana representative and I have attended numerous meetings with our Montana Congressional delegation, mayors, and Gov. Brian Schweitzer (D). We have had excellent television, newspaper, radio and talk show coverage supporting our efforts. Positive support among the people of Montana, Sen. Tester, the governor and many mayors has been overwhelming. Many resolutions throughout Montana have been adopted in support of providing Amtrak passenger rail service along Montana's southern route.

University of Montana students organized the "Rally For Rail" event on May 8, 2009 on the campus lawn in Missoula. The students made a giant "Thank You" card to present to Sen. Tester for his continued support of passenger rail service in Montana. Everyone signed the card. Dave

Strohmaier gave a speech along with myself. There was music and students dressed up as train cars had a great time.

We celebrated National Train Day on May 9, 2009 in downtown Missoula at the former Northern Pacific station. We handed out flyers, Amtrak passenger train schedules and vacation guides, Amtrak pins and hats, and Great Northern magnets, all provided by Amtrak. We collected over 1,000 signatures supporting restoration of passenger rail service through southern Montana. They were presented to Sen. Tester at a Town Hall meeting in Bozeman on May 28.

The draft MDT study (a part of the state's update to its rail plan) can be found at [www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/railplan](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/railplan).

Amtrak's draft *North Coast Hiawatha* study has not been released to the public.

**AAWA, Other Rail Advocates Working to Restore Pioneer**

By C.B. Hall, All Aboard Washington member

Grassroots action to restore Amtrak's *Pioneer* between Seattle and Denver continues as the national rail provider finalizes its study of the restoration's feasibility. All Aboard Washington members and a host of other activists have sought local expressions of support for the service restoration, thus far garnering more than 60 such public statements and resolutions. An ad hoc group, the *Pioneer* Restoration Organization (PRO), is coordinating the effort.

The *Pioneer* served the Seattle-Portland-Boise-Wyoming-Denver route as a tri-weekly train at the time of its discontinuance in 1997. Under the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, Amtrak must complete the feasibility study by mid-October. It released a draft of the study September 18 and PRO is formulating its response. The key issue appears to be the daunting up-front capital requirements that Amtrak foresees for relaunching the train.

Amtrak based its feasibility analysis on the train's history. In addition to creating a foundation of local political support, PRO has focused, however, on opportunities for

improving the train's historical performance through a better mix of stops, better scheduling, and improved connections to off-route destinations such as Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks.

PRO is also studying what equipment Amtrak could deploy on a restored *Pioneer*. Ideally, the train should attract enough riders to reduce its carbon emissions below all the competing modes – including intercity buses, which typically generate only about 40% of the carbon than trains do, per passenger-mile. To succeed in these environmental terms, the *Pioneer* will have to be well patronized and PRO is seeking to lay the groundwork for the marketing efforts that will maximize ridership and keep it trending upward in years ahead.

Boosting ridership over historical levels also means studying route alternatives, to which the study draft gives only minimal attention. PRO has promoted a route through Fort Collins rather than Greeley, Colorado – the latter being the historical route. The Fort Collins routing would serve two college campuses, generating many more riders. This improves the train's financial outlook and makes it easier for Congress to support service restoration.

In Washington State, AAWA volunteers Debbie Knapp and Tedine Roos have done the legwork in winning city council and mayoral statements in Centralia, Kelso and Longview. AAWA volunteers are seeking similar declarations in Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia and Vancouver. So far council and mayoral statements have been received from communities that would be served by 21 of the train's 30 prospective stops.

Amtrak is allowing only 13 days for comment on the just-released draft and efforts on the train's behalf will be intense during that period, but Congress' final decision on the restoration lies in the indefinite future, promising the need for a sustained campaign.

Updates and further information are available at PRO's website, [www.Pioneertrain.com](http://www.Pioneertrain.com). Amtrak also maintains a website on the *Pioneer*: [www.Pioneeroutestudy.com](http://www.Pioneeroutestudy.com). (See *Pioneer*, page 6)

All Aboard Washington  
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### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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## All Aboard News

**November 14**, All Aboard Washington Annual meeting at **F.X. McRory's** Steak Chop and Oyster House, 419 Occidental Ave S, **Seattle** (two blocks from King St. Station). We will order off the menu, with individual settlement. AAWA will also collect a \$5 donation per person to help cover meeting costs. Meeting will run from **12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.**, allowing travel from the north and the south on the *Cascades*. Invited speaker is Talgo Seattle's Antonio Perez.

**December 5**, All Aboard Washington gathering at **11:30 a.m.** at **Centennial Station**, 6600 Yelm Hwy, **Lacey**. Meeting is timed between arrival of trains 11 and 500 and departure of trains 507 and 516. Cost is \$10 per person cash or check for pizza and beverages. We will have a small silent auction and railroading merchandise will be for sale. If you have items to donate to the silent auction, contact Jim Hamre or Lloyd Flem (contact info on p. 5)

All Aboard Washington welcomed the following new members in August and September: Wendolyn Hawkins, Kennewick and Sharon Redeker, Seattle.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include C.B. Hall, Mike Skehan, Zack Willhoite, Mark Meyer, Rob Eaton, Barry Green, Loren Herrigstad, Jim Cusick and Lloyd Flem.



Photo by Zack Willhoite

Amtrak *Cascades* train 513, newly extended to Vancouver, BC, passes the under-construction Stanwood station on Sept. 5. The new stop between Everett and Mt. Vernon is expected to open in November. Loadings on trains 513 and 516 out of Vancouver have started fairly strong even though an advertising campaign has not yet begun.

### **Pioneer**, from page 5

The draft study can be accessed via Sen. Mike Crapo's (R-ID) website at [crapo.senate.gov/issues/transportation/Amtrak.cfm](http://crapo.senate.gov/issues/transportation/Amtrak.cfm). Interested persons can also contact C.B. Hall at 360-468-2611.

### NOTICE OF ELECTION OF DIRECTORS OF ALL ABOARD WASHINGTON

ALL ABOARD WASHINGTON will elect five new members to its board. Each member of All Aboard Washington who is of sound mind and legal age is entitled to run for the office of Director and file a Declaration of Candidacy by November 7, 2009. The Declaration of Candidacy shall be in writing and shall include the full name and mailing address of the candidate and must be delivered by mail, email or otherwise to Rocky Shay, Secretary, 820 SW 356th St., Federal Way, WA 98023. (For Shay's telephone and email information, see page 5.) If no more than five candidates have duly filed for Director by 8 PM, November 7, 2009, all candidates who have filed Declarations of Candidacy will be deemed elected and the election will be canceled.

If an election is required, such election shall occur at the General Membership Meeting commencing at 12:30 PM at F.X. McRory's Steak Chop and Oyster House, 419 Occidental Ave S, Seattle on November 14, 2009. Each active member of All Aboard Washington (everyone whose dues are current) is entitled to be present and vote for candidates for Director. The new Board members shall take office on January 1, 2010.