

Jim Hamre Receives Golden Spike Award for Rail Advocacy

by Charlie Hamilton

Jim Hamre, the All Aboard Washington and Rail Passengers Association board member who lost his life in the Amtrak 501 incident in December, was honored by RPA for his tireless work toward a better and safer passenger rail system. In a ceremony co-sponsored by AAWA at the U.S. Capitol on April 17th, RPA President & CEO Jim Mathews, RPA Board Chairman Peter LeCody, and U.S. Congressman Denny Heck (WA-10) lauded Hamre for his efforts to improve passenger rail service in Washington state and around the nation.



Jim Mathews said:

Our friend and colleague Jim Hamre devoted 40 years to our work and our cause, including the need for strong implementation of Positive Train Control. As you know, dozens of people have died in the past decade in preventable wrecks.

Jim was a tireless advocate for our work, and the last thing he would have wanted was to see that work threatened by short-sighted moves to curtail the new service in Washington...a service for which, in a real sense, he gave his life. We honor him tonight in a small way, presenting his family with this year's Golden Spike.

But we believe an even better way to honor him is to redouble our efforts to ensure that the vision — HIS vision — of a strong transportation ecosystem, with rail as its centerpiece, is realized.

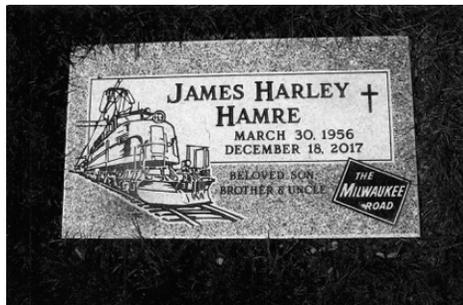
We Rail Passengers have recommitted ourselves to his legacy and work, and will fight that much harder for Positive Train Control...for a robust national network...for strong vibrant urban corridors...for newer, better equipment...for a reliable, frequent and SAFE service that puts every American within 25 miles of the transportation network.

And we will also take up a cause which was especially close to Jim: nurturing the next generation of advocates. We are working with our legal counsel to create and launch a fund that will award fellowships to promising young graduates who hope to focus their careers in transportation, as Jim did, and to work on modern rail projects. We hope to be able to announce the formal launch of a capital campaign by the time we hold our National convention in Miami this Fall.

Tonight, however, we'd like to present our Golden Spike to Jim's family.

Mathews concluded his remarks by reading the citation: “For a lifetime of dedicated volunteer commitment to improve and expand rail service on behalf of America’s passengers, who are saddened by his sacrifice and grateful for his selfless service, the Rail Passengers Association presents the George Falcon Golden Spike Award to the family of James Hamre.”

Carolyn, Kristi, and Tom Hamre received the award on Jim’s behalf.



A fitting tribute to Jim’s work at Milwaukee road and his lifelong passion for trains.
Photo by Kristi Hamre

Day on the Hill 2018

by Claire Bowen

Several AAWA members traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in the Rail Passenger’s Association’s “Day on the Hill” and meet with the offices of our elected Congresspersons. This annual RPA event, while shadowed by our loss of Jim Hamre, went very well. Many of the people we met with were familiar faces from previous years, and the Congresspersons they represented seemed to be on board with our mission to provide better passenger rail service. Most of the people we met with were already well informed and looked to us for direction on how to improve rail transportation.

At least four Washingtonians made the office rounds, including me. I met first with Sen. Patty Murray, her transportation aide Jo, and Samara Ressler. The Senator lead with rail being her favorite issue, and after a few minutes left us with her staff, with whom went into details for around 30 minutes. The Senator and Jo both expressed their regrets regarding our loss of Jim Hamre who had been the leader of our state’s congressional visits for many years. Samara and Jo were especially interested in safety options such as fences or smart crossings, probably having heard concerns from the mayor of Lakewood. They were also interested in general safety and concerns specific to Amtrak, as there will soon be a Senate Transportation Committee meeting about rail safety (which sounded like it was going to be Amtrak focused). We mentioned PTC, state of good repair, and training as areas to look at. In addition we talked about passenger car needs in Washington State and about AAWA’s desire to foster cross state rail via Ellensburg and Yakima to Pasco from the Cascades line.

After that we visited the offices and staffers of Sen. Maria Cantwell, and Representatives Denny Heck, Pramila Jayapal, Dave Reichert, and Adam Smith. We mostly

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*From the desk of
Lloyd H. Flem*

On Amtrak CEO Richard Anderson; U.S. Rep. Al Swift 1935-2018; Centennial Station's Statewide Legacy

Amtrak CEO Richard Anderson's presence on December 19th at the site of the previous day's Amtrak 501 tragedy, and his unquestioned acceptance of Amtrak's responsibility for the derailment and death of our two close friends, are worthy of praise. But the concerns about the cuts in amenities and services the Anderson administration has made, as mentioned in my last newsletter column, have been joined by additional cuts and persistent rumors of other decisions that could devastate the national Amtrak system.

In general, I dislike trading in rumors. But it is reality, not rumor, that the dining cars on two important national network trains (Capitol Limited - Chicago - D.C.; Lakeshore Limited - Chicago - Boston, NYC) have been replaced by cold box lunches, which Amtrak calls "New and Contemporary" dining. And communities served by the Southwest Chief (Chicago - LA), which closely parallels the legendary Route 66, are deeply worried that Amtrak is no longer planning to assist in making needed capital investments on that route, particularly in southeast Colorado.

In other words, current Amtrak leaders seems willing to rid themselves of the responsibility for maintaining the long-distance trains that serve so much of our country. This is not only a problem for passenger rail advocates nationwide, but it is especially concerning for the people and elected officials of communities served only by these national network trains.

As well as being usually skeptical of most rumors most of the time, I tend to smile at conspiracy theories, whether concerning railroads or whether we really landed men on the moon or kept secret the real parties responsible for 9/11! But many respected rail policy observers have shown increasing concern over the direction of the Anderson Amtrak administration. Railway Age (a bastion of objective rail journalism), Trains magazine (more railfan-oriented, but still solid), and, not least, former Amtrak President Joe Boardman, have all directly taken Anderson and company to task. Boardman was not critic-free as Amtrak President, but the rail

advocacy community is saying, "Joe's right this time!"

I am quite impressed that the three-person congressional delegation from Montana, led by Senator Steve Daines, who in formal hearing pushed Amtrak top execs hard with Montanans' legitimate worries about the partial or total loss of their Empire Builder, a lifeline for the northern part of their state. In my judgement, Amtrak's answers were not totally reassuring. Amtrak's Stephen Gardner's answer to questions about cutting the Builder and the Southwest Chief to thrice-weekly was the following bureaucratic gem: "Any conversation about the broad future of the network, I think, is best placed in our reauthorization context as we approach the next reauthorization." So the good folks of Whitefish, MT and La Junta, CO can now rest easy, right?!?

Do I know exactly what Amtrak has in store for the near-future and beyond? I do not. But, without arbitrarily concluding that Mr. Anderson's plans for Amtrak would prove detrimental to our national network trains or to intercity rail passenger service generally, I urge you to contact our US Senators and your Member of Congress with your concerns.

RPA head Jim Mathews, whom AAWA people greatly respect, has met with Anderson and Gardner directly in an effort to get some feel for Amtrak's plans, particularly for the national network trains. Mathews wants to ensure that our national network trains are OK for now, but feels that passenger rail advocates nationwide need to contact their members of Congress, urging that they watch Amtrak carefully while stressing the value of the long-distance trains.

Do I know exactly what Amtrak has in store for the near-future and beyond? I do not. But, without arbitrarily concluding that Mr. Anderson's plans for Amtrak would prove detrimental to our national network trains or to intercity rail passenger service generally, I urge you to contact our US Senators and your Member of Congress with your concerns. The policy decisions made to date are seen as mostly negative to even Amtrak's traditional allies. Uncertainty about the future of the national network has increased rail advocate worries.

For the majority of you with internet access, a site called Govtrack can give you contact information such as email addresses, in-state and D.C. phone numbers, and physical addresses of the offices of the twelve-person

Washington delegation (Senators Murray and Cantwell plus our ten U.S. Representatives). A mailed letter to a regional office will be opened by a staff person, and your message given to the Member of Congress. Mailed letters to the D.C. offices are delayed two weeks or so; not advised. Emailed or phoned messages to D.C. are monitored by D.C. staff person and the content passed on.

The views of those of you without internet access are equally important. Don't hesitate to phone me and I'll get contact info to you. (My numbers are 360-943-8333 and 360-870-6286). Congress will respond to the concerns of its constituents. Help save our national Amtrak system!

Even if you don't see yourself as a brilliant writer or speaker, do contact Congress. Congressional staff and your elected officials care more about your message than "perfect" oral or written composition.



Passenger rail advocates in Washington have enjoyed fairly good support for both intercity and regional/local trains from our congressional delegation. One of the best was Rep Al Swift, who represented NW WA from 1979 to 1995. Following Al Swift's passing in late April of this year at age 82, statements of broad support came

for the work of this traditional Democrat, who had the respect and admiration of his Republican colleagues as well. (In recent years, Rep Swift lamented the loss of bi-partisanship in Congress, as the political parties declined into warring tribes.)

Here are a few thoughts about Al Swift's importance to rail: A couple of years following AAWA's (then WashARP) 1986 unsuccessful efforts to persuade the Feds, the State, and the private sector to invest in passenger train service to Vancouver, B.C., we invited Rep Swift to a meeting in Bellingham. He was most comfortable with us and seemed very interested in rail passenger issues. The influential congressman's clout in D.C. became very important to the restoration of Amtrak service to Vancouver in the next few years. (Lesson for Central Washington about restoration of Yakima Valley passenger train service.)

I attended several annual RPA meetings in D.C. during Al Swift's tenure. A highlight was visiting with this Congressman. I recall particularly two of his statements: One was how members of Congress could only have expertise in a few things. His was broadcasting. Other issues required input from others. Mr. Swift said he looked to us for knowledge

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All are evening numbers, except Lloyd's, which is available 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM daily.

about passenger trains. Another public quote, soon after following the restoration of service to Vancouver: "A few years back, WashARP was alone, crying in the wilderness for passenger trains!" and credited us for helping push trains forward.

On one of those D.C. trips, Al invited me to meet him at the Monocle, a high-end pub/cigar bar near the Capitol. Upon entering the Monocle, I asked the doorman/host, a cordial but imposing man who appeared as though his day job was as an NFL defensive end, if he might know Al Swift, who was to meet me there. With a grin, the host said yes, he knew Rep Swift. I was seated toward the rear of the pub, but had a view of the entrance. Al came in a bit later, but took at least 20 minutes to work his way back to our table, being greeted by dozens of regulars! Little did I know that Al Swift was the Alpha at the Monocle. My experience was repeated by many who were to meet the Washington Congressman in D.C. out of his office.

Rep Swift 's interest in things rail continued. He was the principal sponsor of a federal rail funding bill that became known as "Swift Rail." Following his voluntary retirement from Congress in 1995, Al became a representative for Burlington Northern. Rep Swift was seen as an effective congressman with many accomplishments. I'm pleased to say forwarding rail was one of those. I count getting to know Representative Al Swift as a highlight of my years with WashARP/AWA.



On May 5th, Olympia-Lacey's Centennial Station celebrated 25 years of operation. George Barner and I, who were asked to speak at the event, never tire of bragging about how Thurston county people , in what was in effect a community barn-raisin', helped produce a fine , classic -designed depot that has been successfully staffed by volunteer station hosts, missing only a couple of trains in a quarter century.

In addition to providing a fine facility for Amtrak at virtually no cost to them, the Centennial Station project was important in helping push the growth of the Washington State Rail Program, now seen as one of the nation's best such state-level institutions. I recall the Senate Transportation Committee was meeting to consider some early investments in passenger train service. Then STC Chair Pat Patterson, a conservative Pullman Republican, looked out at me, pointed and said he was so impressed by the energy and dedication of "your people," without our having relied on large amounts of taxpayer money, he would fully support State investments in passenger rail, though not likely to serve his legislative district in the future.



Would the State have developed a passenger rail program without the Centennial Station project impressing a key senator? We can't be certain, but we feel our project helped the process along in the early 1990s. And in answer to the frequent question as to why Centennial Station was built "out in the country" seven miles from the Capitol, we say, "Because that's where the tracks are!"

Day on the Hill from page 1

covered the same topics with each of the offices. The Senator's offices and the offices for representatives further east were more interested in our cross-state rail proposals. At the office of Rep. Reichert, the transportation staffer, Colin Swanson, is now based in Issaquah so we said we'd plan to visit him there, but still had a nice visit with a Legislative Assistant, Isaac Tobis.

Hendrik de Kock and Charlie Hamilton were able to meet in person with Rep. Suzan DelBene (WA-01), Rep. Rick Larsen (WA-02), and Rep. Derek Kilmer (WA-06), and their staff members. Rep. Kilmer's staffer Katie Allen (who they have met with in previous years) introduced them to new transportation staffer Tom Seaman, with whom they had an extended conversation about rail passenger issues. Hendrik and Charlie were also able to meet with staffers from the offices of Rep. Pramila Jayapal (WA-07), Rep. Dan Newhouse (WA-04), and Rep. Cathy McMorris Rogers (WA-05). All except McMorris Rogers (whose office was in the middle of an invitation-only event) expressed their sincere condolences regarding the loss of Jim Hamre and Zack Wilhoite, and conveyed their strong support for improved safety and a robust national passenger rail network.

In the evening, RPA hosted a reception at the Capitol Visitors Center at which Jim Hamre was posthumously honored with the Golden Spike award which was received on his behalf by his mother and other family members. See the article and photos on the AAWA website at <https://allaboardwashington.org/jim-hamre-receives-golden-spike-award-for-rail-advocacy/> . As the event started, I was approached by a friendly man who said, "It's always good to meet with one of my bosses." I didn't realize it at first, but this was in fact Representative Denny Heck, in whose district I live. We spoke for 20 minutes about passenger rail's importance and he agreed that passenger rail is vital to our district and the country as a whole.



For anyone who is interested and available, I recommend visiting with your elected senators and representatives offices not only in D.C. if you can, but also in Washington State. All Aboard Washington has resources to help you when visiting state or federal representatives and their offices. All of our elected senators and representatives have offices in their districts, so meeting them does not require traveling to D.C., just to their office that is probably a short trip away from where you live. As mentioned in Denny (continued on the next page)

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All Aboard News

Please welcome Patrick Carnahan, recent graduate of Saint Martin's University, as editor of Washington Rail News. He can be reached at editor@allaboardwashington.org.

Some important upcoming dates for members of All Aboard Washington:

Sat, July 14th: AAWA board of directors meeting from 12:00 PM – 5:30 PM at **Basil's Kitchen** inside the **Embassy Suites Hotel** in **Tukwila** (15920 W. Valley Hwy). *All are welcome to attend*, and car shuttles are available from the Tukwila Amtrak station.

Sat, August 11th: Annual AAWA picnic meeting from 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM at **Rainier Vista Park** in **Lacey** (5475 45th Ave SE).

Sat, September 8th: AAWA business meeting. Location and final time to be determined and will be listed on the website soon.

Sat, October 13th: AAWA business meeting. Location and final time to be determined and will be listed on the website soon.

Sat, November 10th: AAWA business meeting. Location and final time to be determined and will be listed on the website soon.

Sat, December 8th: AAWA Annual Holiday Meeting from 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM at **Panorama** in **Lacey** (1751 Circle LN SE). Final times are still being determined, so please check the website for updates.

Heck's opening remarks, we are the constituents that elected officials represent. The more we can inform our representatives about the value of passenger rail, the more they can do on our behalf.

One final thought we should keep in mind as we consider how we present ourselves and our vision to the public. RPA provided new handouts this year that were very visually appealing. Unfortunately, I immediately noticed that all the people shown on the fliers were white, young, seemed to be able-bodied and were paired into straight couples. This not only a bad representation of the demographics of our country, it also gives the appearance that the future we imagine for passenger rail is one of passenger homogeneity, of sameness among riders. If RPA wants to expand their organization to include and represent the many citizens of the U.S., they need to make sure that the image they present to the legislature and to the public is one of inclusivity that recognizes our future as a. We at AAWA need to remember this as well; there are many voices in our great state, and we need their power in our efforts to expand and maintain passenger rail service in Washington.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include Charlie Hamilton, Claire Bowen, and Lloyd Flem.



Letter from the Editor

Hello everyone! For those of you who don't know me, I'm Patrick Carnahan. I only recently became involved in AAWA, but how I learned about it was pretty remarkable. I rode the Cascades with some friends on its last scheduled day around Point Defiance, Dec. 17th, 2017. While chatting about the route with my friends, I happened to begin talking with Jim Langston who told me about his work with AAWA. I exchanged cards with him and looked forward to becoming more involved in the fight for better passenger rail. In particular, I was anxious to see how the Point Defiance Bypass would improve Amtrak service in the region.

Nothing could have prepared me for what I saw when I woke up the next day. Seeing the Cascades off the track and hanging treacherously over I-5 was shocking enough. Learning that two well-loved, veteran members of AAWA were victims was even more harrowing. Having learned about this organization just the day before, I knew I had to do something to support its members in their time of hardship. I attended Jim and Zack's memorial services and some AAWA meetings to see how I could help, and here I am now.

There's no question about it: what happened on December 18th, 2017 was a terrible tragedy for AAWA, Amtrak, the people of Washington state, and the United States as a whole. It's a day that will forever live in infamy. But it was also the day that I found my calling to join the fight for improving the options we have for moving across our great state. Having lived and studied abroad in countries with much better public transportation systems than us (especially on the side of rail), I know that we are wasting so many of the world's energy resources to support an unhealthy, unnecessary addiction to the automobile. It's just one of the things that stems from a throw-away culture that takes its wealth and power for granted. But there are many opportunities for us to change this, and I believe promoting quality passenger rail service is something we at AAWA can do to make better use of what we've been blessed with as Americans.

- Patrick C.