



# Washington Rail News

April/May 1994

Publication of the Washington Association of Railroad Passengers  
A Not-for-profit Consumer Organization  
"...getting the Pacific Northwest on the right track."

## Seattle-Portland Talgo train service begins April 1; six month demonstration planned

The Washington State Department of Transportation, in cooperation with Amtrak, BN and Renfe Talgo of America, has announced the April 1st start of demonstration revenue service for the high speed tilt train from Spain. This additional daily Seattle-Portland roundtrip will operate with Talgo equipment through Sept. 30. Starting Oct. 1 the run will be operated by regular Amtrak equipment.

The 200-seat train will depart Seattle at 12:10 p.m. and arrive in Portland at 4:05 p.m. It will depart Portland at 6:00 p.m., arriving back in Seattle at 9:55 p.m. Reservations will be required.

Roundtrip fare between Seattle and Portland is expected to be about \$35, slightly higher than the regular Amtrak fare. The surcharge covers the extra cost Amtrak charges DOT for the train to be in its computer reservation system. But, for the extra fare, you will get a train with all first class 2-and-1 seating, a dining car, lounge service and the knowledge there will not be standees.

The Talgo arrived by ship in Baltimore on Mar. 11. It was then moved to Washington, DC for inspection and testing. On March 21

Amtrak operated a VIP special out of Washington. The train is to arrive in Seattle on March 25 via the *Empire Builder* route.

DOT is planning a series of public events before service starts. At press time, details were still being finalized. The following information may change so check the local media for final times and places.

On March 29, the train will tour north of Seattle, with stops in Ever-

ett and Bellingham. A possible trip to Vancouver, BC is still in negotiation.

On March 30, the train may travel between Portland and Eugene, if funding is provided by Oregon DOT.

On March 31, the train will run between Seattle and Portland, with a stop in Tacoma and, possibly, Centralia.

WashARP will have updated information on Lloyd Flem's 24-hour answering machine. Call 206 943-8333.

In bringing the Talgo to Washington, the state DOT has moved the Northwest to the forefront of

the five federally designated high speed corridors. This shows DOT is serious about attacking creeping grid- (See Talgo, page 4)



WashARP director J. Craig Thorpe's painting of the Talgo, passing a double stack pulled by BN's new SD70MAC engines. The scene is along Tacoma's Commencement Bay. Craig also painted the Olympia-Lacey station that graced Amtrak's 1993 calendar and the X2000 at Gap, PA. WashARP is selling posters of the Talgo painting at events celebrating the inauguration of service.

## Clinton proposes increased Amtrak funding for 1995

Pres. Clinton's FY 1995 budget proposes a 12% funding increase over the 1994 level for intercity rail. The proposal is 13% above actual 1993 funding and 197% above Pres. Bush's 1993 request. In a press release, NARP "praised Pres. Clinton's reversal in policy towards intercity rail passenger service compared with pre-Clinton budgets." This appears to be the first substantial increase ever proposed in a president's budget since Amtrak's creation in 1971.

Amtrak released a statement Feb. 7 saying, this is the "first presidential budget in more than a decade that realistically addresses [Amtrak's] needs." Amtrak, however, requested a higher funding level when it submitted its request to Congress on Feb. 15. Amtrak said its request is "based on an inflation rate of 4.5%. This rate is higher than the 3% assumed for national inflation. This higher rate for Amtrak results from several factors, including...the fiscal impact resulting from operational problems caused by floods and severe weather in 1993 and early 1994. Also, Amtrak needs to restore service quality levels that were cut back during 1992 and 1993...These [staff] restorations and others should have a positive long-term effect on revenue."

Below is Clinton's proposed Amtrak budget with Amtrak's request in parenthesis (figures in \$ millions):

Operations:	\$380.0	(\$438.0)
Capital:	\$252.0	(\$337.0)
Northwest Corridor Improvement Project:	\$199.6	(\$270.0)
Mandatory railroad retirement payments:	\$156.0	(\$150.0)

Amtrak's operations request includes \$8 mill. in 403(b) funding for its share of existing and planned state sponsored service, including Washington's. Clinton did not include any 403(b) funds in his budget. This funding is critical to our DOT's plans for restored Seattle-Vancouver, BC service and additional Seattle-Portland service.

(See Amtrak, page 4)



**From the  
Executive  
Director's  
Desk by  
Lloyd H. Flem**

**Legisla-  
ture,  
WSDOT,  
Talgo**  
As re-  
ported in  
the Feb.-

Mar. *Washington Rail News*, top state legislative priorities did not include transportation this session. As the 1994 Legislature wound down, WashARP's major goals of praise for and preservation of the existing state rail program and opposition to bills deemed detrimental to the broader interests of rail were accomplished.

Visits to legislators included kudos for the work and great progress made by DOT's Rail Branch, both in the high-profile passenger and less-noticeable but also vital freight programs.

WashARP's testimony, oral and written, joined that of freight management and labor in again keeping from passage potentially harmful rail "anti-whistle" and private crossings bills. The latter passed the Senate overwhelmingly but died in the House, where WashARP focussed our opposition. While WashARP is not sympathetic to recent neighbors of train tracks who feel rail's presence (including warning sounds) interferes with their "lifestyle," we concur with thoughtful House Transportation Committee members who felt all grade crossing and "rail's neighbors" issues had to be addressed, especially as increased numbers and speeds of trains are planned for the Corridor. WashARP hopes to work with all rail interests, public and private sector, in proactively approaching these issues, not just reacting to occasional brush fires as our freight railroad friends have traditionally done.

WashARP members can say with good conscience that their tax dollars are being carefully spent by the employees of the Rail Branch. I remain happily stunned by the level of dedication and progress made in our state's young passenger rail program. WSDOT's Rail Branch is now seen as one of the leaders among all the states, despite its small number of people (just as WashARP is said to have a similar status among rail advocacy groups!). While preparing for the Talgo is the number one task at this writing, the remainder of the rail program--station improvements statewide, planning for Vancouver and other Corridor service increases, and the manifold projects associated with track and signal improvements--

continue a pace. A big job for a small staff.

Knowledgeable WashARP people may have differences in detail with the job being done. I join many of you in my concern over Talgo's noontime southbound schedule, which sorely limits use of that train for significant day visits to Portland, but the noon departure may bring a major "dinner train" crowd during the summer. At any rate, be impressed with the fine implementation of "our" program! Support this wise use of public monies.

WashARP membership, particularly, those of you living near the Corridor, have been "drafted" to assist in assuring the success of the Talgo, upon which the future of our state's now-lauded passenger rail program may depend. The state's investment and commitment of time, effort, and dollars in the Talgo train will be measured by ridership. A flashy European train that attracts only gawkers and photo seekers rather than paid passengers is still a failure as a transportation investment. You and significant numbers of others along the Corridor must either ride regularly on trips you wouldn't have otherwise made, or better yet, travel by train rather than contribute to I-5 gridlock and Sea-Tac-PDX "winglock" for scheduled trips.

WashARP people will complement the information and promotion done by WSDOT. Your Olympia office will be working closely with the Rail Branch to ensure our efforts are most productive in--bottom line--getting more folks to ride the Talgo and other in-state Amtrak trains. We will certainly have an educational role. Prepare to help tactfully teach Passenger Rail Travel 101 to otherwise well-informed folks whose knowledge of what, how, and where about trains is nil. Soon WashARPer from Seattle south will be asked to help inform local elected officials on the many pluses of the rail program as it is accelerated on the south part of the Corridor. (Many of you will likely be involved in selling J. Craig Thorpe's Talgo poster. Hopefully, other "tangibles" will be available for you to market as well.)

But above all, filling train seats is the prime task. WashARPer know the social, economic, environmental, and safety advantages of passenger trains. Practice what we preach with the coming of Talgo; and educate others to behave likewise. Corridor WashARP members will be receiving separate mailings to aid your educa-

tional/promotional works.

☆☆☆☆

**Making the Elephant pay.**

Despite increasing attention to and investment in transit, passenger rail, car and van pooling, bicycling and other non-drive-alone transportation, the length and number and percentage of single occupant vehicle trips continues to increase with its attendant congestion, pollution, use of irreplaceable petroleum resources, traffic deaths, and destruction of traditional communities. Stanley I. Hart and Alvin L. Spivak, "reformed" California engineers, have authored a short but powerful polemic on the overwhelming automobile dependence in North America in *The Elephant in the Bedroom*.

Their thesis is that only two things, traffic congestion dramatically worse than we now experience or full-cost-pricing driving, will turn around "the suicidal habit." (The former has been demonstrated following the recent L.A. quake. Even VALLEY PEOPLE will ride transit when the freeways collapse.) *Elephant's* preferred solution is allowing free market forces, a la conservative economist Milton Friedman, to work. Full cost pricing for motor vehicle use would be phased in. Hart and Spivak posit that car and truck drivers are given huge public subsidies that distort transportation mode choices. Were we to pay the full cost of street improvements, the full value of urban parking, the public money now spent for police and fire protection, ambulance service, health care costs resulting from vehicle pollution, etc. we would rationally choose other than SOVs for much of our transportation needs. As it is, gasoline in the U.S. is the cheapest in the world and is now relatively the cheapest per mile ever. With "free and convenient parking" seen as a god-given right in North America (of course, parking in urban areas is not free; direct costs and lost opportunity costs for more productive land uses are directly borne by the community at large) it will take massive educational efforts and unusual political courage to begin to bill us as drivers for the costs we impose on our communities and our future for our drive-everywhere-usually-alone addition.

Besides now-available technical means of achieving congestion pricing, innovative ideas such as insurance costs based on miles driven are introduced. *Elephant* sees that with fixed costs of car/truck ownership (See Flem, page 3)



## WashARP resolution urges RTA action

At its Feb. 12 meeting the WashARP board adopted the following resolution:

"WHEREAS, Public patience has been severely tested by the prolonged and expensive planning phase to which the issue of a new regional transit system has been subjected, in spite of the electorate's expressed wish for early development of such a system and, WHEREAS, Employment in the region has been increasing, despite the majority of Boeing cuts having already occurred and, WHEREAS, The System Plan developed by the JRPC includes elements of commuter rail which would be of substantial public benefit, while incurring only a small portion of the expense required by the plan and, WHEREAS, Commuter rail alone does not serve residents of Seattle, the Eastside, and other significant centers of population, and by itself does not constitute a regional plan and, WHEREAS, The JRPC system plan includes a new rail rapid transit system which addresses, amongst other considerations, certain key bottlenecks in our existing transportation structure and, WHEREAS, Both commuter rail and the initial operation segment of a rail rapid transit system have been identified as potential recipients of significant federal funds, provided that timely applications are made, and that such funds may be lost, in whole or in part, if such timely applications are not made and, WHEREAS, Considerable effort has already been expended to gather public input and to negotiate equitable benefits throughout the region and, WHEREAS, Phased voter approval of the system plan will provide greater accountability to the taxpayers, and will likely lead to faster implementation of the system plan than the 30 years of planning and replanning, NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Washington Association of Rail Passengers urges the Regional Transit Authority to submit a plan to the electorate no later than November, 1994; That such a plan include a significant element of commuter rail and the initial operating segment of a new rapid rail transit system which addresses the transportation bottle-

necks across the Ship Canal and through the Seattle Central Business District; And that the RTA retain the current system plan as a long-term goal, and not restart the planning process from the beginning; And that the RTA emphasize the regional benefits and system integration of the initial phase by presenting diagrams showing all modes together; And that the Washington Association of Rail Passengers also urges the legislature to amend the existing legislation to the extent necessary to give the RTA the flexibility to present the above first phase to the electorate in advance of completion of a full system plan through the year 2020.

ADOPTED BY VOTE of the Board of Directors this 12th day of February, 1994."

The resolution was presented to RTA by WashARP Vice Pres. Richard Tait in late Feb. Tom Matoff, the new head of RTA, already has the agency headed in basically the direction urged in our resolution. At its Feb. 25 meeting RTA approved a plan to put an initial first phase on the ballot as quickly as possible.

Quoting from the plan: "The RTA intends to identify a Ballot Proposal representing an initial phase of a longer range system plan. This investment must be financially feasible and address critical public transportation needs on a regional basis. The RTA will identify this phase one investment through a collaborative process with as broad a group of interests and the voting public as possible in order to proceed with a public vote in 1995."

The plan lays out the timetable for getting to the public vote. If no supplemental environmental work is needed as a result of any changes in the plan a vote would happen next spring. Matoff, who is now a member of WashARP, prefers May 16, 1995. If additional environmental work is required, the vote couldn't happen until Sept. or Nov. 1995.

Richard also said RTA is very concerned about losing the federal funds Congress has appropriated and is taking steps to protect the money. They plan to ask Congress to release the remaining funds designated for commuter rail so track and signal improvements (which are also needed for increased Amtrak service) can be made. If the public vote is favorable, RTA will be that much closer to getting the commuter trains running.

Let's hope our rail system is in

place before the big earthquake hits. In both the 1989 Bay area quake and the Jan. Los Angeles quake the rail systems shined while the highway infrastructure was in shambles. The Santa Clarita Metrolink commuter line (which runs through the epicenter) went from 1000 passengers a day to 21,900 on Jan. 25 and is now averaging 8000 a day. Metrolink is building new stations, laying new tracks, and expanding service on almost a daily basis. At the rate our Legislature is funding seismic upgrades to our state's highway bridges the project won't be finished for 70 years!

## Flem, from page 2

high and running costs low people's incentive now is to drive more and not less.

*Elephant's* technical and economic arguments are strong but do North Americans have the political will to apply market forces to level the transportation choice field? That lack of will is what keep IT piling ever deeper in our bedroom.

☆☆☆☆☆

I will be attending, with WashARP member and Cascadia Project Director Bruce Agnew, a two-day conference in Vancouver, BC Mar. 30-31, where development of our High(er) Speed Rail Corridor is a major theme. Cascadia includes highest-level elected officials from Corridor cities and is chaired by Seattle Mayor Norm Rice. The days of WashARP's "crying alone in the wilderness" (as Cong. Al Swift once complimented our pioneering work 5-10 years ago) are over. We now have many good strong allies praising intercity passenger rail as part of our transportation future. Let's continue to do our share to see this future happens.

I will also be attending the NARP board of directors meeting (with the NARP Region 8 directors) in Washington, DC Apr. 28-30. Additionally, we will be meeting with members of our Congressional delegation.

## WashARP Officers

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Lloyd Flem, Olympia. Exec. Director  
24-hour phone: 206 943-8333



# WashARP News

The April 9 and May 14 meetings will start at noon at Andy's Tukwila Station, 16200 W. Valley Hwy., just south of Exit 1 from I-405.

The annual WashARP/OreARP/NARP Region 8 meeting was held in Vancouver, WA on Mar. 5. There were 105 rail advocates present. They heard a variety of speakers talk about regional and national rail events.

Chuck Mott and Lloyd Flem discussed the Talgo. Richard Tait explained the latest moves of the Puget Sound RTA.

NARP director-at-large Barry Green talked of the dialog he and fellow NARP director Bob Stevens have developed with the Mont. Transportation Dept. MTD has been holding meetings on its 20-year plan and is hearing many people in rural Montana say the don't want more roads but they do want better public transportation.

OreARP Pres. Dan McFarling noted ODOT appropriated only \$5 mill. for intercity rail, but that is where Wash. was two years ago. OreARP helped stop a proposed new off ramp in downtown Portland. This ramp would have substantially increased truck traffic across the SP mainline just south of Union Station.

Harriet Parcels, director of NARP's Campaign for New Transportation Priorities, was the featured speaker. CNTP now has 55 member organizations, including transit, labor,

environmental, church, trail and bicycle groups. One recent CNTP project was a compilation of the 430 historic rail stations in the U.S. which are eligible for restoration funding under ISTEA. This project has generated a lot of interest from officials around the country.

Harriet discussed the proposed Clinton Amtrak and transit budgets. She also noted USDOT has finally issued implementation regulations for ISTEA which should make it easier for states to use its flexible funding provisions to move more money into transit. In the next reauthorization of ISTEA we will work to include funding for intercity rail, virtually the only form of ground transportation left out of the current law.

Elected as NARP Region 8 directors were Bob Stevens (Helena, MT), Ray Polani (Portland), Hans Mueller (Seattle), and Jim Hamre (Puyallup).

Ordering info for the Talgo poster, *The Elephant in the Bedroom*, WashARPs Paul Vitous and Alan Halfhill's *X2000 in the Northwest* video and other items will be in the next *Rail News*.

## Talgo, from page 1

lock with solutions other than just more pavement. All WashARP members need to help make this demonstration a success by riding the train often and encouraging family, friends and acquaintances to do the same.

## Seattlite named Amtrak V.P.

Amtrak has named Elizabeth C. Reveal, Seattle's finance director, as the rail system's Vice Pres. of Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer. Last year, she served on Vice Pres. Gore's Restructuring America Commission. Among other positions, Reveal was formerly chief budget officer for Washington, DC and Philadelphia's director of finance. She was appointed by Mayor Norm Rice to her Seattle job in Oct. 1992 to fill the combined positions of city treasurer and comptroller.

-Jerome Sheldon

## Amtrak, from page 1

The president also proposed to increase high speed rail funding from \$3.5 mill. to \$32.5 mill. This would fund the ISTEA-mandated national plan for high speed ground transportation but provides no grant program for the states.

It is extremely important that all WashARP members write their representative (U. S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515) and senators (U. S. Senate, 20510) today. While WashARP is pleased with the Administration's proposed increases for Amtrak, we can offer our Congressional delegation explanations as to the need for additional funding if Amtrak is to ever achieve a higher level of prosperity. Our members of Congress say they are hearing from few constituents on Amtrak and high speed rail.

Washington Association of  
Railroad Passengers  
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