



A Cascades Talgo VIII train at Seattle's King Street Station on September 19th, 2019.

## Cascades Receives Federal Capital Grants

Amtrak *Cascades* will receive much-needed capital funding, courtesy of a United States Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) grant and an Amtrak matching contribution. Totalling over \$38 million, these funds will assist the states of Oregon and Washington with two projects affecting *Cascades* service: siding rehabilitation south of Portland, and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Passenger Rail Car Replacement Program.

Amtrak gave the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) a \$750,000 matching grant in July to bolster the state's efforts to reduce delays between Salem and Portland. Oregon has applied for funding under the U.S. DOT's Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Discretionary Grants program to restore a disused siding near Oregon City. If this first BUILD grant is approved, ODOT will reconstruct the Oregon City siding with new track, ties, powered switches, and switch heaters. Once that project is completed, ODOT would pursue funding for further work south of Oregon City, bringing a total of five miles of double-tracking to a corridor that hosts the *Cascades* and the *Coast Starlight*.

WSDOT will receive up to \$37.5 million from the U.S. DOT for its Washington State Passenger Rail Car Replacement Program. The funding comes from the Federal Railroad Administration's Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair Program, which focuses on repairing and rehabilitating aging railroad infrastructure nationwide. Based on estimates pricing each new trainset at \$25 million, this grant would cover about half of the cost of replacing the three Talgo VI units that are approaching the end of their scheduled service lives. There is currently no timeframe for procuring replacement equipment.



*A warm, clear summer's day at Eugene Station on August 31st, 2019.*

## DeFazio Eugene Meeting Focuses On Rail

*by Jon Nuxoll*

It would be great to see high-speed rail in the future, but what about today's needs? Two Oregon politicians agreed that plenty of existing rail infrastructure requires upgrading to improve reliability, frequency, and ridership in the Portland-Eugene section of the *Cascades* corridor.

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., hosted an August 26th meeting in Eugene for Amtrak stakeholders. Officials from Amtrak, Union Pacific Railroad, state Rep. Nancy Nathanson, Eugene Mayor Lucy Vinis, and high-speed rail advocates were among those in attendance. The gathering received good media coverage, including a front-page newspaper story.

"If your car broke down one out of every eight trips, you'd start to think you can't count on this particular vehicle," Nathanson reportedly said at the Monday meeting. "If you can't count on it, you can't choose it as your regular option, your go-to mode of travel." Nathanson sponsored a bill in the 2018 Legislature to mandate studying causes of delays in the Portland-Eugene corridor.

DeFazio, who chairs the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, reiterated his support for upgrading UP's single-track Willamette Valley mainline, rather than building a completely new Eugene-Portland right-of-way. That complements the position of the Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA), as well as a recently-completed ODOT study recommending improvements rather than a new right-of-way. DeFazio also reiterated his opposition to any Trump Administration proposal to cut long-distance service, specifically the *Coast Starlight*.

DeFazio also received expressions of support for Amtrak from several coastal residents at another town hall meeting in Coos Bay.

## La Grande: Calling All Portland-Boise Rail Advocates

by Jon Nuxoll

Generating local support for passenger rail service between Portland and Boise will be the focus of an October 26th meeting in La Grande, Oregon, under the sponsorship of AORTA.

"We're hoping to bring together people along the route and give them information on how to organize to bring back service," according to AORTA President Jon Nuxoll. "This has been the model being used to build support for Yakima Valley rail service, and we're hoping to build on that." To that end, speakers will include organizers of the Yakima Valley effort as well as other interested parties and stakeholders from Oregon and Idaho.

"If there's the interest along the route, we're hoping the meeting will result in the formation of a local group to push for this as well as concrete actions they can take"—such as pushing for support for dedicated passenger rail funding, an AORTA priority and proposal to the 2020 Oregon Legislature.

The meeting will be Saturday, October 26th from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the Cook Memorial Library: 2006 Fourth Street, La Grande, OR.

The route last saw passenger service in 1997, when the Salt Lake City - Boise - Portland - Seattle *Pioneer* was discontinued. AORTA is not envisioning this effort as immediately restoring that service, but serving Portland-Boise is a feasible short-term goal.

Information is also available on the "Eastern Oregon Rail Summit" Facebook page.

## In Memoriam: Carolyn Hamre

by Carl Fowler

I recently received the very sad news from Kristi Hamre that Jim Hamre's mother Carolyn passed away September 17th from leukemia. When discovered the cancer was beyond medical intervention, except for palliative care. Hospice care was arranged and she passed secure in the love of the wonderful Hamre family.

I had the joy of knowing Carolyn through my friendship and happy work with her son Jim Hamre. She was so special. In her long life she traveled the world with Jim (and sometimes both of them with me); worked for the Milwaukee Road; enjoyed life across the west; raised a large, close, loving and accomplished family; endowed the Rail Passenger Association's (RPA's) James Hamre Memorial Scholarship Fund; and brought such love and kindness to everyone she met. And of course she gave us the time, commitment, compassion and genius of her son Jim, in helping the RPA cause for over 30 years! Her home was always a place of safety, love and true warmth. I can see her now in her living room watching television (usually news and current affairs); talking about her family; asking always about the lives and family members of her friends; and above all giving to anyone who knew her unconditional love and grace. She will be more than missed.

Kristi Hamre has graciously allowed me to suggest that if anyone wishes to send a memorial, a donation could be made to Francis House: 322 7th St SE, Puyallup, WA 98372. This is a unique organization that Jim Hamre volunteered for and helped to lead for many years. Francis House serves the poor of the South Puget Sound area by making donations of food, clothing, furniture, books, etc available to persons in need without any payment required or accepted. A recipient gets a scheduled time to "shop" at Francis House and therein to simply take what is needed. Jim gave me a personal tour here in July, 2017 and I immediately understood why he was so devoted to such a quintessentially kind place!

I take comfort in knowing that Carolyn has rejoined Jim, Martin and her husband Alvin and that I was blessed for over 30 years to know her and be her friend. Farewell blessed soul!

## Upcoming Events

11/9	Board Meeting*	Olive Branch Cafe, Tacoma	11:15 AM - 2:15 PM
12/14	Holiday Party & Board Elections*	Olympia	11:30 AM - 2:30 PM

*\*RSVP required; please see [aawa.us/events](https://aawa.us/events) or call (360) 529-5552 ext. 3 to reserve your spot*

## Don't Forget to Renew Your AAWA Membership!

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