

Publication of All Aboard Washington
A Not-for-profit Consumer Organization
"Moving forward... On Rail."

Conference: Building Higher Speed Rail Infrastructure in the Northwest

The National Assoc. of Railroad Passengers, All Aboard Washington and the Assoc. of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates joined together for a successful intercity passenger rail advocates conference on March 2 in Tukwila. Our theme was Northwest Corridor & Amtrak Cascades: Building Higher Speed Rail Infrastructure & Service Improvements.

Some highlights from our speakers:



Ron Pate, Acting Director, WSDOT Rail Office

Ron highlighted the Northwest Corridor and the operational partnership between Washington, Oregon, Amtrak, Talgo and

BNSF.

The keys to success of the Amtrak Cascades are:

- Incremental approach
 - Adding daily service one round trip at a time
 - Project development divided into eligible funding pieces
- Collaborative planning and stakeholder engagement
- Supportive governor, stakeholders and legislative champions
- Use all funding sources available
- Strategic rail plans
- Effective cost management

In 2012, on-time performance improved to 75%, ridership dipped a bit to 836,324 and farebox recovery was 64.3%. WSDOT has established an on-time performance task force. It meets weekly to review causes of delays and institute procedures to reduce them.

The nearly \$800 mill. in federal high speed rail funds for infrastructure improvements to the BNSF mainline will support two additional round trips between Seattle and Portland, on-time performance of at least 88% and a 10 minute reduction in running times. Twenty projects in Washington will build additional rail capacity by upgrading tracks, utilities, signals, passenger stations and advanced warning systems.

Major projects underway or starting in 2013 include restoration and seismic retrofit of King St. Station, new yard tracks in Everett to reduce mainline congestion, track upgrades between Seattle and Vancouver, WA, a track grade separation in Vancouver and slope stabilization work.

Ron discussed the current and future costs and funding for the Cascades.

- Current operating fees – Amtrak: Washington could pay up to \$10 mil. this year
- Current equipment maintenance fees – Talgo: Washington pays \$4 million per year
- Future track infrastructure maintenance for 20 years (2017 start): Washington will pay ~\$5.5 mil. per year
- Section 209 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) takes effect October 1, 2013: estimated Washington will pay up to \$5 mil. more per year to Amtrak

WSDOT created a joint partnership effort with BNSF, Sound Transit and Amtrak to focus on understanding the root causes of mudslides between Seattle and Everett. The partners, along with local jurisdictions, are reviewing recent slope studies, historical slide data and updated analyses to identify factors contributing to the slides to develop and implement action items.

In answer to a question, Ron said that passenger speeds of 90 mph are possible and BNSF is open to that discussion in the future.

Bob Melbo, Rail Planner, ODOT Rail Division

ODOT is currently developing an Environmental Impact Statement for the Portland-Eugene segment of the Northwest Corridor and updating the state rail plan.

The two Talgo trainsets Oregon purchased should be in the Northwest soon for testing in the corridor. Set 1 has been at the AAR test facility near Pueblo, CO. It has passed all FRA tests. The trains should go into service this summer.

Talgo's Josh Coran noted that during testing with an Amtrak P42 locomotive (rated top speed of 110 mph) the trainset got to 108 with the locomotive pulling but 113 with it pushing. So, despite the less-than-aesthetic design of the cab car it's more aerodynamic than the P42.



Rob Eaton, Director-Government Affairs West, Amtrak

Rob outlined Amtrak's national operations and recent achievements. He then highlighted Amtrak in the Northwest: 638 employees with a payroll of \$44.1 mill.; \$29.8 mil. spent on goods and services; invested \$42 mil. in the new Seattle maintenance facility.

He discussed the Amtrak services in the Northwest: the Cascades, Empire Builder and Coast Starlight. Amtrak is working to implement the performance improvement plans for the long distance trains.

(See **Conference**, page 5)



Paula Hammond, just retired Washington State Secretary of Transportation, received All Aboard Washington's Tom Martin Award from Executive Director Lloyd Flem at the March 2 rail advocates conference. The plaque reads "All Aboard Washington presents to Paula Hammond our Tom Martin Award for Many Years of Exceptional Service on behalf of Passenger Rail in Washington." See Lloyd's column for his thoughts on Paula's support for intercity passenger rail service.

Photo by Jim Hamre



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

Celebrate Centennial Station's 20th; Thank You, Paula!

Some of you readers have heard the Centennial Station (Olympia-Lacey's Amtrak station) story many times from me and other proud Thurston County residents. If so, you are welcome to skip ahead to the invitation to attend the May 4 20th Anniversary celebration.

The entire saga of Centennial Station development and the flawless twenty years of service to the train-traveling public by a fine corps of volunteer Station Hosts would and should be the topic of a book. Here we'll just review a few anecdotes, from my biased viewpoint. I won't name most individuals here to avoid omitting some of the virtuous ... or the others.

In the mid-80s, our state's Capital region had as its Amtrak stop, in the unincorporated hamlet of East Olympia, a small three-sided shack, on which the scrawled graffiti was often misspelled. It was located on a rough gravel patch, the potholes of a depth which made it often difficult to approach during winter. BN owned the property, and evidently did not feel any need to maintain it to allow reasonable access for train passengers. As a result of the dismay felt concerning this mean facility, a dozen or so of us Thurston County residents, consisting of some well-known citizens as well as folks simply dedicated to passenger rail, formed the Amtrak Depot Committee (ADC) in 1987. I served as ADC's recording secretary and also was one of the contact persons with Amtrak, BN, WSDOT, the Legislature and other public and corporate entities.

Though we of the ADC were relentlessly dedicated, things moved slowly at first. Thurston County, which was the public entity overseeing the project, had some employees and one Commissioner

highly involved and put in many hours beyond their official duties. But some of us sensed an indifference or more attention to process rather than progress among others of the county bureaucracy in the early years. In 1988 we naively thought the new station would be completed by Washington's Centennial on November 11, 1989, hence the station's name. It was more than three years later before Centennial Station would open to the public in the spring of 1993.

BN was at first unwilling to consider allowing movement of the Olympia station stop from the old East Olympia site to the new location, near where the Yelm Highway overpass crosses the BN main just SE of Lacey. Finally, BN people accepted the reality that the new site, which became Centennial Station, had much less potential liability exposure than the

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shack on the gravel patch, and they approved the move. The new site had at first a platform and some lights, but even without a building (we had a couple of bus shelters), it was a great improvement over the gravel-patch shack.

Amtrak? Two anecdotes: Amtrak had not been particularly supportive of our early efforts. We felt Amtrak assumed, especially our being far from DC and the Northeast Corridor, that we locals from the nethermost corner of the 48 coterminous states could not do such a project. What bothered us was the impression that Amtrak HQ didn't really care that the old train stop for the capital of our state was an embarrassment and gave a very negative impression of Amtrak. But later on by happy chance the then President of Amtrak, the imperious Atlanta Brahmin, W. Graham Claytor, Jr. (A wonderful quote in the New York Times from Mr. Claytor, "Ah don't have stress; Ah **GIVE** stress!"), happened to be traveling north from Portland on one of his trains and was willing to stop and look over the site where the ADC hoped to place the new stop. Claytor blessed the site and Amtrak DC began to pay attention.

I was directly involved in the second anecdote. I was on the phone with the Amtrak VP we referred to as "Dr. No."

Given Mr. Claytor's blessing, Dr No said, "Now you ARE building our "standard design" (like the current bland Tacoma station which we call a "McDepot"). I said, "Oh, I didn't realize Amtrak was paying for our station; of course then we'll use your standard design." Dr No stammered a bit, telling me what we already knew: Amtrak didn't have a dime to contribute to our project! I told the Amtrak VP we would build a station of traditional rail depot design which I believed Amtrak would like. Fast forward to the station opening year of 1993: Amtrak "liked" the just-completed Centennial Station sufficiently that it literally became their corporate poster child for the year. The painting of Centennial Station by Bellevue artist J. Craig Thorpe graced the 1993 Amtrak calendar! The work of us bumpkins from small-town Washington state was depicted nationally, even internationally, the single most distributed symbol of Amtrak for that year.

While the Centennial Station structure itself was built mostly with funds, labor, materials, and professional skills donated by Thurston County people, interested folks from around the state and beyond, including many members of what is now All Aboard Washington, gave to this good cause. (Note the hundreds of paver bricks and marble plaques

commemorating individual and business/institutional donors seen trackside of the depot.) Cities within Thurston County and, as mentioned, the county itself, were involved in the land and infrastructure requirements and costs. Thanks to a couple of dedicated WSDOT employees who strongly believed in our project, funds were found to complete the somewhat costly required waste water facilities. The only Federal money involved did not come from taxpayers. "Stripper well" funds from a federal anti-trust settlement were used to build the park-and-ride lots, which still serve that purpose as well as parking for Amtrak patrons and an Intercity Transit stop.

One important external benefit of this Olympia-Lacey train station: The then chairman of the state Senate Transportation Committee, a conservative Republican from SE Washington, was, in a public hearing, so impressed that Thurston County people wanted this rail improvement and did it ourselves with only modest amounts of public money, he endorsed the then new idea of state financial support for passenger train service. His endorsement was instrumental in getting the state's successful and re-

(See **Flem**, page 5)



Bagpipers at Centennial Station's 2012 National Train Day. Photo by Jim Hamre



WITH
JIM
CUSICK

Who me?

a_wise_grandfather¹: "Trains are only effective in dense cities like New York, so we can't build them here."

train_nut: "No, they built them into outlying areas, and the development followed them. It's actually where the term 'commuter' came from, to 'commute' (or lessen) the fare for someone that regularly rides the same train every day, from that of the full fare a casual rider pays."

not_a_train_nut: "You Foaming choo-choo fetishists have no idea what you're talking about!"

bus_dude_nut: "Buses can supply all the transit relief we need!"

hijkl: "You people have no idea what you're talking about ... Trains don't have any effect, besides, mud falls down on them!!"

car_fetishist: "More Lanes!! More Lanes!!!"

Transportation_wonk: "Putting in more lanes costs money, so we'll have to raise gas taxes, or add tolls."

Real_Gubm'nt_Hater: "The Dept of Transpo is full of a bunch of IDIOTS. They are just trying to steal our money. Don't they know how to do anything!!"

p.p.: "I know EVERYTHING, and anyone who doesn't agree with me really ticks me off!!"

m.e. : "You are a fool!!"

qwerty: "I'll sue you for defamation of character!!"

Old timer's reading this might remember comedian Steve Allen doing his Tonight Show routine passionately reading the Letters to the Editor section of the N.Y. Daily News.

Internet sites with public commenting available read just like it.

For those of you who aren't connected to the Internet, the above conversation is actually tame compared to some of the flame wars² that go on.

Why do people even take this seriously? If you're really trying to learn something from the people commenting on news articles by various publications and blogs, you have to weed through the mostly uninformed and emotional ones posted to find ones that are really saying useful things.

Anonymity is the key here. The 'names' of the people posting are fictitious, chosen by the actual people typing said comment into whatever on-line forum they feel compelled to speak out on.

If no one knows who you are, you can pretty much say anything.

Essentially it's the Internet version of the prank phone call (pre-caller-ID days).

Yes, there usually is some sort of moderation of these sites for obscene comments and others made that are just in very bad taste, but the issue for anyone posting is credibility.

If you were going to be in a confer-

ence room meeting, with the other people

in there, would you really say those things?

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Sure, there are many times that I've felt like saying something dreadfully sarcastic (and quite witty, I might add), and just do it under an alias, but then one has to think ...

Even if I always posted the comments under an alias that the little devil on my shoulder wants me to, dripping in well-deserved sarcasm, I would still be setting up a pattern. Unless I want to keep two (or more) on-line personalities, then each one will develop their own level of credibility ...

or none.

And sometimes I'm not so sure I'm not looking at one person having a 'sock-puppet' debate on these various Internet forums, either.

I always post using my real name.

Why? Look, it's not like I'm on some hockey-fight bulletin board calling out other players to a local bar for some real fisticuffs, which would heighten the danger aspect, by the way, but for heaven's sake, it's just about transportation.

And there is one thing that will give

you that shield of armor, so to speak.

And that's the facts.

When I post, I only make the argument based on the facts that I am sure of, and make an opinionated comment obvious that it's an opinion.

While I might be stating what is my opinion, I give the facts straight, and the links (where possible) to the data that back up my opinion.

I want the readers to read it for themselves.

Whenever I saw comments (in my early Internet forum days) by someone claiming to have a well informed opinion, I would go to that link, or actually looked up the source at the library, and research it myself.

Who he?

Which brings us to someone else who posts to these forums, using his real name.

Before I actually reveal this person that I respect for fact based postings, I will share some of his comments on the public forums, or quoted in the media, or in testimony before public entities.

Public Comment to the Puget Sound Regional Council General Assembly, May 26, 2011

"Despite the popularity of urban trains, ugly facts about their development around here may eventually reach public

consciousness: Sound Transit is consuming the elephant's share of transit money in the region, is holding \$800 million dollars in its treasury while other transit agencies claim starvation, and is able to deliver just half of the ridership expected on top of well-publicized problems with its construction schedule."

"[An organization which he co-chairs] urges all elected officials of the PSRC [Puget Sound Regional Council] General Assembly to grasp and act upon the discrepancy between the hope of rail mass transit and the evolving reality."

And as quoted in an article in the **Seattle Times** published October 29, 2008, concerning the upcoming vote for Proposition 1, known popularly as ST2 (Sound Transit 2nd phase):

"But a very aggressive bus program could outperform rail, thinks light-rail opponent [our person in question], a research associate at the Mineta Transportation Institute. On the I-90 floating bridge, buses could travel several seconds apart, instead of four to six minutes between trains", he said. "Then after (See Cusick, page 4)

¹ All on-line handles are from my imagination, any names that are exact matches is purely accidental, and no actual quotes are attributed to them.

² Flaming is hostile and insulting interaction between Internet users, often involving the use of profanity." [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flaming_\(Internet\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flaming_(Internet))

Cusick, from page 3

those buses go across the bridge, they fan out in all directions."

And, ...

Testimony for the Public Record of the Sound Transit Board of Directors, December 20, 2012 Meeting:

"In conclusion, the Sound Transit Board can and should correct this service inefficiency by redirecting the resources currently expended illegally on Sound North service to far more cost-effective Regional Express Bus service. In addition to demonstrating Sound Transit's compliance with state law, doing so would also lower costs, increase ridership, and reduce risk. This change would be a win-win-win for taxpayers, Sound Transit, and BNSF.

A few elected officials in communities served by Sounder North are on record wanting it to be continued. If the will of these officials is followed and my principle recommendation is not implemented, I have an alternative request for explanatory documentation: The Sound Transit Board should explain why RCW 81.104.120 was applied in 1994 with calculations shown as though the requirements of this law mattered, and why now in 2012 the law is being ignored."

That last paragraph, with the reference to state law (RCW 81.104.120), seems to give gravity to his opinions, doesn't it?

The way I read it, that particular enabling legislation was enacted for the Central Puget Sound Regional Transportation Authority to analyze and put together the first Sound Move ballot measure. (note the "Voter Approval" part of the header).

It's not an operational guideline.

Have you guessed this mystery person's name?

Most Transportation regulars already know, and usually when his name is mentioned, they have already surmised what his point of view is.

John Niles (quoted above), a co-chair of CETA (Citizens for Effective Transportation Alternatives), is well known in the Puget Sound region as a critic of rail based solutions, and is regularly sought out by the local media for that reason.

Which leads to my next question, when a road project is suggested, why doesn't the media rush to have Lloyd Flem or myself comment for a truly balanced article?

When [Transportation Issues Daily](#) ran a [piece by John Niles about the mudslide issues](#) plaguing passenger rail operations north of Seattle, I found it curious that it was headlined: Analyst: It's Too Dangerous to Ride Amtrak in Seattle in Winter.

Conversely [the rebuttal that Lloyd Flem presented is titled: Advocate: It's Perfectly Safe to Ride Amtrak North of Seattle in Winter](#)

Mr. Niles is an analyst, yet Mr. Flem, [from his bio on All Aboard] who received

degrees in Geography from the University of Washington and the University of California at Berkeley with emphasis on transportation and land use planning, and has taught at public schools, The Evergreen State College, Centralia College and the University of Wisconsin is considered an 'advocate.'

Couldn't Mr. Flem be described as 'Expert' or 'Transportation and Land Use Planning Instructor'? Analyst vs. Advocate, indeed.

But for the moment, let's look at both articles, and see what transpired.

In John Niles' piece, he points out the facts he is aware of surrounding the issues with mudslides on the BNSF Scenic Subdivision.

His editorial links to a lot of information that in actuality only gives generic background to his opinion to stop passenger rail service during the rainy season. These references make the article look well researched, and that Mr. Niles' opinion is based on a thorough analysis of the data prior to the mudslides.

Here's something for you to do.

Read the data in the links Mr. Niles posts.

This isn't specific data, but a general explanation of [what causes slides](#), (many geologists already know that), [where they occur](#) (BNSF knows that, too), and [under what conditions](#) (like when it rains a lot).

In fact, Mr. Niles case could have been made with the last graphic on the USGS page 'Rainfall Relative to Threshold', the Antecedent Wetness Index (AWI). If Mr. Niles was truly worried, he would be monitoring that daily, and **he could actually back up his opinion with data**. But he doesn't.

One could ask, is that the point?

Too bad this AWI isn't an App ... it could prove quite useful.

Everyone in Lloyd Flem's piece – ST, BNSF, WSDOT – all have the data, and they are the ones collaborating with each other to solve this, so Mr. Flem's rebuttal is exactly in line with Mr. Niles original article, an opinion piece. Mr. Flem is merely deferring to the analysis by those involved, who have the direct data.

Last time I checked, I don't think I saw Mr. Niles in the reporting hierarchy for any of these companies or agencies.

I wonder if Mr. Niles has friends in the Railroad business.

I don't mean that in a figurative sense, given his reputation, I mean, if he's going to comment on rail related issues, wouldn't he at least have some detailed information how things work on the railroad?

The comment I posted on that Transportation Issues Daily article (Lloyd's rebuttal), in a helpful manner explained that safety is a regular part of the railroad's operations. I even gave Mr. Niles an option that is available to any railfan, and that was

simply to observe what they do when the weather does present these problems.

If Mr. Niles was worried that his reputation was going to be sullied, I even gave him an 'out.' That being, he could always pretend he was bird watching, or even a coal-train observer (pro or anti).

Since Mr. Niles feels his background as a Navy-trained aviation safety specialist [his description in the article] qualifies him as the go-to expert on the subject of suspending Sounder and Amtrak service in the north end, I think it's time I do the same.

I have over 25 years in the Information Technology field and 9+ years in the automotive parts field. That, along with my time on the I-405 Corridor Program's Citizen's Committee, make me think I will declare myself The Expert ... in Everything!

First, I will bring my great IT experience and knowledge to bear on Mr. Niles' solution to our transportation woes.

You see, I don't believe that John Niles could only be known as a light-rail 'critic.' After all, those who plan and build these projects do the work, and the 'critic' has an easy job – just point out any flaws.

I feel Mr. Niles had to be 'for' something.

And I found it.

John Niles is President of Global Telematics.

From their website: "*Global Telematics is a research and consulting firm that approaches opportunities and problems in individual, organizational, and community performance with deep technology understanding and a policy perspective. Our viewpoint expressed in [our consulting services](#) encompasses both information and communications technology (ICT or [telematics](#)) as well as transportation (physical movement)."*

It seems, from their viewpoint, the constructive answer to our transportation woes lies in the application of computer technology. Things like 'Intelligent Transportation Systems' and Telecommuting.

Telecommuting ... hmm.

For a moment, let's ignore the recent news from [Yahoo!'s CEO Marissa Mayer concerning telecommuting](#) at her firm, and [the same news from Best Buy](#).

The [latest report from Commute Seattle](#), shows Telecommuting comprises only 4% of how people 'go to work.'

Bringing my great experience, and technical knowledge to bear on this, I will make the bold prediction for telecommuting.

I see it having the same success the [The Paperless Office](#)!!

Who she?

Forget he ... I mean him ... I mean Kemper Freeman.

Judy Clibborn is my hero! Although I think Transit Advocates are going to sink her boat, being the Tim Eyman Initiative haters that they are.

In case you don't know, the state Su-



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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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 Capitol Switchboard (all members): 202 224-3121
 State Legislature: State Capitol, Olympia 98504
 Hotline for leaving messages: 800 562-6000
 Amtrak Reservations/Information: 800 872-7245

All Aboard Washington: AllAboardWashington.org
 NARP: www.narprail.org
 NARP Hotline: www.narprail.org/news/hotline
 Amtrak: www.amtrak.com
 Amtrak Cascades: www.amtrakcascades.com
 Sound Transit: www.soundtransit.org

preme Court struck down his Initiative requiring a 2/3 majority in the state legislature to increase taxes.

The mind reels.

I was impressed with her '[Connecting Washington' transportation package](#), and if it wasn't for those transit-geeks and their anti-Eyman bent, that thing would be out there so I could vote on it as it probably couldn't get a 2/3 yes vote in the Legislature.

Trust me.

Flem, from page 2

spected passenger rail program going in its initial phase.

Skeptics, including some locals, felt the idea that unpaid volunteers could or would continue indefinitely to serve train riders and visitors to Centennial Station was a vain notion. Just maybe the skeptics will be right; maybe someday an Amtrak train, possibly a very late *Coast Starlight*, won't be met by the amazingly dedicated Station Hosts but ... in the twenty years plus that Centennial Station has been open, it has not yet happened! Every train has been met and in some cases, late-night passengers were given a ride home. Our volunteer Station Hosts are not Amtrak agents and do not perform all the functions agents do. They do make passenger visits to Centennial Station a positive experience.

Oh, to the question as to why the station was built "way out there" rather than in or near downtown Olympia and the Capitol. Er ... because "way out there" is where the mainline railroad tracks are located; are not and never have been in or near downtown Olympia and the Capitol.



All readers of this newsletter and your friends and families are invited to join Centennial Station's 20th Anniversary celebration on Saturday May 4th. Come by train from north or south. Enjoy the ambience of our classic rail station. Operation Lifesaver will have a locomotive cab simulator. Many other exhibits and refreshments. A happy occasion marking two decades of Olympia-Lacey's elegant station and the excellent service of the volunteers to the Capital community's traveling public.



Celebrate Centennial Station's 20th Anniversary Saturday May 4th 10:00a.m. - 2:00p.m.

Amtrak CASCADES Amtrak COAST STARLIGHT

Win 2 round-trip tickets to San Francisco on Amtrak's premier west coast train, the Coast Starlight (includes roomette and all meals onboard)

Fun for the whole family

6600 Yelm Highway SE

Vendors Food Refreshments Entertainment Guest Speakers Door Prizes

Passenger rail advocates in the state of Washington were very fortunate to have had Ms Paula Hammond as Secretary of Transportation the past several years until her retirement in February. The civil engineering graduate of Oregon State University spent most of her career at WSDOT. Her excellent work caused her to rise into management at WSDOT, finally being appointed to the top job by Governor Gregoire in 2007. In the opinion of All Aboard Washington, Ms Hammond, while having spent much of her career on the "highway side" at the Department, showed growing interest in the developing role of passenger rail in our state and became a true rail advocate, not just the top administrator, as she assumed the secretary's position. Paula's work is widely recognized, she being elected chair of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition, the national organization of those states which include passenger rail as a significant part of their transportation missions. (WA, NC, MD, IL, and in the past, WI, are among the more active states.)

In recent months, Paula testified about our passenger rail program before important Congressional committees in DC, being widely-praised (by NARP, among others) for her effective presentation. I was pleased that, when doing public speeches on the scope and status of WSDOT, Paula always talked about the rail program, often mentioning "us" first,

before the much larger highway and ferry divisions.

I have always maintained that the secretary of transportation is the state's second most difficult public sector job, topped only by that of the governor. Paula served well in that tough job, in a time of many and varied challenges in the field of transportation. All Aboard was pleased to present Paula Hammond our Tom Martin Award on March 2 for her exceptional service to passenger rail in our state (photo, page 1).

Thank you, Paula! And we hope to continue to see you and count you as one of us who want rail to have a growing role in the movement of people, as well as freight, in our state, region and nation.

Conference, from page 1

Some plans for the *Coast Starlight*:

- Convert the arcade area in the lower level of a coach on each trainset to an Acela-type business class seating area, with \$5 per meal credit in dining car and access to the Pacific Parlour Car.
- Refresh the Parlour car, upgrade the Wi-Fi, and add Satellite radio.
- Use existing Amtrak space in LA Union Station for a first class lounge to eliminate annual rental expense.

And for the *Empire Builder*:

- Connect the train to VIA Rail's *Canadian* and Churchill service with a Thruway bus from Grand Forks to Winnipeg.
- Expand marketing and partnerships for the ski business at Whitefish Mountain resort from both the west and the east.

Some plans for all long distance trains:

- One additional row of seats will be added to Superliner coaches to make an additional 700 seats available for sale. The already spacious legroom will be reduced about 2 inches.
- The Superliner dorm cars will be modified to maximize the number of rooms that can be made available for public sale.

Amtrak has had preliminary talks with the City of Seattle on installing a first class passenger lounge at King St. Station.

For more details on these speakers' presentations and for NARP Chairman Bob Stewart's presentation on what NARP is doing to promote intercity passenger rail service throughout the country see the slide shows on our website

www.allaboardwashington.org.

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All Aboard News

April 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. Our speaker is D.J. Mitchell, BNSF Asst. Vice President for Passenger Operations. He plans an open forum question and answer presentation. Please RSVP to Harvey Bowen, if you can (contact info p. 5). Put "April 13 RSVP" in Subject or Body of your email. Use the *Cascades* to and from the meeting.

May 4: Join All Aboard Washington and the Olympia-Lacey Centennial Station volunteer hosts in celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the station from **10:00 AM-2:00 PM**. See Lloyd Flem's column for details.

May 11: National Train Day at train stations and tourist railroads throughout the U.S. Check www.nationaltrainday.com for events. Many AAWA members will be travelling to the **Portland** event on the *Cascades*. **10 AM-4 PM**. Live steam locomotive, Amtrak

and other rail equipment on display. AORTA reports there could be an announcement about something else that may appear at this event. We'll leave it to you to ponder what that might be.

June 8: All Aboard Washington is planning its June meeting for **Blaine** to support the people on both sides of the 49th parallel pushing for a *Cascades* stop in the border city that would serve not only Blaine but people living in British Columbia's lower mainland south of Vancouver. Details will be published here and on line once we firm up our plans.

All Aboard Washington welcomed the following new members in February and March: Cynthia Murray & James Schwing, Ellensburg; Elizabeth Garfield, Seattle; James Bowditch, Bainbridge Island; Luis Moscoso, Mountlake Terrace; John Litten, Lacey; Paula Hammond, Olympia; and Salah Al-Tamimi, Olympia.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include Zack Willhoite, Dan McFarling, Warren Yee, Rich DeGarmo, Bill Becht, Charlie Hamilton, Art Poole, Lloyd Flem and Jim Cusick.

AAWA welcomes **new WSDOT Secretary Lynn Peterson**, appointed by Gov. Inslee on Feb. 19. We look forward to working with Ms Peterson on rail passenger issues.

Blaine *Cascades* stop efforts move ahead

Bill Becht, AAWA member from Blaine, and **Save the Blaine Station** are leading a two-pronged effort to preserve the city's badly deteriorated 100 year old BNSF station and to convince WSDOT and Amtrak to add Blaine as a *Cascades* stop. The group notes that an Amtrak stop in the city would be a boon to its economy, attracting more visitors and thus more businesses. The stop would be also help boost ridership on the *Cascades* by opening a huge new market in the lower mainland of British Columbia south of Vancouver, an area with a population approaching one million. With the stop in the U.S., immigration control would remain at Vancouver's Pacific Central Station. Save the Blaine Station has started a petition, both on-line and in local businesses. To sign the petition visit www.blainestation.com.

