



WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

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www.AllAboardWashington.org

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

AAWA pushes Blaine Amtrak Cascades stop at meeting with local supporters

Over 30 people in attendance at All Aboard Washington's June 8 Blaine meeting heard of our organization's strong support for an Amtrak Cascades station stop in the Peace Arch City. We also support saving and restoring the Blaine BNSF station building, which is currently boarded up and slowly deteriorating.

Though Blaine has a population of



AAWA President Loren Herrigstad, standing, leads the discussion at the June 8 Blaine meeting.

Two photos by Jim Hamre

only about 5000, there is a huge untapped Cascades ridership potential in the British Columbia lower mainland between the Fraser River and the 49th parallel. Over 800,000 people call this area home. Most would not drive northerly to downtown Vancouver to board a south-bound train and if they drive south to Bellingham they are nearly half way to Seattle so why get out of the car at that point.

With a Blaine stop to serve this population (and boost the city's own tourism), the immigration – and hopefully soon customs – preclearance in the Vancouver station is preserved, as people make their own way across the border to board the train. The added ridership would have



The Blaine station, abandoned by BNSF, has been offered to the City of Blaine.

a major revenue impact for the Cascades, which is critical to maintaining and

growing the Seattle-Vancouver service.

The campaign to save the building and establish a train stop in Blaine has been spearheaded by Bill Becht, local businessman and AAWA member. His interest started with seeing a news article that the station was to be torn down. Being a history buff, Bill didn't want to see this happen. He started attending city council meetings and writing letters. He put petitions throughout the city and online, gathering over 5500 signatures in support of the stop.

Bill's efforts led the city council and mayor to ask BNSF to hold off tearing down the station. BNSF granted the city a one year reprieve, which soon expires. Mayor Harry Robinson, in attendance at our meeting, hopes the city council will ask for an extension and BNSF will grant it. The railroad has offered the building to the city for \$1 if it's moved off the right-of-way (which of course diminishes its functionality to serve a Cascades stop). Currently, the city has not identified a funding source to take ownership of the building and save it; they are working with the Port of Bellingham in the effort.

All Aboard Washington, in addition to pledging its support to saving the station and establishing a stop, vowed to use its influence with WSDOT and BNSF to move both efforts forward. WSDOT is reluctant to add stops to the Cascades because of potential increases in running times and the fact that any number of communities want a stop. For example, [WSDOT is currently analyzing a stop for the City of Auburn](#). This effort has allowed DOT to develop criteria for analyzing potential stops, which can be used for Blaine.

Several attendees brought up the need to involve the local state legislators and Congresswomen Suzan DelBene (D-Medina). Citizens and politicians from the BC lower mainland have shown support for these efforts and that must be built upon. The long time missing partner in

(See **Blaine**, page 4)

Seattle Rail Day – July 27



AAWA's Warren Yee and Kathy Davis chat with a visitor at Seattle Rail Day. In addition to many groups providing information, Amtrak, WSDOT and ODOT had the Amtrak Exhibit Train and one of the two new ODOT-owned Talgo Series 8 trainsets on display. With restored King St. Station in



the background, lined up are the Amtrak Exhibit Train, the ODOT

Talگو trainset and Cascades 507, ready to depart. The Exhibit Train was powered by locomotive 42, which Amtrak has painted as a salute to our Veterans. Guided tours of the new trainset were offered



by Talگو. At left are views of a standard coach car and the 2-and-1

seating in the business class car.



Bottom photo by Zack Willhoite; Others by Jim Hamre



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

WashARP/AWA: The Constant Pro-Rail Voice for Over Three Decades

My saving written material associated with rail advocacy in behalf of Washington and the Pacific Northwest since the early 1980s (and NARP material since the late 1970s) means many boxes full of notes, letters, papers, correspondence, documents, meeting proceedings, studies, etc. that fill my office and a pair of big storage closets! Sorting and organizing this stuff, which has involved dozens of hours in recent weeks, can get tedious. It has also been a reminder of the vital role our organization – Washington Association of Rail Passengers now renamed All Aboard Washington – has played in bringing forth a successful and respected, if still modest, passenger rail program in this corner of North America.

While we can fully justify tooting our own horn, we at AAWA must acknowledge dedicated work has been done by many others, from elected officials at all levels, to public and private sector people associated with rail, to the growing 100,000s who ride our trains. These rail passengers, too few of whom are AAWA members, are why we and others have labored to add more rail service to our state's and nation's transportation mix.

But while many elected officials have short political lives and a multitude of interests other than passenger trains, and public sector employees often experience rapid turnover, and key employees at Amtrak and Sound Transit – with a few laudable exceptions, such as Dan Engstrom, who just retired from Amtrak after 41 years – also move through their jobs rapidly, we at WashARP/AWA soldier on, year after year, now decade after decade, possessing the institutional knowledge, broad perspective, and deep commitment to more and better passenger trains few others have.

I moved to Olympia in 1980 from Grays Harbor, having helped organize and administer, since 1976, the Washington State Farmers Market Association, with duties as (unpaid) executive VP somewhat similar to those I practiced in the early years as the WashARP Executive Director. The experiences with elected officials and state agencies in Olympia, and by 1985 the successes with farmers markets, convinced key WashARP people that I could replicate a similar presence in Olympia for passenger rail advocacy. December 1, 1985 I became point

man for WashARP as our Executive Director.

In both advocacies I encountered naysayers, including those who insisted that “nobody cares” where and how food is produced and “nobody wants to ride a train.” Farmers markets are now of course a huge success in Washington, providing livings for a new generation of farmers not afraid to work hard, plus superb locally-grown products for 100,000s of customers. Public investment in passenger train service still has opponents but few can credibly claim “nobody wants to ride...” as a major problem with our trains is sell outs. “We need more trains” is what is heard.

As a member of NARP in 1982 I acquired the address of Mr. Hans Mueller, then of Bellevue, and wrote Hans asking if

While we can fully justify tooting our own horn, we at AAWA must acknowledge dedicated work has been done by many others, from elected officials at all levels, to public and private sector people associated with rail, to the growing 100,000s who ride our trains.

NARP membership meant concurrent membership in a state rail advocacy group. Hans answered “no” as he phoned me asking that I come north to a meeting of the state organization. (In my letter to Hans I had also fussed that travel agents assumed I would fly to cities in the Northwest where I was then doing farmers market workshops. As a WSFMA person, whenever possible, I traveled by Amtrak.) Hans considered me a good prospect for WashARP membership.

Notes and papers exhumed from the early 1980s reminded me of the bipartisan derision, during Transportation Committee hearings, aimed at the two or three courageous legislators who proposed at least a look at a State role in Intercity passenger train service. These courageous legislators somehow managed to convince their skeptical peers to fund a study of returning passenger train service to Vancouver, BC. My impressions were that the study, done by one of the Big Firms, concluded that trains are nice but it would be very costly to get them re-established to Vancouver, ridership would be modest, and the greatest need was ... for additional studies!

I represented WashARP in Olympia informally through November of 1985, learning how transportation advocacy works and developing rapport with some legislators and a couple of WSDOT people. December 1, 1985 I formally contracted with

WashARP, following then-President Chuck Mott's getting Board approval to put me on a modest monthly stipend.

The “archives” from 1986 show our intense effort to return the Vancouver, BC service in time for their World's Fair. We learned to work with the press, increasingly with State elected and agency officials, the Amtrak bureaucracy, and some in the private sector, both in BC and in Washington. Neither Amtrak nor the State had funds available to support the proposed service. We did not succeed in getting private sector investments. But the learning and getting a broader public interest in passenger trains made the effort worthwhile.

We worked for passage of legislation creating a Rail Development Commission. We were pleased that a commission dealing explicitly with rail came to be in the late 80s. Among the RDC members was Mr. George Benson, revered Seattle city councilman and WashARP member. A good thing, as the original proposed work plan for the RDC dealt with regional and transit rail, freight rail at all levels, but had not included intercity passenger rail! Mr. Benson requested that Chuck Mott and I give a “short course” on intercity passenger trains at an RDC meeting. We did so and intercity rail was added to the work plan.

One of the most anxious moments came when the RDC's findings were to be put into bill form, SB 1825. At the Senate Transportation Committee hearing on the bill, a GOP senator from northeast WA proposed the parts dealing with intercity passenger rail be totally eliminated, stating that it no longer was needed or relevant. Unfortunately, several intercity passenger rail proponents on the STC were absent that day, a couple others appeared to be dozing, until ... another GOP senator offered strong support for intercity rail, which he tied to the then enthusiasm for maglev. Hearing that it might someday be maglev, the northeast WA senator withdrew his motion and intercity passenger rail remained as part of the legislative package.

We continued working closely with members of the Legislature who seemed open to a state role in forwarding passenger rail. At the risk of leaving out important legislative allies, I'll mention Rep. George Walk, Sen. Jeanette Wood, and the late Rep. Ruth Fisher as important pro-passenger-rail people. At WSDOT, again risking leaving out some helpful folks, Jim Toohey and Jim Slakey were particularly important to the passenger rail cause. In the cases of those named and others in the Legislature and at WSDOT in the late 80s, early 90s, I spent many genuinely pleasant hours working with them. This is not to suggest (See **Flem**, page 4)



WITH
JIM
CUSICK

Life Ends at the Skagit River

Gloom!!! DOOM!!!!

Life as we know it had come to a screeching halt!

The ONLY BRIDGE over the Skagit River in Mount Vernon has fallen, and we can't get up – or down – from the North.

From all of the news reports and the fact that area merchants were complaining of lost business, and some hotels in Anacortes were even getting cancellations after the news, you would think the bridge was the only way to get from here to there.



It appears we've run the wheels off of our transportation

system!!

This is an incredible travesty, what will you do ... what will you do?

Well, about \$20 million promptly sent by Uncle Sam ought to fix things pronto, since this is a critical connection, with what, 70,000 vehicles per day making that crossing?

It was Carmageddon, I tell you!!!

I even witnessed it with my own eyes ... and my own tires on the pavement.

It took me all of an extra 10 minutes to get through the area.

How did I do that?

Well, I have a little secret ... it's not really the only way in and out of the area. Ha!!!

It is if you have high expectations of high speed travel for you, and you alone in your car.

So if it really wasn't Carmageddon ... what really happened?

Wouldn't the loss of a major artery, one that carries 70,000 vehicles a day, have some effect?

In fact, to mitigate the inconvenience, which is what it really turned out to be, an inconvenience, WSDOT, Sound Transit, and BNSF quickly partnered up to put on additional train service.

WSDOT spokesperson [Laura Kingman](#) told [[Seattle Transit Blogger Martin Duke](#)] the highest ridership of the round

trip on any day was 55.

Unfortunately the regular average was quite a bit less than that, and once the temporary span was in place, the decision was made to cancel the extra train.

So, now it's time for all the armchair quarterbacks to weigh in and tell us what went wrong.

I'll tell you what's wrong.

The center of gravity is in the wrong place!

And it affects our minds ... if you think that rational thought has anything to do with driving decisions.

I have way, way too many conversations with people planning their train trips, and saying "Hmmm, that's cheaper than the cost of gas!", as if that is the only cost of driving your car.

When you are reimbursed by your employer, or the government, or you check AAA's numbers on "How much does it cost to drive?" you will find out that an average sedan calculates out to \$.59/mile.

We'll get back to that later.

But to find out what happened, let's first get back to the numbers surrounding how many people used the bridge, and maybe where they all went to, if not on to the train.

When you check the WSDOT Annual Traffic Report, you can see that indeed 70,000 vehicles a day cross that bridge. However, what is also apparent is that just north of the bridge, after the George Hopper Road exit, the number drops off to 50,000.

On the other end of the bridge, south of Mount Vernon, at Starbird Road (just south of the Fir Island cutoff, i.e. SR 534 - Pioneer Rd), the count again drops off to 50,000.

What makes up the difference of 20,000 vehicles?

Well, one of the possibilities is that a number of people who are heading to Anacortes or Whidbey Island use I-5 all the way to SR 20, which is on the north side of the Skagit River.

This was apparently borne out by the uptick in traffic using the Fir Island cutoff exit, since WSDOT found it necessary to install a temporary traffic light at an otherwise lightly used intersection.

People were making an early exit, heading towards Best Road, and tiptoeing through the tulips to get to SR 20 to access points west.

Unfortunately, there is no before and after snapshots of the local roads, but the word was that all the local roads, including W Division St. and Riverside Dr., both which cross the Skagit River (surprise) in the area, saw large increases in traffic,

along with those who opted to head towards Hwy 9 at a point much farther north than usual.

Other anecdotal evidence showed that many people just did not make the trip.

Why not? Were these trips discretionary? Hmmm, now that's evidence of "induced demand" with a high-speed interstate.

It would stand to reason that even the drivers between Sedro Woolley, Burlington, and Mount Vernon apparently see I-5 as a high-speed conduit for travel that they can just as easily use as the local roads.

So, why didn't people take the train north from Seattle and environs, up for a day of shopping in Mount Vernon, or the Bellingham/Fairhaven area?

Ah, this is where the armchair quarterbacking comes into play.

And let me tell you, the views expressed out there in Internet-land lend themselves to immediate conclusions.

Some espoused the idea that the train was running the wrong way, and that it should have come down from the north in the morning, and returned at night. Why not?

In that scenario, one would have to think about the fact that the equipment and the crew would have to stay up in Bellingham overnight. Maybe cost dictated that decision.

Others criticized the timing, that with only ½ hour between train 510 (Seattle-Vancouver BC) and 512 (Seattle-Bellingham), that it would have been better to leave a little later for a more leisurely type of outing. Hey, if I'm going for a day of R&R, I don't want to have to set my alarm THAT EARLY!

The return trip, leaving Bellingham at around 5 o'clock did work for making a good day trip to Mount Vernon or Bellingham, given that the regular return of train 517 at 7:49 PM made for a much longer day for someone who wanted to take a day trip up there.

Which seems to be the real question.

Do people from the south think that these are destination cities?

It was reported that Bellingham saw an upsurge in Canadian shoppers, and consequently Mount Vernon and Burlington merchants complained of a loss of their Canadian business.

Along with Laura Kingman's reply above, where she noted that people's habits tend to take a while to change, it could be argued that people from the area around Seattle don't see Bellingham and Mount Vernon as places to visit. (See **Cusick**, page 5)

Flem, from page 2

gest any less good working with more recent legislatures. Senators Mary Margaret Haugen and Dan Swecker were greatly missed by AAWA in Olympia during the 2013 session. But now Rep. Luis Moscoso has taken a leadership role for rail at the Capitol. New generations of allies.

While Olympia-Lacey's Centennial Station was truly a broadly-based community project, most of the key people involved were WashARP members. The late Maurice "Buck" Harmon was an indispensable leader of our project. Others WashARP members deeply involved included George Barner and Rich DeGarmo, still very active in AAWA today. (Important to mention that a couple of Thurston County employees developed an extraordinary commitment to the Station project. I served as the Amtrak Depot Committee's Secretary and liaison with WSDOT, Amtrak, and Olympia-based representatives of BN. Many other WashARP members from around the state were supportive, a large number purchasing the paver bricks that helped to fund the project.

The Centennial Station project, which demonstrated the Olympia-Lacey-Tumwater's persistent determination to build passenger rail in the Pacific Northwest, favorably impressed members of the Legislature, none more than the highly respected Sen. Pat Patterson of Pullman. I vividly recall Sen. Patterson's having pointed at me sitting in the audience at a Senate Transportation Committee hearing, and saying that with Olympia-area citizens building a fine new depot without much taxpayer money, he would support some state funding for improved passenger train service in general. The blessing of the conservative Eastern Washington Republican Patterson at that time helped ensure a broad bi-partisan legislative support that continues to this day.

We were strong supporters of the incremental approach to improved passenger rail. The State ending up also dedicated to incremental development of our rail corridor, after some originally showed a short-lived excitement over maglev.

WashARP member Hal Cooper, PhD, arranged to have ABB, a Swiss-Swedish maker of high-end, high-tech passenger trains, bring their X-2000 train to demonstrate its capability in our Northwest. Following the X-2000, Talgo brought their fine trains to the Northwest Corridor. Bob Bregent, the relentlessly-dedicated manager of the Centennial Station project, as well as then-Secretary of State and now very active AAWA member Ralph Munro, helped arrange to bring the Spanish-built Talgos to town. (And in Ralph Munro's case, bringing the Crown Prince of Spain to town.) The X-2000s and Talgos helped further convince influential officials at the State level to support passenger rail as part of a modally-diverse DOT.

The State Transportation Commission from the late 80s on, was cordial and open to passenger rail advocates. With but a couple of exceptions, Commissioners welcomed my input and that of other WashARP leaders. Lots of good folks on the WTC, but I'll single out Mr. Aubrey Davis. We were privileged to have Aubrey as a WashARP/AAWA member. His support for passenger rail, while vitally important, was but one of the affirmative issues Mr. Davis worked on well into his nineties. He passed away earlier this year, honored in his Mercer Island hometown and throughout the state.

Gov. Gary Locke's Blue Ribbon Committee on

Transportation included many members committed to the highway mode. But WashARP's Chuck Mott, with a couple of allies who favored more than just roads, made certain rail, passenger and freight, had a proper role.

Our Congressional delegation has traditionally supported passenger rail. Again, I'll mention only two in this column, although many were our allies. Sen. Patty Murray's support for Amtrak was such that she was awarded NARP's Golden Spike Award, for particularly meritorious work at the Federal level.

And then there is Congressman Al Swift, also a NARP Golden Spike recipient. WashARP/AAWA has always sought to have guest speakers at our meetings who are in important positions involving rail policy and administration. These guests have included a dozen or more state legislative transportation committee leaders, all Secretaries of Transportation since the 1980s, leading Amtrak, Sound Transit, BNSF, and Talgo officials, and several members of Congress. Rep. Swift was open to a larger role for passenger rail than what was then the case when we invited him to be our guest at a Bellingham meeting. That meeting was said to be a catalyst for greater action from Rep. Swift in DC. For several years, he was an absolute leader in the US House on passenger rail issues. Swift paid WashARP credit for "being alone, crying out in the wilderness for passenger rail" in the early years of what is becoming somewhat of a passenger rail renaissance in our state and country.

WashARP hosted Amtrak President Tom Downs when he visited SW Washington. We help sponsor a luncheon and reception at our Capitol and arranged for a very warm welcome, including a key to the City of Centralia, a community grateful for its good (by non-NEC standards) Amtrak service. When Amtrak President David Gunn met with state transportation leaders in Olympia, I was seated next to Gunn. (OK, that we are both "senior gentlemen" might have been the reason.)

Community leaders have been very important as well. Naming again but two, former mayors Rob Eaton of Leavenworth and Mark Foutch of Olympia proved to be very important supporters of passenger rail in their cities and beyond.

WashARP/AAWA has observed and applauded the growth of the Rail Office within WSDOT. We regard many WSDOT Rail staff, past and present, as friends and allies. Will mention but two again: Gil Mallory, who was full throttle ahead in his implementing what the Legislature would mandate. The usual caution exhibited by mid-management at public and private institutions was not Gil's style. Following Gil's move on to an Amtrak executive position, Ken Uznanski assumed the role as head of the Rail Office. Ken's careful, steady leadership style, was different from that of Gil, but he was recognized nationwide as he assumed leadership positions among the States for Passenger Rail Coalition. Important to mention that the current rail leadership at WSDOT was recognized by BNSF's DJ Mitchell as the best of the many state-level rail people BNSF works with. And our DOT Rail people effectively established the model of good work the FRA required to receive ARRA Passenger rail grants.

While I had cordial and constructive relationships with all our state's secretaries of transportation the past three decades, Sid Morrison and Paula Hammond were particularly positive. Sid had a fairly good

record as a Congressman from Central Washington, but from our viewpoint, was outstanding as our Secretary of Transportation. The growth and respect for Washington's rail program was first rate under Mr. Morrison's leadership. He was, like Ken Uznanski, a national leader among state-level transportation executives. Paula rose through the ranks primarily as a highways person. But after assuming the secretary's position, she quickly included rail as a vital part of her mission. She too assumed a leadership role at the national level on state rail issues. We are pleased to note Paula is now working at the Seattle office of Parsons-Brinkerhoff and will keep in touch.

I really hesitate to mention names of WashARP/AAWA people who have proved extraordinarily helpful over the decades. Risking leaving out folks worthy in inclusion, I'll venture forth with five names not included in the above paragraphs: Jim Hamre, Loren Herrigstad, Bob Lawrence, Bruce Agnew and, most importantly, Darleen Flem!

In all cases, we have sought to be collegial rather than confrontational. Our motto "Praise and Push" has been adopted elsewhere. There is no way to ever know whether Washington State's passenger rail program would have existed, at least to the current degree, had WashARP/AAWA never existed. We believe we were, are, and will be helpful in carrying on important independent support for passenger train service in the decades to come.



AAWA offers condolences to our Oregon colleagues concerning the death of David M Zagel, who was a very important part of the AORTA organization since joining in the 1990s. David served on the AORTA board of directors in the late 1990s and as vice-president and president 1994-96. David, a U of Oregon Architecture grad, is described by his AORTA friends, as bright, articulate, compassionate, intelligent, and dedicated. We of AAWA also recall the 37-year-old as a fine young man and a credit to the rail advocacy community of the Northwest.

Duane L Berenson, who served in the Washington State legislature for 18 years before being appointed Secretary of Transportation, a position he held from 1981 until 1993, passed away in Mt Vernon on July 5 at the age of 84. While Mr. Berenson led WSDOT at a time when highways were seen as the major focus of state transportation interest, he became a supporter of rail as a state responsibility during those crucial first years of our state's passenger rail program. Duane followed the advice of WSDOT senior staff and key legislators who believed rail should be part a multi-modal Department of Transportation. A lifelong Republican, Mr. Berenson had respect from both sides of the aisle during his long career of public service to the State of Washington.

Blaine, from page 1

operating and improving the *Cascades* service has been the province of British Columbia. Infrastructure improvements in BC funded by the province could easily mitigate the additional several minutes needed for a Blaine stop.

For updates on the two-pronged project, check out the station website: www.blainestation.com.

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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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 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

Cusick, from page 3

At least not the downtown areas, which are old-style pedestrian friendly areas.

But what do the Canadians see?

What I have been told is that while things aren't any cheaper in the US, given that the Canadian dollar is of equal value, there is much more selection in the states.

Since the train didn't run from Vancouver BC, to Mount Vernon or Bellingham, that wasn't an option for those shoppers.

While some of our German speaking friends like to poke fun at the fact that it seems no one in Leavenworth, WA can understand German, even though the town has built its reputation on being an Alpine Bavarian Village, their "shtick" sells the town.

It has a flavor.

People from the Central Puget Sound region visit it because of that.

What is the attraction in Bellingham? Mount Vernon?

Burlington has built its reputation on the outlet malls, which are the epitome of auto-oriented strip mall development. Even though they were accessible via car when the bridge was out, maybe shoppers avoided them because of the traffic, or the fact that they couldn't drive at 60 mph right up to the front door ... well at least to the exit ramp close to the outlet malls.

The Fairhaven shopping area near Bellingham has an attractive pedestrian nature, but again, major shopping is oriented around the strip malls.

Mount Vernon fancies itself as the Tulip Capitol of the Northwest, and they've painted their downtown smokestack to advertise that fact, but the tulip fields aren't a year round attraction.

Since parking is restricted during the Tulip Festival, and access is provided via transit to the various tulip farms, that lends itself to taking the train and many people do.

Maybe the locals in Mount Vernon should learn to walk in wooden clogs and dress like folks in Holland ... all year long.

Don't laugh ...

Unpave the road system

Since we have a system in effect, the extremely financially-socialistic highways, (remember, if it were a capitalistic venture, it would be a private toll road) that competes with a fare based system, who before said highway system was built made money on pay-

ing passengers, what can you do to level the playing field?

It appears that any paved highway is an invitation to build along, or even at the end of a stretch of such a route.

Have you seen developers create housing on miles-long gravel roads?

I was musing over this the other day in Eastern Washington, while travelling on Sagebrush Flats Road, and noticing as I made the jog onto B SE Rd, lo-and-behold, like wildflowers under the power lines, were real estate property-for-sale signs.

I was led to the only possible conclusion that if we want a balanced transportation system, and aren't willing to make the highway system one that "pays for itself," we would have to unpave the roads.

Don't laugh ...

If you have followed the I-5 Columbia River Crossing project, and how the Washington State Legislature has been drawing the battle lines, you'd think that is what we are trying to do.

And from an unlikely source, since the biggest snag seems to be the Federally funded inclusion of the extension of Portland's Max light rail system over the river and into Vancouver, WA.

In what seems to be with almost religious zeal, some politicians will not compromise with rail supporters, even if it means that what some have considered a massive road expansion project can move forward.

Portland is willing to accept this project, but prefers that the future influx of commuters be handled by the rail system. Vancouver has drawn the line, and it doesn't include light rail in their fair neighborhood.

This has been a long-standing conflict, since way back in the days before the 1996 Sound Move vote. On a Sound Transit sponsored bus trip to visit Portland's Max system, I heard the same arguments.

Who doesn't drive?

Well, hardly anyone at some time in their lives, especially in the modern western cities and towns that grew up around the cul-de-sac and arterial based road system.

Yet, if you actually do the math, and really, really think about how and why it costs that AAA estimate of \$.59 mile, you would hardly drive the car as much as you do.

The justification to drive is based on that little portion of the above cost that AAA characterizes as "marginal costs," or the gas, oil, windshield-washer fluid and other consumables used at a relative quick

pace, and requiring more frequent cash outlays.

What AAA assumes is that you buy your car brand new, and trade it in after 5 years. This goes in the column of "sunk costs," i.e. depreciation, insurance.

Sunk costs are part of the driving justification, since everyone figures "Well, I've thrown my money away on this contraption already, so I only really care about the marginal costs."

One little problem ...

Everyone doesn't buy their car new, and trade it in every 5 years.

Essentially, you hide the per mile cost in the low-maintenance portion of the accounting.

A new car won't require big outlays of cash for engine, transmission and brake repairs.

Keep the car longer and the cost factors move from the sunk costs column to the marginal costs column.

As the car ages, those costs don't seem so marginal any more.

If you decide to buy the car used and then "run it into the ground," you are essentially settling for a much lower-quality ride, since at what point do you decide one of these marginal items will be the straw-that-breaks-the-camel's-back?

Go for a simple car. Enjoy the austerity. Enjoy the lower maintenance costs. Enjoy that standard of living.

Go for a car with a few amenities, and here's where keeping it longer creates that maintenance problem.

You can keep a nice car longer, a good twenty years, and 200k-300k miles, if you are willing to invest the money and/or time to keep it that nice.

Guess what ... AAA is right.

It really does cost \$.59/mile to drive. Any other calculation is an excuse, not a reason, to make the decision to drive.

Sometimes I get the "driving cost is only the marginal costs" argument from the most unlikely of sources.

Don't laugh.



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\$ 25 Individual Membership

\$ 18 Student/Fixed Income Membership

Extra Contribution of \$_____

Please send me my newsletter through e-mail only.

Note: if you move, let us know in advance and save us the fee for address correction service.

Name_____

Address_____

City/State/Zip_____

Phone_____

Email_____

All Aboard News

August 10: All Aboard Washington's Annual Summer Barbecue. It will be noon – 4:00 PM at **Tumwater Pioneer Park**, 5800 Henderson Blvd (just south of Yelm Hwy).

Come join us at this annual summer event. AAWA will provide burgers, hot dogs and beverages (no alcohol in the park). Those attending are welcome to bring potluck salads, desserts and other specialties to share.

If you're outside the Olympia area, we encourage you to take Amtrak train 500 from the south (returning on train 507 or 509). From the north use either Train 501 or 11 (returning on Train 516 or a later train). Shuttle transportation will be provided from/to the Olympia-Lacey Station. We request RSVP if you can for shuttle service. Direct questions to Lloyd Flem; see page 5 for contact information.

September 14 & 15: Snohomish Rail Weekend. In both observance of the 125th anniversary of the pioneering Seattle, Lakeshore & Eastern Railway, and to promote continued support for the redevelopment of the Eastside Rail Line, the City of Snohomish is holding a week-

end of events. There will be a forum on Sept. 14, with speakers profiling both the area's rail history and rail's possible future. On Sept. 15, there will be outdoor events, including train and caboose rides on Eastside Community Rail. AAWA will be having an information table both days. Stay tuned to AAWA's social media and web page or contact Lloyd Flem for updates.

September 21: All Aboard Washington meeting in Ellensburg. We will meet at noon at a restaurant to be determined. Watch for the location on our social media and website, or contact Lloyd Flem in September. After the meeting, we will tour the under-restoration Ellensburg Depot and see the excellent work being done by the local community. Also contact Lloyd for possible carpooling, both if you are driving and have space or want a ride.

October 12: All Aboard Washington business meeting from noon-4 p.m. at Basil's Kitchen, Embassy Suites Hotel, 15920 W. Valley Hwy, **Tukwila**, adjacent to the Amtrak Station. Please RSVP to Harvey Bowen, if you can (contact info p. 5). Put "October 12 RSVP" in Subject or Body of your email.

All Aboard Washington welcomed the following new members in June and July: Bruce McIntosh, Seattle; Robert Blake, Bellingham; and Rob Brewer, Seattle.



All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include Bob Lawrence, Mike Morrison, Zack Willhoite, Lloyd Flem, Jim Cusick, Bill Becht, Louis Musso, Bruce Agnew and Loren Herrigstad.

Remember to Like us on Facebook and Follow us on Twitter for continuing passenger rail updates.

The Issaquah Valley Trolley is scheduled to go into service Aug. 10. A celebration will take place at 11 a.m. and rides for the public will start at 1 p.m. Once in regular operation, the car will depart from the historic Issaquah Depot, 150 First Ave. NE, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays through the summer and fall season. Trolley No. 519 was built in 1925 and originally ran in Lisbon, Portugal. It was rebuilt by the GOMACO Trolley Company of Ida Grove, Iowa a year ago.