

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

Sen. Dan Swecker speaks at AAWA meeting

State Sen. Dan Swecker (R-Rochester) was the featured speaker at All Aboard Washington's annual membership meeting on Nov. 10 at the historic Centralia Union Depot.

(Sen. Swecker lost his bid for reelection last month, surprising many people. In his introduction of Swecker, Lloyd Flem said, "Dan Swecker is a great friend of passenger and freight rail." His presence in the state Capital will be greatly missed.)

Swecker pointed out that our state received about \$820 mill. in federal high speed rail funding because we were ready with our plan to improve operations, reliability and safety, and expand service in BNSF's Northwest Corridor from Blaine to the Columbia River for both passenger and freight trains.

A next big task is to determine how the Legislature and WSDOT will provide full funding for operation of the

Cascades service between Vancouver, BC and Portland. One Seattle-Portland round-trip is currently funded by Amtrak. This assumption of costs is effective in 2013 and is required by the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008. And there are many unanswered questions yet. For example, WSDOT and Amtrak signed a 50-year contract granting WSDOT access to the new Seattle maintenance base at no cost to maintain the Talgo trainsets. Does PRRIA's requirements supersede this contract?

Swecker discussed the agreement by WSDOT and Oregon DOT to jointly manage the entire corridor as a single entity, instead of currently where WSDOT takes the lead north of Portland and ODOT, south of Portland.

On time performance of the Cascades continues to be a major issue. OTP is well below the 80% goal (See **Swecker**, page 5)

"Curse of Oil" Hits *Builder*

Observers reporting on the impact of oil discoveries in Third World countries use the phrase "Curse of Oil" to describe the economic distortions that result when what appears to be a wealth-producing boom harms other parts of the economy.

These distortions – labor shortages, inflation, supply shortages – sometimes act as a brake on the oil development that is causing the boom.

One characteristic of the Third World oil boom is the inability of governments and businesses to adjust to the new situation. So, it was not surprising when the Sidney, MT *Herald* reported that "U.S. Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester, both D-MT, are urging Amtrak to increase capacity of the *Empire Builder* to help energy-impacted communities take full advantage of the Bakken oil and gas boom."

"We are hearing from our constituents that Amtrak passenger capacity for Montanans, tourists and other passengers trying to travel through eastern Montana and western North Dakota is 'extremely limited,'" wrote the senators.

Amtrak's service is often the best way to reach the small cities along the northern route and has long been used for a sort of long-distance commuting by workers who live in the dorm-type housing and go home from time to time. This traffic coexisted for generations with tourism.

Now Amtrak is in a tough spot. Decades of neglect by politicians of both parties have left it critically short of long-distance equipment and only indirect improvements planned (new Viewliners and regional-type cars should release some of the aging Superliners that are being used on Eastern and short-haul trains.)

Demand on the *Builder* for tourist travel has been boosted by gasoline (See **Builder**, page 4)



The NARP council toured Talgo's Milwaukee manufacturing plant at its October meeting in that city. At left is one of the two trainsets purchased by Oregon DOT. Note the higher windows in the Bistro car that makes it easier for standing passengers to see the passing scenery. On the right, AAWA member Mark Lawrence checks out the new design of the Bistro, which has a redesigned service counter and more storage, but no seating. (That remains available in the table car adjacent to the Bistro.) Other changes include more bicycle space in the baggage car and fixed seats. This means half the seats face in each direction so that some passengers will ride backwards. While this is new to the Northwest (and will take some adjustment on the part of the passengers) it is common practice on corridor service in California, the Midwest and the Northeast, as well as much of the rest of the world. The first trainset was undergoing static testing when we were there and was moved to the [Transportation Technology Center](#) for dynamic testing in early November. The trainsets are expected to arrive in the Northwest in late January, where additional testing will be performed. The plan is to have the trains in service during spring 2013. How they will be used is still being finalized.

Photos by Jim Hamre



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

**Election 2012: Impacts on Rail;
Other Pending Issues**

Those readers who have Internet access may have read my comments on the November 6 General Election on AAWA's website and Facebook page. For those of you who read only or prefer the print medium, here's a summary and extended comments on Election 2012 as it applies only to rail issues, particularly passenger rail.

It is almost certain the re-election of Obama-Biden will be better in forwarding passenger train service than would have been the case had Romney-Ryan won. While perhaps less vocally pro-rail than two years ago, the Obama administration gave no hint of ending support for Amtrak, in contrast to statements by Mr. Romney and in the Ryan budget proposal.

It is uncertain whether very pro-passenger-rail Ray LaHood will be retained as US Secretary of Transportation. Either LaHood or most of those named as possible replacements would likely be strongly supportive of rail and transit. Stay tuned.

As Democrats in recent years have been generally more supportive of passenger rail and transit than, particularly, the new breed of GOP members of Congress, one might assume funding for rail might have an easier route as Democrats increased their numbers in both House and Senate. However the loss of four pro-passenger-rail Republicans in the Senate (Snowe (ME), Brown (MA), Hutchison (TX), Lugar (IN)) and the attrition of pro-rail Republicans in the House, means probably little net increase in votes for rail investments in 2013 and even more of the support will come from one party.

Whether John Mica (R-FL) retains chairmanship of the US House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee or is replaced by Bill Shuster (R-PA) is of interest. Both are pro-passenger rail, particularly for the Northeast corridor. But both have been quite critical of Amtrak, believing the private sector would operate passenger trains more effectively. While that supposition is questionable, neither would try to zero out funds for

Amtrak. Shuster, with roots in rail-rich Altoona, PA, would likely be more appreciative of conventional intercity passenger trains than Mica.

Governor-elect Jay Inslee (D) supported Amtrak and transit while in Congress. Rob McKenna (R) did not support Sound Transit's rail components, and like many elected officials of both parties, has more to learn about our state's successful rail program. Given Inslee's strong "green" push, rail advocates need to emphasize to our incoming governor the environmental and safety virtues of trains.

Rail advocates and other transportation interests are concerned about the

Now I and many of you must seek out and work with other legislators who can share our desire and that of most of the public for an increasing passenger rail role for our state and the Northwest.

loss of three key transportation veterans in the Legislature. Senate Transportation Chair Mary Margaret Haugen (D-Camano Island), House Transportation Ranking Member Mike Armstrong (R-Wenatchee) and pro-rail veteran Senator Dan Swecker (R-Rochester) will not be serving in the 2013 Legislature. Not only were they fine legislators, highly respected by the transportation community, they all avoided narrow ideology and partisanship, putting the interests of their districts and particularly the state foremost.

All three are friends of rail and friends personally. All have been guest speakers at our meetings, Mike and Dan in recent months. The three will be greatly missed in Olympia. Fortunately HTC Chair Judy Clibborn (D-Mercer Island) and STC Ranking Member Curtis King (R-Yakima) will be returning. Both good people.

Now I and many of you must seek out and work with other legislators who can share our desire and that of most of the public for an increasing passenger rail role for our state and the Northwest.



The heavy November rains have done it again. Up to fifteen mudslides have shut down passenger train service north of Seattle, including for Thanksgiving, which is among the busiest times of the year for train patronage. AAWA joins other rail passenger advocates, including Cascadia and Talgo, in offering to do whatever we can to encourage the fix of this chronic wet-season problem. A per-

manent fix may involve working with adjacent property owners (east of) the tracks in the most impacted areas, between Seattle and Edmonds.

Kudos to WSDOT, including Secretary Paula Hammond, who are working with BNSF and the Feds to get funding to effect the needed physical changes.

Meanwhile, AAWA would like BNSF's unilateral "48-hour rule" to be more flexible. While passenger safety is of top importance, there are certainly times, when freight trains and passenger trains with crews only may safely pass through a slide prone area, that the arbitrary 48 hour annulment might be shortened.

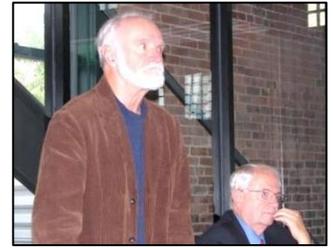
Bus replacements for annulled trains are better than no transportation, but people have paid for and want trains!

I serve on the Stakeholder Advisor Committee for the pending Washington State Rail Plan. Other interested persons are encouraged to give input as well. Some of you may have attended the November 29 meeting in Seattle. All of you who attend AAWA's December 8 Christmas Holiday Meeting at Olympia-Lacey's Centennial Station will be able to see and hear Ms. Kerri Woehler, Rail Planning Manager for WSDOT, who will be our featured speaker.

Rail advocates are working to preserve intact what remains of the railroad infrastructure on what was the BNSF Wilburton Subdivision, commonly called the Eastside Line. Rail advocates generally support rail AND trail on most of the right-of-way. History teaches us that once tracks are removed and the rights-of-way are converted to trail only, rail does not return, even when economically and environmentally justified.

Good news is the upwelling of support, including from some of among Seattle's leading citizens, for the preservation and putting to good use the George Benson streetcars by restoring the Waterfront Streetcar route. Mr. Tom Gibbs, AAWA's featured speaker at our July meeting and a leader of Save our Streetcars, reports good news on that important mission to restore the tangible

(See **Flem**, page 5)



Lloyd Flem, left, introduces Sen. Dan Swecker at the Nov. 10 All Aboard Washington meeting in Centralia.

Photo by Jim Hamre



WITH
JIM
CUSICK

Don't Think.

"The rose goes on the front, big guy."

I know what you're thinking...
That I've lost it.

That I've been shying away from being the outspoken rail advocate and have been drifting off the subject at hand, like some office worker 'taking a trip to the Bahamas' at their desk.

So what?

So, I took a trip back to the Jurassic (actually, some of the Cretaceous if you want to nit-pick) and then felt compelled to talk about my cars.

Well, maybe I've just found most of the rail news too depressing.

Better to dream pleasant dreams, rather than nightmares of Rail Removal.

I promise this time I'll try to report good news as I hear it, even if it seems minor.

But let me just take one more trip, and then I can finish with my plan to help Kemper Freeman promote his "End Gridlock Now" program.

"Throw the next pitch at the mascot."

Let's go back.

Way back.

This time, something from way back in the Paleozoic, in particular, the Carboniferous period.

The Night Stalker ... Jazz ... what?

I know ... the guy in that old TV show "The Night Stalker" was named Kolchak, and John Coltrane was the Jazz great.

I'm talking about real **COAL TRAINS!!**

Officially, All Aboard Washington has not taken a position on this, but I plan to opine about it anyway, only because I've been hearing so much misinformation out there.

If there is one thing that needs to be talked about, and I rarely see it mentioned in the rhetoric, it is Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 of the United States Constitution,

Otherwise known as the [Interstate Commerce Clause](#).

Amongst the host of items this deals with, in particular is the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 that deals with regu-

lating the railroads, and there was a legal precedent set in the case of [Southern Pacific vs. Arizona](#):

The Arizona Train Limit Law of 1912 (the Law), prohibited the operations of trains of more than 14 passenger or 70 freight cars and authorized the state to recover a money penalty for each violation.

Issue. *Are the benefits of a state law safety measure limiting the length of trains outweighed by burdens on interstate commerce?*

Yes, a state law that puts a significant burden on interstate commerce, yet provides no real improvement in safety, will be found to violate the Constitution's Commerce Clause.

This argument is being brought up again in the fight to stop the coal train traffic, particularly focused on the segment in Washington State.

The website [Coal Train Facts](#) makes a number of points, one of them being the length.

Coal trains are approximately 1.5 miles long. As it turns out, so are the grain trains and the intermodal trains that run on the BNSF mainline.

Smaller manifest trains and maybe the ones delivering 737 fuselages to the Renton Boeing plant are shorter, as are Amtrak and Sounder trains.

Observational evidence (by this author) is that coal trains do travel approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the speed of most other freight trains.

At crossings, this means that, unfettered by slow orders, the train will take 2 minutes and 30 seconds from start to end to clear the crossing.

This is slightly slower than the 2 minutes for the faster grain and intermodal trains.

Yet, this website is stating:

"The cities studied by Gibson Traffic Consultants all have common concerns regarding waiting and traffic. An additional 16- 18 trains are expected, and each train may be over 1.5 miles long.

At a speed of 50-60 mph, that would be an approximate 3-4 minute wait time at crossings. At a speed of 35 mph, there would be an approximate 6-7 minute wait time at crossings."

But even a bit of simple math shows that a mile long train, travelling at a mile a minute (60 mph), would take one minute to pass. Add another $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of train, and that comes to 1.5 minutes. Double that for a 30 mph train, and that is roughly 3 minutes. Add in the crossing signal activation/deactivation time of approximately 40 seconds.

A slow coal train takes up about 4.5

minutes of wait time at a crossing.

Coal dust is another issue that needs hard data to support their point of view. Again, the [Coal Train Facts](#) website speaks about it, but doesn't get specific.

Coal dust lost en-route must be measured to make this a valid claim. Observation evidence is, shall we say, non-existent.

Do the trains lose coal?

Yes, but the major part of the loss occurs at the mine, and has been an ongoing issue between the railroads and the mining companies being mitigated.

All of this plays right back into the case law as described above.

From a business standpoint, BNSF has every right to pursue the coal shipping business.

It makes sense for them, and most certainly creates jobs.

Does the company shipping the coal pay taxes?

We know the mining companies have the right to mine, and sell coal.

I'd say that if the companies are good American corporate citizens, paying their fair share in taxes, and following the environmental rules (as if they too had to live with the results of their decisions), then they should be able to pursue their economic endeavor.

However, if they are merely a global consortium, and deem themselves above the laws of the citizens of this country, then I do have a problem.

China is burning the coal, and unless there is an international effort to embargo the shipment of coal to China from all coal producing exporting countries (CPEC?), then we're still going to get the air pollution.

Look, I don't believe the "Clean Coal" commercials either, but given the economics and the politics, I'm looking to get as much positive outcome as I can.

The port cities do have a say environmentally, and that is one place to stand fast, and demand accountability.

The other angle would be a Federal Carbon Tax that could support seed money for alternative energy sources, but even then, seeing how difficult it is just to get the tax loopholes removed for the oil companies, I'm worried this effort will be wasted.

My worry is that the valid environmental concerns are going to be lost by uninformed, well-heeled NIMBYs whose final result will only be to antagonize the freight railroads and preclude the honest, cooperative negotiations that would be more fruitful.

(See **Cusick**, page 4)

Cusick, from page 3

Breaking news!!! ... WSDOT has decided that reliable rail travel is going to be the hallmark of their organization and is embarking on solving the mudslide issue with the proper retaining walls needed, which is of moderate expense compared to some of the highway projects. And ... [What's that, Mr. Editor? They aren't? (yet) ... < sigh > ... Okay, I'll keep looking.]

Ridership on Sounder North not meeting expectations?

Time to shut it down. Surprisingly, I find that argument coming from, of all places, [The SeattleTransitBlog](#). This isn't a statement from our friends at the Coalition for Effective Transportation Alternatives or postings by John Niles; this comes from people who are disappointed in their local Seattle area bus service.

One of the more interesting arguments



Sound Transit Photo

is that they should end the Sounder North service, and redistribute the monies to enhance Seattle area coverage; Metro's RapidRide program, for instance.

I know it says SeattleTransitBlog, but you would think interconnectivity would be a part of their message, which includes taking as many suburban car commuters off the road as you can, who happen to be clogging their streets in Seattle.

One of the other problems is that while a number of them walk the talk as far as shedding the auto-dependent lifestyle, they unfortunately become accessories to the tax crime by pushing an agenda to 'punish' the auto drivers with higher gas taxes.

Since we know the gas tax is not a user fee (as a toll would be), then just increasing it means I, as a taxpayer would have more money taken from me, without any control of where and how it is spent.

Those who would 'punish the bad car owners,' are playing right into the highway lobby's hands.

But back to Sounder.

How do you get more riders to take it?

It's hard enough to get news organization to mention train travel as a transportation option, especially around holiday time.

How to make it front line news?

Hmmm...

[Drive a truck in front of it!](#)

Edmonds ridership actually took an observable jump after the reporters were there for the 'Low Ridership on North Sounder' story, since it was the same day a tractor trailer driver stopped his truck on the tracks at the crossing at Main Street, at the Edmonds-Kingston ferry dock.

The last inbound Sounder clipped the front bumper of the truck. No one was injured, thankfully.

Apparently, many of the new riders were unaware you could commute on the train from Edmonds to Seattle, until they saw the news story.

Breaking news!!! ... The City of Kirkland has come to the inescapable conclusion that the best long range plan for the cross-Kirkland corridor is to build the trail and plan for the eventual construction of ST's commuter rail, but also leave the current rails in place to facilitate not only freight traffic, but a small scale startup passenger rail service. And ... [Yes Mr. Editor? They aren't either? ... yeah I know.]

I support a Roads Plan.

"Trust me."

Kemper Freeman invited Dr. Bill Eager to give his presentation to the committee on the I-405 Corridor Program back around the year 2000.

Back then it went under the name "Reduce Congestion Now," but is referred to presently as "[End Gridlock Now](#)"

This is a great place to start in order to be able to bring a package before the voters.

It does have some issues, though.

While forward thinking as this website is, it needs help getting in front of the public.

The section describing how Salt Lake City is dealing with their transportation issues, is evidenced in the part of the report about [Salt Lake City's Legacy Parkway](#).

The Legacy Parkway runs at the edge of the developed area from the town of Bountiful to the area just north of Salt Lake City, close to the Great Salt Lake.

Remember, Salt Lake City voters approved extra taxes to get their light rail and commuter rail system expansion up to speed sooner.

Did they have a ballot measure for the taxes being spent on this highway?

No matter.

I want one here!

A ballot measure, that is.

What would happen here is that we'd have to convince the voters that a road such as this would be beneficial for regional drivers.

How can we help them sell this?

First thing is to get it in front of the public.

The next thing is to present all the arguments in a simple and concise way so that the average voter can evaluate the costs and the benefits of highway expansion.

Why hide the process behind closed doors?

Well, okay, you should all know by now this doesn't happen in secret, but we need to give this package more air time.

Trust me.

News Flash!!! ... Mayors from Snohomish County cities have committed to improving Sounder North Ridership and have publicly stated their support. Sound Transit has agreed to provide additional parking at the Edmonds Station ... [I got that one right, Mr. Editor. I'm so glad I voted Republican where it counts!]

"Quote from the movie Bull Durham"

Builder, from page 1



The eastbound Empire Builder near West Glacier, MT Photo by Jim Hamre

prices and elimination of parallel trains (the North Coast Hiawatha and the Pioneer). An hour with Amtrak reservation computers around

holidays often shows Chicago-Portland and Chicago-Seattle selling out at higher rates than travel on the longer routes to California.

The situation is risky for other Superliner routes, as Amtrak may be tempted to cut cars from other trains in order to respond to the conflicting political signals that tell it to dismiss proposals for western transcontinentals, defer replacing Superliners, but respond to marketplace demands.

One of the ironies in this situation is that Amtrak in 2010 contracted for studies that claimed that ridership on a restored Pioneer or North Coast Hiawatha train would be lower than it was when those trains were operating.

The problems created by the oil economy spill over into other familiar areas. The north-south BNSF line through Boulder and Longmont, CO lines up directly to the Bakken energy play, raising its potential freight traffic value, as Denver Regional Transit District learned recently when pursuing commuter rail in this corridor.

The next time you read a condescending article about a Third World country that cannot get its infrastructure sorted out, it may be about us.

(Reprinted with permission from the Colorado Rail Passenger Association (ColoRail) newsletter.)

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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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 U. S. Senate: Washington, DC 20510
 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

Swecker, from page 1

Amtrak, WSDOT and the partner freight railroads strive for. Two major issues hurting OTP are Amtrak locomotive failures and freight train interference/breakdowns. WSDOT and Amtrak continue to explore solutions for better corridor reliability.

Ridership and revenues are down (one of the only routes in the country where Amtrak ridership dipped this past year). About 90% of the passenger losses can be attributed to Bolt Bus entering the Seattle-Portland market. Bolt has now also expanded to the Seattle-Vancouver, BC market. WSDOT and Amtrak are analyzing how to counter this new competition.

Talgo and WSDOT are negotiating a one year extension of the trainset maintenance contract. The extension will allow time to figure out what the PRIIA-required changes will mean and how to integrate the two new Oregon-owned trainsets into the maintenance plan.

On the issue of additional stops for the *Cascades*, Swecker says WSDOT and ODOT require that a new stop must not interfere with service outcome guarantees and must add revenue to the bottom line. There is a lot of interest in adding a stop in Blaine because it has the potential to serve many hundreds of thousands of people living in the BC lower mainland south of Vancouver. Most people in this area would not backtrack to downtown Vancouver to catch a train and if they consider driving to Bellingham they'll probably just stay in their car all the way to their destination.

He noted that the several-years-long overhaul of the Talgo trainset interiors is providing a better passenger experience. The Mt. Rainier is the first trainset to be fully completed. All five trainsets will be finished in 2013. Some of the main improved passenger amenities are power outlets are every seat, free Wi-Fi throughout the train and installation of new seats with leather coverings.

Procurement of new locomotives has moved a step closer with the release of the new national passenger locomotive stand-

ards. This will help address the problems with Amtrak's current fleet of aging and well-worked locomotives. (See October/November 2012 **WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS** for details on the new locomotive plans.)

WSDOT is also analyzing how to procure another trainset to add to the pool. (Editor: The state of Wisconsin reneged on its contract with Talgo for the purchase and long term maintenance of two trainsets. Mediation of this issue has failed and Talgo has filed a breach of contract lawsuit against the state of Wisconsin. Will these trainsets become available for purchase by our state or another entity some day? Stay tuned.)

From an audience question, Swecker noted that WSDOT, Sound Transit, Amtrak and BNSF continue to work the mudslide issue. (Editor: AAWA has been pushing the parties involved to more rapidly develop temporary and permanent solutions to the mudslides. They struck between Seattle and Everett just before Thanksgiving for the second year in a row, disrupting the holiday travel plans of thousands of people. See the April/May 2011 **WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS** for All Aboard Washington's position on the mudslide issue.)

On the issue of future funding for transportation in our state, Swecker stated that we need to diversify our revenue sources. Gas tax revenues are continuing on a downward trend with a seemingly permanent drop in miles driven from year to year and new fuel economy standards that will nearly double the average miles per gallon by 2025. Some alternates that will be considered are more tolling and the controversial vehicle miles traveled tax. He believes a new revenue package will be put forth in the next year or two. All Aboard Washington will be working hard to ensure any tax revenue increase package is balanced and continues to fund and expand our state's intercity passenger rail program.

AAWA thanks Sen. Dan Swecker for joining us at our meeting.

Flem, from page 2

legacy of the revered Mr. Benson.

Despite considerable outreach by WSDOT to concerned citizens in southwest Pierce county, some in Lakewood, Tillicum, etc., remain firmly opposed to having passenger trains pass through their communities. A recent article in the on-line magazine *Crosscut* addresses the issue. At an open house recently on this issue in Lakewood, I was interviewed by both the FRA (I believe) and The News Tribune. My themes were:

- Indeed passenger trains moving from the current Point Defiance mainline to the inland route is a substantial loss aesthetically. The Sound and Narrows bridges are a tad more picturesque than ... Ponders Corner.
- "Decreases in property values" as a result of passenger trains passing through is not valid. Other western US cities which have recently developed passenger rail service have experienced significantly increases in property values near the stations. While Amtrak at this time is not proposing a stop in SW Pierce County, Sound Transit's Sounder has such stops. Property values near those stops will increase.
- Safety: Some citizens are concerned that people, including youngsters, are not used to trains on the tracks. But the tracks have been present long before any of the residents were there. People must educate their kids and themselves that railroad tracks, like I-5, are not pedestrian pathways or playgrounds. Operation Lifesaver's "Three Es" are Engineering, Education, and Enforcement" the last being citations for those who insist upon endangering themselves on tracks. Trains do not wander off tracks looking for people to run down. Incidents on railroad property nearly always are a result of people trespassing, breaking the law or acting foolishly on or when crossing railroad property.

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All Aboard News

December 8: All Aboard Washington holiday gathering from **noon-4 p.m.** at **Centennial Station**, 6600 Yelm Hwy, **Lacey**. Program will feature Kerri Woehler, Rail Planning & Strategic Assessment Manager for WSDOT. We will have an analysis of the election and a legislative and Congressional outlook for 2013 for passenger rail. Cost is \$10 per person cash or check for pizza, subs and beverages. Holiday snacks and baked goods will be available for a donation to AAWA. The Centennial Station volunteer hosts have been invited to join us.

Use the *Cascades* or the *Coast Starlight* to and from the meeting.

January 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. Program will feature Trevina Wang, King Street Station Restoration Project Manager. Please RSVP to Harvey Bowen, if you can (contact info p. 5). Put "Jan 12 RSVP" in Subject or Body of your email.

Use the *Cascades* to and from the meeting.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include Zack Willhoite, Rich DeGarmo, Lloyd Flem and Jim Cusick.

Reelected to the All Aboard Washington board of directors at the November 10 meeting were: Harvey Bowen, Seattle; Loren Herrigstad, Centralia; Kathy Davis, Des Moines; and Bob Lawrence, Mill Creek. Newly elected to the board is Abe Zumwalt, Tacoma. Welcome to the board Abe!

Mark **March 2** on your calendar. That's the date of our annual regional passenger rail conference. The meeting will be at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Tukwila. We're planning on having another great conference. More details will follow in January.

Corridor Construction Update from WSDOT

Work is underway to increase Amtrak *Cascades* train speeds between Vancouver and Kalama. BNSF crews have begun work to replace worn steel railroad track between the two cities in southwest Washington. Some portions of track through this area, installed in the late 1960s for slow-moving freight trains, re-

quire passenger trains traveling at higher speeds to slow down. This work is part of a \$92 million, [multi-phase rail improvement project](#) that will improve track quality, durability and passenger ride and comfort by upgrading tracks between Nisqually and the Columbia River. The track upgrades will allow the *Cascades* to run at top speeds more often, leading to faster and more reliable service. The overall project will be completed in 2016, but track replacement work through this area was expected to wrap up before Thanksgiving.

Construction work started in November to remove a rail bottleneck through the Everett Rail Yard. Freight trains doing switching at BNSF's yard here frequently cause delays to *Cascades* trains passing through. BNSF crews are adding two new tracks long enough to hold a 7,000 foot freight train so passenger trains can avoid getting stopped by freight trains blocking the tracks. The \$3.5 million [Everett Storage Track project](#) is expected to wrap up by the end of 2012.

