



WASHINGTON RAIL NEWS

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2013

www.AllAboardWashington.org

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

Beauty and functionality of King Street Station continue to emerge

Trevina Wang, Project Manager at Seattle DOT for the King Street Station restoration project, was the featured speaker at the Jan. 12 All Aboard Washington meeting in Tukwila.

King Street Station was designed by Reed and Stem, who also designed Grand Central Terminal in New York City, the Northern Pacific depots in Ellensburg and Livingston, MT, and Union Station in Tacoma, as well as many other railroad stations. The station was inspired by the Campanile at San Marco Piazza, Venice, Italy. It opened in May 1906 at a cost of \$450,000.

The city of Seattle acquired King Street Station from BNSF for \$10 in March 2008. It is one of three major hubs to move people in and out of downtown. The city also recognized the project as an opportunity to restore a major landmark, help revitalize the Pioneer Square neighborhood and support future development around the station site.

Wang discussed the original elements of the station and how many of them had been altered over the last century, mostly not for the good of the building or the passengers. The historic

features are being restored while at the same time making the building into a 21st century transportation hub. Examples of the work being performed include:

The grand staircase on the west side of the building was originally open and provided a thoroughfare from Jackson St. to King St. It was later enclosed, thus blocking public access. The (not original) escalator and walls that blocked part of the staircase have been removed and it is being re-opened to public use as part of the restoration.

The terra cotta (See **King Street Station**, page 3)

Are mudslide solutions finally coming?

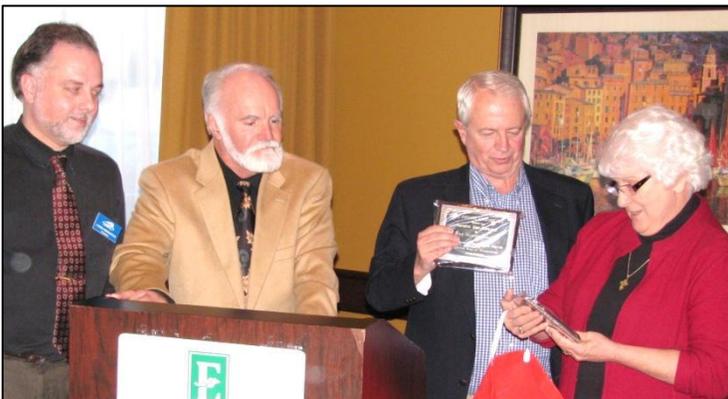
On Jan. 24, the Washington State DOT announced that it and its three rail partners involved in service and safety in the corridor between Seattle and Everett are putting a new focus on understanding the root causes and potential solutions to mudslides that have resulted in a record number of Amtrak *Cascades* and Sounder service disruptions this winter. Though mid January, there had been 77 mudslides and hundreds of cancelled or truncated passenger trains since Thanksgiving.

While preventative maintenance continues, WSDOT, BNSF Railway, Sound Transit and Amtrak will take a broader look at the issue and work to preserve the rail line between Seattle and Everett, a corridor essential for freight, daily commuters and intercity travel.

"This collaboration will help us shift the focus from short-term responses to repeat mudslide occurrences to a long-range solution for this vital transportation corridor," said DOT Secretary Paula Hammond. "For Amtrak *Cascades* to remain a viable transportation option and achieve future growth, we must look at the root causes of these mudslides and start a larger discussion among our partners about addressing them."

As the owner of the rail line, BNSF Railway temporarily suspends passenger service to ensure safety when a mudslide occurs or a high-level threat of a mudslide exists. Amtrak and Sound Transit are then forced to provide alternate bus transportation for their passengers.

"Safety must remain our highest priority," said D. J. Mitchell, assistant vice president of BNSF passenger operations. "BNSF is committed to operating passenger trains in a manner that always places the safety of train passengers (See **Mudslides**, page 5)



At our Jan. 12 meeting in Tukwila, All Aboard Washington presented its Tom Martin Award to two distinguished retiring state legislators: Sen. Dan Swecker (R-Rochester, second from right) and Sen. Mary Margaret Haugen (D-Camano Island). Pres. Loren Herrigstad, left, and Exec. Dir. Lloyd Flem made the presentations. The Tom Martin award, named for one of the founders of our predecessor organization the Washington Assoc. of Railroad Passengers, recognizes people in our state that have made significant contributions to the cause of intercity passenger rail, rail transit and balanced transportation. The pair received a standing ovation. Sen. Swecker noted that Lloyd once approached him with the idea of buying a train, and we only needed \$7 mill.! The funding was needed to buy the one trainset still owned by Talgo. Members of the Legislature found the money before the trainset could be purchased by the state of North Carolina and that allowed Amtrak *Cascades* service expansion to the current level. Sen. Haugen thanked AAWA for being the catalyst for the state's passenger rail program.

Photo by Jim Hamre



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

Our Busy Season

There is no longer an “off season” for rail advocacy, but early in the odd-numbered years when the recently-elected Congress and Washington State Legislature are in session it is busier than usual. Your Olympia office and, I trust, many of you are gearing up to witness in behalf of, at minimum, a continuation of the progress underway at the State and Federal levels on passenger rail. We must be realistic, however, that it is unlikely that a monetary commitment like that for “high(er) speed rail” as part of the ARRA (“Stimulus” bill) will occur in the near future. And even if and when, for Washington state to do as well as we did in the ARRA is a remote wish. But what we can and must do is to monitor and help ensure that the one-time \$800 million fulfills the intent of the ARRA, and brings material improvement to passenger rail in our state. Let me emphasize there is nothing to suggest these improvements won’t occur, but it is prudent to keep a close watch.



All Aboard Washington has not taken a public position on the proposed significant increase in the number of trains hauling Montana and Wyoming coal to Washington ports to be shipped to willing East Asian markets.

However, concerns from many quarters have been raised. AAWA’s “official” position (as individuals, AAWA members have varied concerns and views) should ask what impacts would the greatly added coal train traffic have on passenger rail service on our Northwest Corridor. If, following massive State, Federal (mostly ARRA), and Sound Transit investments on the corridor between Vancouver, WA and Whatcom County, passenger train travel times and reliability are no better or even worse than now, we would certainly raise concerns. But it may be years, if ever, before the proposed high volume of very long and heavy coal trains ply the corridor, and we should retain a cautious, informed neutrality until such time as our views might be needed.



AAWA is **NOT** neutral on the pro-

posed ripping up of the tracks on the old Woodinville Subdivision (Eastside Line) through the city of Kirkland. That Eastside King County suburb, apparently ignoring the wishes and eventual well-being of the larger Eastside and beyond, is intent on removing the rails and replacing them with a trail. The Kirkland effort is being pushed by the same people who advocated the entire Eastside Line becoming the “Granddaddy of all Trails” a couple of years ago. Now piecemeal destruction seems the goal.

Particularly galling is that those of us wanting to keep rails in place, including Cascadia and AAWA, have been fully open to rail **AND** trail, and have repeatedly sought alliance with trail advocates!

[W]hat we can and must do is to monitor and help ensure that the one-time \$800 million fulfills the intent of the ARRA, and brings material improvement to passenger rail in our state.

Our side has been ignored or actively opposed. I believe militant trail advocates know, like we do, that once a rail line becomes a trail only, it virtually never again is rerailed, even if the economic, environmental, and social justifications are compelling.

AAWA supports bicycle and pedestrian transportation as healthy parts of an environmentally-sound transportation mix along with bus and rail transit and intercity rail, among other modes. We should be allies in the “transportation choices” world. We strongly supported bikes, and now more bikes, on our Talgo trains. Most of us have supported bike lanes in urban areas and requirements that major employers grant bicycle riders facilities as they do drivers with free or subsidized parking for motor vehicles. We simply feel that this remaining rail infrastructure is a near-irreplaceable resource and we are willing to share it, where appropriate, as a “**TR**ailway.” Yes, we are **NOT** neutral about the near-certain elimination of what should be a valuable rail (and trail!) corridor in the crowded and traffic-congested Eastside.



The now-nationally-notorious mudslides issue on the BNSF main between Seattle and Everett is finally being addressed more than in the past. When an active mudslide dumped several cars of a

BNSF Railway freight train on the ground on Dec. 17, we believe BNSF HQ in Fort Worth began paying attention. We are certainly pleased there were no injuries and only environmentally-benign freight, no hazmat, was involved. Now the Railway, Amtrak, Sound Transit, and WSDOT are cooperating to investigate and mitigate the slides, which have not only been very negative for Sounder and Amtrak passengers, they have the general public questioning the whole idea of passenger rail reliability and viability.

Soon new engineering data should not only be better able to predict slides but also the specific causes. Heavy late autumn and winter rains have been a part of our West Coast maritime climate for millennia, certainly since before old Jim Hill brought the Great Northern into Seattle 120 years ago (the golden spike being driven on the United States’ northernmost transcontinental railroad on January 6, 1893 at Scenic, WA). Yet the number of slides is now increasing year after year. Factors other than just “December rains” are obviously involved. Those factors will soon be identified and hopefully parties responsible can help fund the mitigation.

Amtrak and Sounder service must be returned to a reliable and safe state as soon as possible. While replacement buses are better than nothing, the loyal Amtrak and Sounder passengers say they vastly prefer their trains. We are pleased that Amtrak is now being more proactive about busing *Cascades* passengers only between Seattle and Everett, as is usually done for *Empire Builder* passengers, instead of the entire distance from Seattle to Vancouver, BC.



There are several other important issues that AAWA is examining closely. We are pleased with the work of WSDOT in these regards, and we like to serve as independent allies. We have had numerous inquiries about getting additional Amtrak *Cascades* service and the slightly decreased travel times before the now-scheduled 2017 date. We continue to explore options.

The Assoc. of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA), our Oregon counterparts, like a wide array of Oregonians, have questioned whether the current Columbia River Crossing (CRC) “mega-bridge” proposal is economically and operationally the best that can be hoped for in serving citizens and visitors of our two states. AAWA is monitoring this issue. AORTA’s proposal: (See **Flem**, page 5)



WITH
JIM
CUSICK

Jim is taking a break. His column will return in April.

King Street Station, from page 1 tile roof had been replaced with asphalt shingles. The Ohio company that made the original tiles is still in business and manufactured new ones for the roof.



Above are complete elements of the restoration project: Top, the new Amtrak ticketing area and bottom, the Jackson St. plaza.

The most blatant “remodeling” was the destruction of the historic waiting room. A drop ceiling was installed, the lower walls covered with brown Formica, original wooden benches replaced with vinyl chairs, and the magnificent lighting fixtures hauled to the landfill to accommodate fluorescent lighting tubes. Much of the ornate plaster had been removed or damaged.

The waiting room and other public areas are being restored to their original splendor and functionality. The ticketing office has been relocated to the north side of the waiting room in the area that once held the dining room. An adjacent baggage area, complete with luggage carousel, is also now in use.

Historic exterior features are also being restored, including the clock and the building canopies. The plaza area at the Jackson St. level, that once was a parking lot, has been turned into a pedestrian plaza. An entrance to the station from the plaza is being built, complete with elevator and stairway access to the main station level on King St.

In addition to the restoration of the beauty and functionality of the station for rail passengers much work that will never be seen by the public is also being accomplished:

The city of Seattle’s sustainable building mandate, implemented in 2000, requires a minimum level of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver in new and renovated buildings over 5000 square feet. The project is tracking for a LEED Platinum designation, the highest level. This is being accomplished by installation of an underground geothermal well field to provide the feed to the heat pumps that will be used for heating and cooling. The walls are receiving insulation with R25.6 value and the roof, insulation with R30 value. A high efficiency ventilation system is being installed and the windows will be openable during moderate weather. A photovoltaic solar array will be installed on the south canopy to supplement the station’s energy needs. Rainwater will be collected and used for toilet flushing.

The existing station uses 113,000 BTUs/square foot/year in energy. The modeling for the restored building is projecting 36,200 BTUs/square foot/year, a 68% reduction in energy use. This reduces carbon dioxide output by 206 metric tons per year.

King Street Station is also being upgraded to current seismic and structural design standards. This work includes the driving of piling through the floor of the building to better support the structure and reinforcing the walls with steel beams.

The entire project is being done in a deliberate manner to preserve the historic elements of the building. This often requires innovative construction methods to accomplish many parts of the work. Where historic elements have been destroyed or removed, the contractor



A worker strips away the rubber mold from a perfectly replicated plaster piece.

Five photos courtesy of Seattle DOT



This picture shows the tight working quarters that make demolition and reconstruction more challenging.

replicates the elements as they were originally constructed.

Funding for the project totals \$54 million and is coming from these sources:

- Federal (\$33 million)
 - Federal Railroad Administration
 - Federal Transit Administration
 - Federal Highway Administration
- State (\$8.8 million)
 - Washington State DOT
 - Washington State Historical Society
- City of Seattle (\$12 million)
- Private (\$0.2 million)
 - South Downtown Foundation
 - 4Culture
 - National Trust

Current funding does not support



Workers hoist a steel beam that will be used to reinforce the wall. A winch on the second floor pulls the beam up and into place.

completion of the second and third floors of the building. They are being repaired and brought up to the same standards as

the rest of the building and will be available for use as office space or perhaps retail space.

Wang is looking at a late spring completion for the project. A grand rededication of King Street Station will follow but the plans have not yet been developed.

For more information on the project with many pictures and videos go to:

www.seattle.gov/transportation/kingstreet.htm

Amtrak has another record year nationally; result mixed in the Northwest

Amtrak set another all time ridership record in fiscal year 2012 (ending on Sept. 30) with over 30.24 million passenger carried across the system. Ridership was up 3.5% over 2011. The rail passenger carrier set 12 consecutive monthly ridership records and July 2012 was the single best month in Amtrak's 42 year history. Ticket revenue jumped 6.8% to a best ever \$2.02 billion. System wide on-time performance reached a 12 year high at 83%, up from 78.1%.

"People are riding Amtrak trains in record numbers across the country because there is an undeniable demand to travel by rail," said President and CEO Joe Boardman. "Ridership will continue to grow because of key investments made by Amtrak and our federal and state partners to improve on-time performance, reliability, capacity and train speeds."

Empire Builder – The *Empire Builder* rebounded strongly from 2011 when Amtrak's most heavily used national network train suffered many months of service disruptions from blizzards, freight derailments and, most especially, severe flooding in North Dakota and Minnesota. In 2012, Amtrak's premiere train carried 543,072 passengers, up 15.8% from 2011. The *Builder* had \$66.66 million in ticket revenue, up 24.0%. The strong increase in revenue shows that Amtrak has boosted fares much more on the *Builder* compared to other national network trains. The company has been able to do this because of the surging ridership, much of which is a result of people traveling to work the Bakken oil fields of western North Dakota. Ridership at the Williston stop nearly doubled in 2012 from 2011. Many people use the train to commute from as far away as Spokane and the Twin Cities, spending several weeks working before taking a week or so off.

Coast Starlight – Ridership in 2012 on the *Coast Starlight* totaled 454,443, up 6.5% from 2011, and continued a multi-year rebound after several years of very unreliable operations on Union Pacific south of Portland. The *Starlight* is Amtrak's second busiest national network train. Passenger revenues in 2012 totaled \$40.83 million, up 2.1% over 2011.

Amtrak Cascades – The *Cascades* service was one of only four train lines that saw small ridership dips in 2012. The total was 845,099, down 0.8% over 2011.

Amtrak Station Data

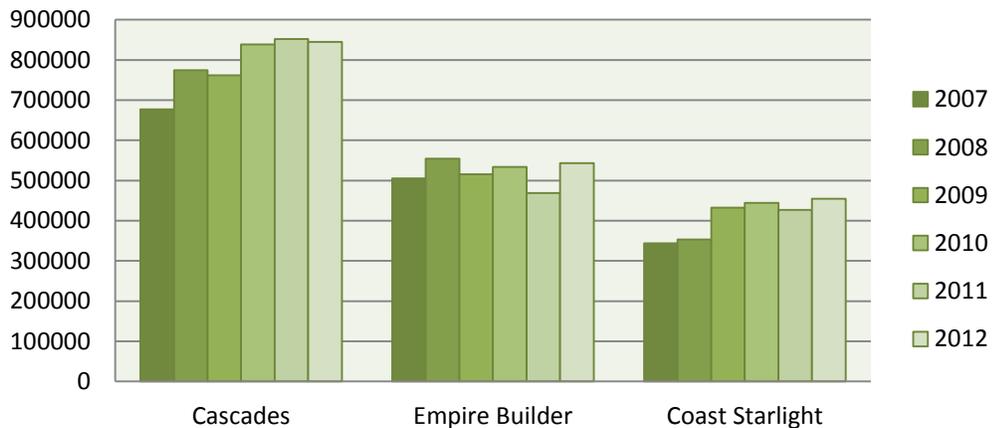
Six-Year Washington State On & Off Totals (federal fiscal year)

Leavenworth service started Sept. 26, 2009; Stanwood service started Nov. 21, 2009

Station	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	'11-'12 % Change
Bellingham	51,315	70,990	72,033	62,562	59,490	64,091	+7.7
Bingen-White Salmon	2,307	2,959	2,835	3,253	2,420	3,147	+30.0
Centralia	21,060	23,663	24,279	23,270	21,998	23,331	+6.1
Edmonds	27,543	31,204	30,770	31,845	30,472	32,896	+8.0
Ephrata	3,923	4,365	4,020	3,574	3,063	3,874	+26.5
Everett	41,567	48,420	46,785	44,103	42,288	44,576	+5.4
Kelso-Longview	23,519	28,330	27,406	28,603	26,972	26,560	-1.5
Leavenworth			3,370	9,149	8,028	12,751	+58.8
Mt. Vernon	19,328	24,280	24,935	18,662	18,747	18,561	-1.0
Olympia-Lacey	49,659	58,133	59,884	60,415	58,094	61,322	+5.6
Pasco	28,072	29,202	24,765	24,992	22,598	25,535	+13.0
Seattle	634,193	668,037	648,774	655,036	672,485	672,351	0.0
Spokane	48,484	59,001	47,670	49,058	46,798	62,773	+34.1
Stanwood			818	4,639	4,134	4,237	+2.5
Tacoma	110,869	124,351	122,763	124,451	124,252	123,063	-1.0
Tukwila	18,887	22,292	22,265	24,892	26,549	26,759	+0.8
Vancouver	84,766	97,554	97,889	98,395	99,001	99,363	+0.4
Wenatchee	19,085	20,945	19,301	16,062	13,664	15,895	+16.3
Wishram	1,683	1,814	1,330	1,570	2,128	1,567	-26.4
TOTALS	1,186,260	1,315,540	1,281,892	1,284,531	1,283,781	1,322,652	+3.0

Trains Serving Washington State

Six Year Totals
(federal fiscal year)



Revenue, however, was up 2.9% to \$30.89 million. Factors influencing the flat ridership in recent years include Bolt Bus moving into the Vancouver, BC-Seattle-Portland market and the lack of available seats on the weekends and holidays when demand peaks. WSDOT and Amtrak are implementing flash fare sales in markets where the *Cascades* compete with Bolt and for seniors traveling Monday-Thursday. On-time performance increased to 74.8% in 2012 from 70.0%.

WSDOT established an On-time Performance Task Force in 2012, meeting weekly with its government partners, Amtrak, BNSF and Union Pacific to develop remedies for and track progress on delays. The group aims to apply these remedies to achieve even better on-time performance in 2013. The final phase of the upgrades to the *Cascades* trainsets is now nearing completion. Go to tinyurl.com/2012cascadesupdate to see WSDOT's full Year in Review report.

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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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 Washington, DC 20515
 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

Mudslides, from page 1

gers first and to continue to work with our passenger rail partners on reducing the long-term risks of mudslides.”

WSDOT and BNSF continue working together to reduce the near-term potential for mudslides through strategies already in use, including more frequent preventative maintenance, conducting immediate repair and stabilization work on slopes involved in slides, improving drainage, deepening ditches next to the tracks, and adding water retention areas.

WSDOT and BNSF are also focusing on long-term engineering and design work and determining appropriate slide-prevention solutions. Some of the potential improvements are in design, with construction to start later in 2013, but they represent only a small part of the significant investments needed to virtually eliminate mudslides. WSDOT will also continue to work with its corridor partners to identify and pursue state and federal funding, with BNSF support, for long-term stabilization projects.

The challenge remains to fully understand the factors contributing to frequent mudslides. The four partners will review recent slope studies, historical slide data and updated analyses, with a goal of drawing preliminary conclusions about underlying conditions or factors contributing to slides.

AAWA welcomes these new efforts by WSDOT and BNSF to finally start addressing the mudslide problem. We urge them to proceed quickly with determining short-term and long-term solutions and implementing them. See Lloyd Flem's column on page 2 for his thoughts on the mudslides.

Flem, from page 2

www.aortarail.org/images/uploads/CRC_Options_June_2012.pdf.

We are very concerned about the fu-

ture of passenger rail service from Seattle to Vancouver, BC. We would hope our Canadian partners might make significant investments in this international train service that is of significant economic benefit to the British Columbia business community.

We are pleased by the increasing numbers of influential Seattleites who want to return the George Benson Waterfront Streetcars to regular use and we are glad to see the steady progress on the King Street Station project.

We also urge consideration of adding daytime passenger train service between the Puget Sound and Spokane, preferably serving the Yakima Valley. We also need to ensure our Long Distance trains continue operation. The *Empire Builder* is a lifeline for many communities far from the train's Chicago and Seattle/Portland termini. The *Coast Starlight* is an important west coast link connecting together the growing passenger rail corridors in the Northwest and central and southern California, and, in the future, will link to California's about-to-start-construction high speed rail system.

But right now, in this 2013 Washington Legislature, we need to speak to our state representatives and senators about essential funding to continue operating the Amtrak Cascades trains we now have. To date, the numbers of AAWA members who have committed to Transportation Advocacy Day (TAD) at the Capitol are few. TAD, February 12, is an ideal time for you to meet with your state electeds. I'll arrange meetings with your legislators (or at least legislative staff) so you can discuss this vital issue. And do come by train. Thurston County AAWA members will provide "limo" service to/from Centennial Station and the United Churches, HQ for TAD. Please let me know SOON if you plan to attend TAD. More details on page six.

Eastside TRailway Alliance Launches

by Loren Herrigstad, AAWA president



Bruce Agnew of Cascadia Center, standing, presents at the Jan. 24 forum launching the Eastside Trailways Alliance.

Photo by Elizabeth Churchill

On Thursday evening, Jan. 24, All Aboard Washington's six years of effort on the Eastside Line was joined by over 30 allies as the new Eastside TRailway Alliance was launched at a forum held at Woodinville's Chateau Ste. Michelle Winery. Chaired by Snohomish Mayor Karen Guzak, with assistance from both us and the Cascadia Center, this Alliance is a first in the region, bringing local governments, businesses and citizens together to champion the development of the Eastside corridor for both rail and trail uses – hence the term “TRailway,” which I coined a while ago when we started working with Cascadia's Bruce Agnew on this issue.

While specific work plans and agendas are currently being scoped, the Alliance intends to meet at least monthly as a working group. Initial efforts will likely focus around working with the City of Kirkland to convince them to leave the tracks in place through the section of the corridor they now own, while also helping them achieve their objective of creating a line side trail that the public can use in the near term. The Alliance will also work to secure grants and other funding to improve the Snohomish-Woodinville section of the line to FRA Class II standards, (See TRailway, page 6)

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All Aboard News

February 12: Join AAWA and many other organizations for **Transportation Advocacy Day in Olympia**. TAD will again be at United Churches, 110 11th Ave SE, just blocks from the state Capitol. To see more details and to register (free), see the Transportation Choices Coalition website:

transportationchoices.org/action/advocacyday.

Also let Lloyd Flem know you are attending and he will make appointments for you with your legislators or their staff. Use the *Cascades* and we'll have shuttles available to get you to downtown Olympia.

March 2: Join AAWA for our annual joint rail advocacy meeting with National Assoc. of Railroad Passenger and Assoc. of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates 11:30 a.m.-5 p.m. at the **Embassy Suites Hotel in Tukwila**, 15920 West Valley Highway, adjacent to the Tukwila Amtrak Station. Registration and meeting information was sent by postal mail or email previously. Also visit our registration website: allaboardwashington.org/2013springrail/. Join

us for what will certainly be another great meeting and opportunity to meet with fellow advocates from around the Northwest. Register today.

April 13: AAWA business meeting followed by a board of directors meeting at the **Embassy Suites Hotel in Tukwila**, 15920 West Valley Highway, adjacent to the Tukwila Amtrak Station.

All Aboard Washington welcomed the following new members since October: David Forsythe, Lacey; Mike Stein, Vancouver; Al Hinkel, Spokane; Marta Ullman, Sammamish; Linda Scharph, Camas; Christopher Jennings, Olympia; J. Theodore Jastak, Ocean Park; Carol Belton, Seattle; David Rowe, Battle Ground; Donna Huntting, Centralia; Irene Hill, Seattle; Donald Correll, Longview; Arthur Folden, Olympia; Harold Greif, Spokane; Casey MacGill, Seattle; William Maiden, Vancouver; Howard Orlean, Federal Way; Anne Thompson, Seattle; Dick Ronald, Olympia; and Jan Owen, Spokane. We welcome especially NARP members that have recently joined AAWA.

All Aboard Washington members contributing to this newsletter include Warren

Yee, Charlie Hamilton, Lloyd Flem, Loren Herrigstad and Zack Willhoite.



TRailway, from page 5

enabling excursion trains to smoothly traverse the line at up to 30 mph, and freights to travel at a more efficient 15 mph.

AAWA will provide important support to this Alliance, with Zack Willhoite, our Director of Information Technology, offering to assist in website, Facebook and Twitter presences for the group. AAWA board members Abe Zumwalt and Stephanie Weber, myself and likely others will actively participate in the Alliance and its work as well. Be sure to watch our online channels for updates and ways to participate in this exciting new chapter for the Eastside Line.