

# Washington Rail News

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February/March 1998

Publication of the Washington Association of Rail Passengers

A Not-for-profit Consumer Organization

"...getting the Pacific Northwest on the right track."

## Administration retreats on Amtrak self sufficiency plan it approved in December

The Clinton Administration's 1999 budget sent to Congress at the end of January violates at least the spirit of the 5 year Amtrak authorization that was designed phase out operating grants by 2002. Instead of providing the recommended operating amount it calls for Amtrak to use some of its critically needed capital funds provided for in the Taxpayers Relief Act for maintenance and overhaul of equipment. The budget proposal is also inconsistent with the White House brokered deal between Amtrak and its maintenance of way employees. This could allow Amtrak to

void the deal and thus lead to a strike.

NARP and a bipartisan group of Northeast senators wrote separate strongly critical letters to the president. Sen. Lautenberg (D-NJ) likened it to taking out a second mortgage to pay for the groceries. The White House, with little success, is trying to put a positive spin on its proposal. Again, Amtrak may face a financial crisis this year.

## WashARP merges with Commuter rail group

By Chuck Mott

Voters finally approved the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority in November 1996 after several failed attempts going back as far as 1969. Now, in 1998, we are watching important decisions, preparation of key contract awards and, funding activities move ahead to commence building this massive mass transit system for the Puget Sound.

Just as our future transit system will tie together with the intercity rail, WashARP needed to broaden its interest and influence to include local and intrastate passenger rail developments. After several months of informal discussions and planning, WashARP has welcomed the Commuter Passenger Rail Coalition into its leadership and

membership ranks. According to former CPRC president Rob Morrison, "After receiving our invitation from WashARP, CPRC voted to join and become partners with the WashARP intercity rail program and bring in the 14 communities and related commuter rail activities to meet the needs of both organizations."

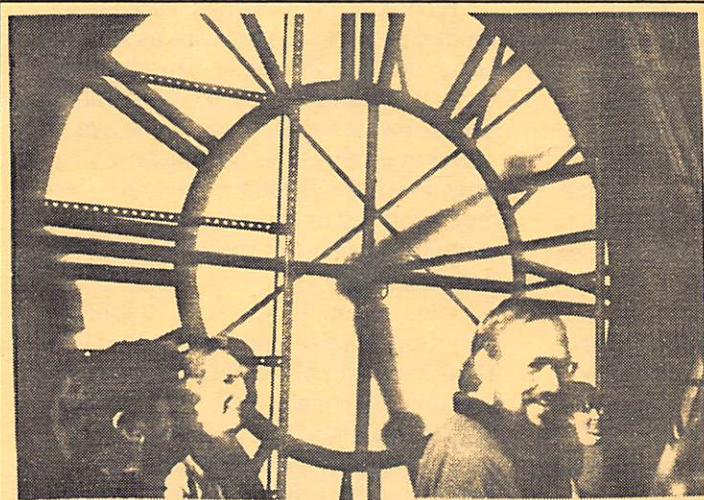
At our January 1998 meeting four leaders from CPRC were approved to serve on the WashARP Board of Directors and Mike Skehan was unanimously approved to fill the new position of Vice President-Commuter rail. The merger of the two advocacy groups results in a much better organization in several ways. First, our strong intercity rail advocacy organization becomes equally strong in supporting and influencing commuter rail developments. Second, our Executive Director, Lloyd Flem, will also address legislative issues relating to commuter rail, and influence its development and coordination with intercity rail. Finally, we can broaden our constituency to include local communities interested in commuter rail developments that directly affect them.

Starting with this issue of our newsletter, we will begin to include more information on commuter rail (and, to some extent, the entire RTA project). Next issue, we will expand our newsletter to bring to our WashARP members and new CPRC members more news about both intercity and commuter rail developments. Welcome CPRC members to WashARP! We are now one organization committed to supporting commuter rail activities just as successfully as we have pushed intercity rail programs in the past.

## Commuter Rail Section News

by Michael Skehan

After formal approval at the WashARP meeting in January, the Commuter Rail Section "rolled up its sleeves" and began the task of organizing, consolidating old and new members (See **Commuter Rail**, page 2)



WashARP members toured King St. Station on Dec. 6. Tour leaders were Stan Suchan of DOT, Gary Harnett of Otak, the design consultant, and Tom Spees of Amtrak. Pictured is the inside view of the clock tower. The building is structurally sound and can ultimately operate without subsidy. The \$44 mill. first phase will take 18 months to construct. Amtrak will relocate to a temporary facility during that time. DOT has contracted with Kristine Hill to write funding grants for available transportation monies. Due to the historic nature of both the building and the railroads that served it, additional funding is possible from many other sources. Kris is also heading a newly-formed non-profit organization, Friends of King St. Station, that will solicit these sources for funds. There will be an **open house at King St. Station on February 25, 1998** from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. All Seattle area WashARP members should plan to attend.

Photo by Jim Hamre

*From the  
Executive  
Director's Desk  
by  
Lloyd H. Flem*

**Here we go  
again!;  
Thanks,  
WashARP  
members!;  
And Thanks,**

### **Sid Morrison!**

Will North American passenger rail advocates ever cease having to fight for the very existence of intercity train service? Amtrak's November 1997 federal authorization victory, signed with presidential fanfare in December, gave our national system breathing room. But now, just weeks later, the Administration stunned Amtrak, its Congressional supporters and rail advocates nationwide with a budget proposal that takes dedicated Amtrak capital to use for maintenance and operations. This is in contradiction of the bipartisanly crafted authorization.

Seven Northeast senators (4 Ds and 3 Rs) have strongly protested directly to the president. The office of Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) has also expressed interest in gathering Northwest and nationwide senatorial support for the original agreement. Calls and faxes to the White House (phone: 202 456-1414) and to our Congressional delegation are again needed just to preserve that which we won a few short weeks ago!

Our small WSDOT Rail Office has done everything asked of it legislatively in implementing our state's nationally-praised rail program. Train ridership exceeds projections. The two trains partially funded by the state (the *Mt. Baker International* and *Mt. Adams*) are judged by the riders as first and third best in the nation among all Amtrak trains. Cooperation among all involved parties is good, and, thanks to the Talgo tilt technology, travel times in the Northwest Corridor will be faster, sooner and cheaper, than originally planned.

The independent late 1995 poll of 3600 Washington adults statewide had fast and frequent rail service as the first choice for desired transportation improvements. The rail program has strong public and editorial support, from the centrist-liberal Seattle *PI* to the staunchly conservative *Centralia Chronicle*. (Centralia's business community considers the bringing in of thousands of Amtrak passengers to their small city in the "Destination Cen-

tralia" program as the catalyst for its economic turnaround.)

A further benefit is the establishment of a new high-wage manufacturing industry, the Pacifica factory which completes construction of our Talgo trainsets, with the potential of being a growing center of rail equipment production for all of North America.

Yet some within the Legislature oppose the program's continuation and growth because it costs tax money and it "doesn't cure congestion." The critics are technically correct, but simple increases in *any* infrastructure capacity, be it road, rail, transit or bikeways has never and will never "cure congestion"! (Though adding capacity certainly can offer more access and mobility opportunities for people.) Busy, growing, economically-vital places are, by definition, crowded with people and traffic of whatever mode. Declining, shrinking, economically-hurting places lack that "problem." Booming Kent has congestion; the little mill town of Raymond does not. Yet during the 1940s Raymond was bigger and busier than Kent! Commuter rail and added Amtrak service will give Kent citizens a safe, efficient, environmentally sound means of access to other places and give outsiders similar access to Kent. And the public complaints I hear are not that rail is a misallocation of resources but that their towns and cities need new or additional passenger rail service...next week!

So, here we go again: write/call/fax/e-mail your state representatives and senators urging continuation and growth of our successful rail program. Governor Locke's proposed budget was relatively good for rail. Thank him for that.



Many WashARP members, without public acknowledgment, do the good work of collecting and providing the WashARP Olympia office with information; help educate their friends and neighbors on transportation issues; and work with local, state and Congressional elected representatives. These efforts plus members' financial support keep WashARP going. Since I cannot thank you individually, I want to express sincere appreciation for your dedication to balanced transportation of which rail should serve a vital and growing role.

Fellow WashARPer, do keep it up. WashARP's officers, board and particularly your Executive Director are

nowhere without you!



WashARP is pleased that WSDOT Secretary Sid Morrison will be one of the guest speakers at the joint membership meeting in Seattle. Mr. Morrison is chairman of the Standing Committee on Rail for the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials organization. He is a solid supporter of balanced transportation, including our successful intercity passenger rail program and our small but vital freight rail program.

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**Commuter Rail**, from page 1  
bers, and building our working relationship with the RTA staff and local governments and organizations up and down the line from Everett to Tacoma.

Rob Morrison will serve as North Corridor coordinator, Bob Whalen as South Corridor coordinator, and Walter Hazen as East Corridor coordinator (never to soon to plan for expansion!). Each station location will have a lead person, yet to be named, so if you're interested, please contact me.

RTA scoping meetings were attended by section members as RTA's commuter rail shapes its Environment Impact Statement. Each community has its own priorities, with many eyeing commuter rail as the centerpiece of downtown revitalization. Several meetings occurred in various cities to promote the benefits of linking Amtrak and commuter rail.

Chuck Mott, Lloyd Flem, Rob Morrison, Bob Whalen and I met with RTA's Paul Price and his staff to formalize our working relationship with them. This was an excellent first meeting and a wide range of topics were discussed. Most important were Lloyd's efforts to combine our talents with the RTA in promoting the balanced transportation funding package that we are working towards this session. The anti-rail foes are active again, and a united front is in everyone's best interest. Chuck, as usual, made sure the RTA heard "loud and clear" our ability to get the job done. We look forward to promoting the very best system the RTA can put in place.

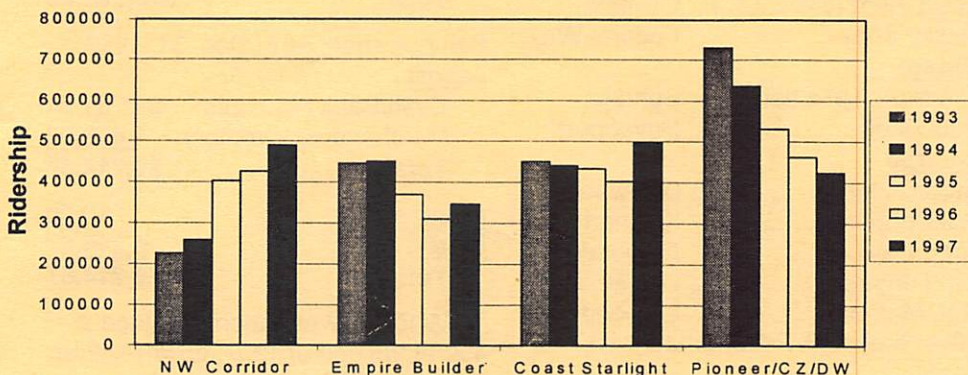
Your support for the CR section, both in membership and talent is needed, and I encourage all WashARPer to get involved with what I consider to be the next major challenge in promoting passenger rail service in the Northwest.

### Amtrak Ridership Data

#### Four Year Washington State City Totals (calendar year)

CITY	1994	1995	1996	1997	% CHANGE '96 vs. '97
Seattle	339,639	377,832	405,866	467,471	+15.2
Tacoma	78,399	80,891	80,563	91,607	+13.7
Vancouver	41,602	43,457	45,071	49,750	+10.4
Spokane	36,536	26,366	22,611	34,916	+54.2
Olympia-Lacey	24,605	25,319	27,265	32,362	+18.7
Kelso-Longview	16,058	17,899	20,788	22,423	+7.9
Everett	16,223	17,041	16,223	18,945	+16.8
Centralia	17,608	16,407	16,575	18,127	+9.4
Edmonds	7,123	12,786	14,016	14,382	+2.6
Pasco	13,465	8,503	7,861	10,392	+32.2
Bellingham	0	4,542	8,225	8,689	+5.6
Wenatchee	9,230	5,332	5,687	6,498	+14.3
Mt. Vernon	0	4,304	5,832	5,150	-11.7
Ephrata	1,831	1,319	1,235	1,378	+11.6
Bingen-White Salmon	861	502	492	827	+68.1
Wishram	644	321	361	516	+42.9
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>603,856</b>	<b>642,784</b>	<b>678,671</b>	<b>783,433</b>	<b>+15.4</b>

### Trains Serving Washington State



The Northwest Corridor, stretching from Vancouver, BC to Eugene, OR, continued to see a ridership boom in 1997. Our trains carried 488,818 passengers, an all time high in the Amtrak era. Corridor ridership figures included the three corridor trains as well as passengers who rode only within the Corridor on the *Coast Starlight* and the now-axed *Pioneer*.

"Ridership has more than doubled in the Pacific Northwest since Washington and Oregon began working with Amtrak and we're looking forward to continued growth," said Jim Slakey, WSDOT Director of Public Transportation and Rail.

In the twelve month period ending Sept. 30, 1997, the Seattle-Vancouver, BC *Mt. Baker International* ranked number one in the nation in customer satisfaction, the Seattle-Portland *Mt. Adams* ranked third

and the Seattle-Eugene *Cascadia* ranked sixth.

WSDOT estimates that if rail passengers in the Northwest used other

means of transportation, they would have driven 43 mill. miles, mostly on I-5, and released more than 1000 tons of carbon monoxide, nitrous oxides and volatile organic compounds into our air.

The Federal Railroad Administration has finally approved operation of the Talgo trains at increased speeds through curves. We will now be able to take advantage of the technology built into the trains. WSDOT estimates Seattle-Portland schedules for Talgo-equipped trains will be reduced from 3 hours 55 minutes to 3 hours 30 minutes. The fourth round-trip will be added at the time the schedules are improved. This will be the most Seattle-Portland service in over 30 years. Progress of negotiation with BNSF to implement the speed increases and re-vamp corridor schedules will determine when the new train will start but Amtrak and DOT are shooting for April or May.

The Seattle/Portland to Chicago *Empire Builder* is starting to rebound after suffering for about two years with four-times-a-week service. The large increase in patronage at stations served by the *Builder* is a result of the return to daily service, not a boom in riders. Amtrak claimed it would retain most riders when various trains had service cut to less than daily, but this did not happen. The *Builder* now boasts an onboard magazine keyed to scenery and destinations along its route.

Service enhancements on the Seattle-Los Angeles *Coast Starlight* (making it Amtrak's premier long distance train) and sizing the consist to demand have reversed a long period of declining ridership.

All Amtrak employees involved in the operation of the trains serving the Northwest justly deserve praise for these trains' high standings in the Amtrak system.

Elimination of the *Pioneer* leg (to Seattle and Portland) and the *Desert Wind* leg (to Los Angeles) of the Chicago-Bay Area *California Zephyr* caused the three-trains-in-one to show a continuing ridership lose. However, the return of daily service on the remaining *Zephyr* leg has resulted in rebounding ridership on that part of the route.

Amtrak considers a south King County stop; details in next *Washington Rail News*.

#### Important Addresses and Phone Numbers

U. S. House of Representatives... Washington, DC 20515  
 U. S. Senate ..... Washington, DC 20510  
 Capitol Switchboard (for all members) .. 202 224-3121  
 State Legislature..... State Capitol, Olympia, WA 98504  
 Hotline for leaving messages ..... 800 562-6000

#### WashARP Officers

Chuck Mott, Mt. Vernon...President..... 360 422-5323  
 James Neal, Ephrata...VP-East..... 509 754-3114  
 Dennis Fait, Seattle...VP-West..... 206 706-1770  
 Mike Skehan, Kent...VP-Commuter rail .... 253 859-3507  
 Ellen Barton, Bellingham...Secretary ..... 360 734-8540  
 Hans Mueller, Seattle...Treasurer..... 206 784-9232  
 Jim Hamre, Puyallup...Newsletter Editor .... 253 848-2473  
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 Olympia Office FAX ..... 360 709-9441  
 Address..... 2516 Thurston Ave. NE, Olympia 98506  
 WashARP e-mail address ..... washarp@scn.org  
 All are evening numbers, except Lloyd's, which is available 24-hours a day (answering machine).

# WashARP News

**February 19** Commuter rail Section meeting at 6:30 p.m. at Andy's Diner, 2963 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. S, Seattle.

**March 21:** Joint membership meeting with NARP Region 8 and AORTA. See enclosed flyer.

**April 11** meeting at noon at University Plaza Hotel, 400 NE 45<sup>th</sup> St., Seattle (just west of I-5 exit 169).

**May 9** meeting tentatively scheduled for Edmonds near the Historical Museum.

## In Memorial

Tom Martin, of Vancouver, WA, passed away on Dec. 21, 1997. Tom, an octogenarian, was a long time WashARP member and was active on the board of directors for many years. When you editor first joined WashARP we were a small enough group that most monthly meetings were held in Tom and Dorothy's Seattle home.

WashARP contributors to this issue include Jeff Schultz, Stan Suchan, Chuck Mott, Mike Skehan, Warren Yee & Jerry Sheldon.

**Nagano Olympics trivia:** Japan has opened a new Shinkansen (bullet train) route between Tokyo and Nagano, partly as a result of Nagano Winter Olympics. The cost for the 117 kilometers of new line: \$700 mill. Trip time on the 222 km route between the two cities has been halved to about an hour and a half with the fastest run in only 79 minutes. Top speed is 260 km/hr.

Washington Association of  
Rail Passengers  
P. O. Box 70381  
Seattle, WA 98107

Address Correction Requested

## 1998-1999 WashARP Board of Directors

### Northwest

Ellen Barton (Secretary) ..Bellingham  
Noel Hancock (Amtrak Customer  
Advisory Committee)....Anacortes  
Chuck Mott (President) ...Mt. Vernon

### Puget Sound

Dennis Fait (VP-West) ....Seattle  
Jim Holley.....Seattle  
Dale Menchhofer.....Seattle  
Hans Mueller (Treasurer)  
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Roger Mumm .....Seattle  
Eleanor Stewart.....Seattle  
Craig Thorpe .....Bellevue  
Stephanie Weber (RTA Citizens  
Oversight Panel) .....Kirkland  
Bill Weeks .....Seattle  
Warren Yee (Internet Webmaster)  
.....Seattle

### Southwest

Jim Hamre (Editor).....Puyallup  
Lloyd Flem (Exec. Dir.)....Olympia  
Rocky Shay .....Federal Way

### Eastern

Jim Neal (VP-East).....Ephrata  
Paul Scott.....Davenport

### At-Large

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Hal Cooper .....Kirkland  
John Dewhirst .....Edmonds  
Jim Langston.....Des Moines  
Rob Morrison.....Edmonds  
Mike Skehan (VP-Commuter rail)  
.....Kent  
Steve Spear .....Pacific  
Tony Trifiletti.....Shoreline  
Rob Whalen .....Kent

## 1997 WashARP Financial Data

### Income

Renewals	\$10,579.50
New members	520.00
Donations	10,191.00
Miscellaneous income	1,552.37
Meeting Income	1,777.00
Sales income	236.90
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$24,856.77</b>

### Expenses

Exec. Director salary	\$10,800.00
Exec. Director expenses	2,654.55
Newsletter postage	463.86
Newsletter printing	1,499.00
Miscellaneous expenses	1,828.31
Miscellaneous postage	742.13
Miscellaneous printing	574.30
Meeting expenses	1,241.03
Sales expenses	35.03
Supplies	690.46
Capital purchase (computer system)	2,777.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$23,305.89</b>

Balance sheet as of Dec. 31, 1997:

### Assets

Cash/Bank Accounts	\$4,781.94
Merchandise Inventory	1,432.93
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,214.87</b>

### Liabilities

	\$0.00
<b>Equity</b>	<b>6,214.87</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,214.87</b>

WashARP membership stood at 452 at the end of 1997, down 20 from Dec. 31, 1996. Members are our strength. You can help your organization by volunteering and by recruiting more members.

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U. S. POSTAGE  
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PUYALLUP, WA  
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## F/M MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION RENEWAL FORM ADDRESS CHANGE

Basic Membership .....	\$20.00 per year
Student/Fixed Income .....	\$15.00 per year
Family Membership .....	\$30.00 per year
Patron.....	\$50.00 per year
Extra Contribution .....	\$ _____

(always welcome and appreciated)

Note: if you move, let us know in advance and save WashARP 75¢ for address correction service.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_