



AORTA Bulletin

A publication of the
Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates

Issue 122

May 2000

Since 1976

Amtrak Breaks Ground For Seattle Maintenance Facility

□ Amtrak and the State of Washington invest in PNW transportation future

Seattle, WA – Amtrak’s Board of Directors, Washington State and Sound Transit officials broke ground on April 26 for a new, jointly-funded \$43 million state-of-the-art maintenance facility in downtown Seattle, replacing the current 1910-era facility. The new maintenance facility will provide superior working conditions and enable employees to better maintain, repair, service and inspect trains, improving efficiency and allowing for the continued growth of passenger rail service in the Pacific Northwest. The facility will enhance customer service and reliability for travelers on Amtrak’s *Coast Starlight*, *Empire Builder* and *Cascades* trains and Sound Transit’s new *Sounder* commuter trains. The modern facility will consist of two structures, a service and inspection building and a locomotive and coach repair building. Construction of the facility will be completed in 2003.

This investment in customer service represents another example of Amtrak’s successful partnership with the State of Washington to improve passenger rail services and provide smart transportation solutions. As part of the joint capital investment, Amtrak has committed \$21 million toward construction of the facility, while Washington State will invest \$22 million. Oregon will benefit from this investment but is not participating in the funding.

“This new maintenance facility will bring more efficient service to passenger rail travelers and commuters, improve conditions for our employees and provide a new source of business for Amtrak,” said Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, Amtrak’s chairman of the board. “Investments like this symbolize Amtrak’s commitment to the future of passenger rail both in the Pacific Northwest and throughout the

continued on page 7, see “Groundbreaking”



Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, former Eugene Mayor Ruth Bascom, and Amtrak West CEO Gil Mallory at ground-breaking in Seattle

New Pioneer Decision Expected June 9

C.B. Hall

After more than two years of concerted effort by **AORTA** and other rail advocates on behalf of a *New Pioneer* train, Amtrak appears to be close to a decision on the service proposal. Amtrak representatives have stated that its Market Based Network Analysis team will have a decision by June 9 on the possibility of Portland-Boise service. For all practical purposes, that will mean a decision on the long-distance *New Pioneer* proposal formulated by **AORTA**.

Since the last *Bulletin*, the *New Pioneer* initiative has maintained its momentum. **AORTA** has been instrumental in securing more than 40 resolutions and statements of support for the initiative from mayors, chambers of commerce, city councils and the like

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PO Box 2772, Portland, Oregon 97208-2772

A nonprofit citizen advocate group working to educate the public about the need for safe, fiscally responsible, environmentally sound transportation. Incorporated as the Oregon Association of Railway Passengers (OreARP).

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Shuster (R-PA), chairman of the authorizing committee, who remains a strong opponent of using Highway Trust Fund money for intercity passenger rail.

This is likely to be the high water mark for Amtrak in the 2001 appropriations process because the spending limits given to the Senate counterpart subcommittee are so much lower than what Wolf's subcommittee got -- \$2.3 billion less in budget authority and a whopping \$17 billion less in outlays.

All of this underlines the importance of "our" other three bills:

--S.1144, that gives states the right to spend their federal transportation dollars on intercity passenger rail;

--H.R.3700 and S.1900 that would allow sale of \$10 billion in bonds for intercity passenger rail investment over 10 years. As NARP has reported before, up to 10% could go to service outside federally designated corridors. Also, the House bill limits the Northeast Corridor to no more than 30% of the total; Amtrak has agreed to support inclusion of this limit in the House-Senate conference report in the happy event that we get to that point. Both bills apply a 20% state matching requirement inside and outside the Northeast Corridor.

Please tell your legislators that you are very unhappy with the appropriations process, which is increasing highway and aviation spending while cutting Amtrak. Suggest S.1144, H.R.3700 and S.1900 as appropriate remedies ...

The Capitol switchboard, 202/224-3121, reaches all Capitol Hill offices. NARP's web site has information on how to contact legislators by e-mail at <<http://www.narprail.org/links.htm#congress>>, but be sure -- if you do that -- to include your name and regular mailing address. *ED NOTE: Check NARP's web site to learn about current status of legislation <www.narprail.org> (click on "Action Alert").*

--Ross B. Capon

NARP is the National Association of Railroad Passengers. Membership dues are \$28/year, and includes an informative newsletter, 11 issues/year. NARP, 900 Second Street, NE, Suite 308, Washington, DC 20002-3557.

Message from NARP

On May 9 the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation approved a fiscal 2001 transportation funding bill that proposes \$521.5 million for Amtrak. This is the same at the "general funds" level requested by the Administration. The last authorization law for Amtrak (in 1997) authorized \$989 million. The Subcommittee is chaired by Frank Wolf (R.-VA.).

Though Wolf's bill includes language that seems to let states spend up to \$468 million of Highway Trust Fund money on intercity passenger rail, this is unlikely to get far. Because this is "legislating on an appropriations bill," it is subject to an inevitable point of order from Bud

Improve economy, environment with simple fix

An article in the May 24, 1999 *Fortune* magazine argued for a 10-percent reduction in federal income taxes coupled with a 50 cent per gallon increase in the gasoline tax. In the article, Professor N. Gregory Mankiw of Harvard stated that reducing the income tax while increasing the gasoline tax would lead toward rapid economic growth, reduced road congestion, safer roads, and reduced risk of global warming "without jeopardizing long-term fiscal solvency. This may be the closest thing to a free lunch that economics has to offer."

Gasoline prices in the United States are dramatically lower than in other countries. Consequently, citizens tend to be very wasteful

when it comes to petroleum consumption. This increases the trade deficit, weakens the nation's economy and adversely affects the health of our citizens and the environment.

Editor's Note: While the solution could work well at the national level, in Oregon, state gasoline taxes are currently locked into roadway maintenance and expansion. While in most cases it is important to maintain existing infrastructure, expanding an overgrown road system which is already costly to maintain does not make sense. Diverting traffic from single occupant vehicles and heavy trucks into public transportation and rail freight makes good economic sense.

Maine, California, invest in rail

According to Rob Elder, Director of Freight Transportation in Maine's DOT, the state's transportation bond issue of 1999 allotted more money for railways than for roads -- the first time ever. Elder was speaking at the annual assembly of the Maine Rail Group according to an article in the spring issue of *Trainriders/Northeast Newsletter*.

On the West Coast, the surface transportation budget of California's recently elected governor, Gray Davis, allots 45 percent to railways vs 55 percent for roads -- less than half, but far superior to the ten percent included in the budgets of the two immediately preceding governors.

While the Oregon Legislature has not yet caught on to what is turning out to be a national trend, **AORTA** is hoping they will board the train in 2001.

2nd West Coast Rail Rail Summit

San Jose- Rail advocates from Oregon, California and Washington will be gathering in Sacramento, California on July 22-23. The coalition of rail advocacy organizations will continue efforts begun in Portland February 4-5, 2000.

History of public transportation

When the Los Angeles area rail transit system was destroyed in the 1950's, a public opinion poll revealed that **88%** of the residents **valued the service and wanted it retained**

The effort to destroy effective public transportation in Los Angeles and in *at least 49 other cities* across the United States was led by National City Lines, a company which received its financial backing from General Motors, Standard Oil, Firestone Rubber and several other highway and petroleum conspirators.

SAVE THE DATE

September 26-28, 2000

2000 CASCADIA Conference

Eugene Hilton
66 East Sixth Avenue
Eugene, Oregon

AGENDA AND REGISTRATION FORM WILL BE
AVAILABLE ON DISCOVERY INSTITUTE'S WEBSITE:
www.discovery.org/cascadia/index.html

UP donates Coos Bay rail bridge

Coos Bay- The Port of Coos Bay voted May 3 to accept an offer from Union Pacific to donate the aging rail bridge spanning the bay. The 87-year-old bridge is in danger of being condemned unless needed repair work is completed. If the bridge were closed, federal law would require removal because it traverses a shipping channel.

Transfer of the bridge to public ownership will make it easier for the Port to receive federal funding (\$5.5 million) to rehabilitate the span. The Port plans to ask State of Oregon officials for the necessary 20% local match.

The Port is hoping to begin rehabilitation later this year.

The Tillamook branch line (Hillsboro to Tillamook) was originally built by the Pacific Railway & Navigation Company. Track laying began in or before 1908, but the line did not begin operating passenger and freight service until 1911. It was sold to Southern Pacific (SP) in 1915. SP sold the property to the Port of Tillamook Bay in 1990.

Today, Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad leases and maintains the bridge.

Coos Bay transit service expands

Coos Bay- The December 1999 **AORTA Bulletin** reported the September 1999 start of a fixed-route bus service in Coos Bay ("The Loop").

Effective May 1, 2000, the County offers a South County Connector (SCC), serving North Bend, Bandon, Coquille and Myrtle Point, and a Brookings to Bandon (B2B) route, with intermediate stops in Langlois, Port Orford, Gold Beach.

Adult fares range between \$1 and \$2. Students (6-18) are half-price.

For further information call Coos County, (541) 267-7111 or Curry County, 469-6822.

More information about The Loop may be obtained by calling Coos Public Transit, (541) 267-7111.

Coach-baggage car moved to Astoria

A former Spokane, Portland & Seattle railway car arrived in Astoria May 1. Purchased by the Astoria Railroad Preservation Association for \$1,000, the car is to be restored and become part of an operating museum along the Columbia riverfront. Restoration work is underway on a steam locomotive.

The 82-foot car originally saw service between Portland and Flavel. It was converted from a passenger car to coach-baggage about 1955, and used between Wishram, WA and Bend, OR. People willing to help restore the car are urged to call (503) 325-5323.

Southern Oregon Signals

Amtrak Thruway bus serves S Oregon

Amtrak Thruway bus service now connects communities in Southern Oregon to Amtrak in Eugene. The daily service serves Ashland, Medford, Grants Pass, Canyonville, Roseburg and Eugene. Call 1-800-USA-RAIL for schedule and reservations.

Ashland residents request more transit

Ashland residents appealed for more frequent transit service to help ease problems with parking at a community meeting April 12. A campaign to promote walking, and shuttle between motels and various attractions, were also high on the list. In June, local officials plan to present a draft transportation plan to the public. Call Amtrak at 1-800-USA-RAIL for schedule and reservations.

Grand Uncle Merlin's Atlas of Intercity Railroad Passenger Routes of the United States

Exact (to the tenth) mileages 65 pages
State-by-state
All stops, junction points *Allow 2 weeks for*
Edge of state, towns *delivery*

\$14.95 postpaid
\$1 goes to NARP and \$1 goes to the
state ARP of your choice (mention **AORTA**)

Merlin L. Marlowe
PO Box 45
Wilber, NE 68465-0045

Willamette Valley Whistles

Capital Press reports "Rail possible solution to truck crunch"

Salem- **AORTA's** efforts to encourage shipment of Oregon's agricultural products via Amtrak Express received front page coverage in the *Capital Press* March 3. The effort is part of a strategy to restore passenger rail service through Eastern Oregon and beyond.

The story appeared in conjunction with another story about how high fuel prices are making it too costly to ship products by truck.

Because shipment by rail offers significant savings in terms of both fuel and labor, Amtrak's potential for carrying Oregon's agricultural products is drawing keen interest. As fuel prices continue to rise, the shift of freight from road to rail becomes more essential in order to maintain a viable economy. **AORTA's** C. B. Hall is extensively quoted in the article.

Lane County Transit District cuts fares

Eugene- Lane County Transit plans to reduce fares for high school and middle school students this summer. LTD recognizes that it is important to get the public familiar with using transit at an early age. Cash fares for students (12-18 y.o.) will be cut in half. The price of a monthly pass

will be reduced by one-third. A three month pass will be only \$32.50 for students.

The lower fares are in response to concerns received at TransPlan hearings in recent months. Citizens raised concern about the multiple trips generated by students, and parents shuttling students, to and from school and school-related events. Concerns were also raised about expensive school parking lots and safety. The lower fares will be in effect for at least one year.

Salem Station dedicated

Amtrak's historic passenger rail station (1918) in Salem was rededicated May 19. ODOT and Amtrak worked together to remodel and restore the station. The project includes a new station platform, outside lighting, landscaping and paved parking.

East Oregon Extras

Bus serves Central & Eastern Oregon

Amtrak Thruway bus service is now operating between Portland and Boise, ID, via Madras, Redmond, Bend, Burns, Vale and Ontario. The tri-weekly service is provided through the cooperative effort of the Oregon Department of Transportation and Amtrak. For information or reservations call 1-800-USA-RAIL.

Shortlines and Quotes . . .

- Voters in Phoenix, Arizona passed Proposition 2000, increasing their sales tax by 0.4 cents to fund a 20-year transit plan. The measure, which passed with over 65% favorable vote, includes expansion of bus service and construction of the first 24 miles of a 64-mile light rail system. The over-whelming victory resulted from a very effective campaign in a city which currently has minimal, six day-a-week transit service. Congratulations, Phoenix!
- Rail transit in Bangkok, Thailand began service December 5, 1999. The elevated "Sky Train" operates at 2 minute intervals on the 17 km Sukhumvit line, and 3-minute intervals on the 6.5 km Silom line. The system serves 23 stations. Bangkok has some of the most congested roads in the world. Road traffic is so-congested that it is not unusual for it to take 1-2 hours to travel 5 blocks.
- At the company's annual meeting in May, Ford Motor Company's Board Chair admitted that sport utility vehicles (SUVs) waste energy, cause excessive pollution, and cause too many injuries. Large and small corporations need to recognize that to have a sustainable, healthy economy, one must think about more than the quarterly income statement. *If* this admission leads to meaningful action, and *if* it raises the corporate consciousness, it would signal a brighter economic and environmental future for this planet and all life forms that reside here.

New Pioneer, continued from page 1

from Portland all the way east to Nebraska.

AORTA passed these resolutions on to Amtrak's board chairman, Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson on April 26 in Seattle..

In the Amtrak Task Force - formerly the Portland-Boise Passenger Rail Task Force - **AORTA** has been a steady voice on behalf of a long-distance train which serves the Boise area but continues east to connect with the rest of Amtrak's network. More and more task force members appear to agree with us. Connectivity with the East is crucial to the train's success, from the standpoint of both passengers and express.

Governor Thompson appears to agree with us, too. While the decision is far from being his alone, he demonstrates an active interest in the *New Pioneer* concept.

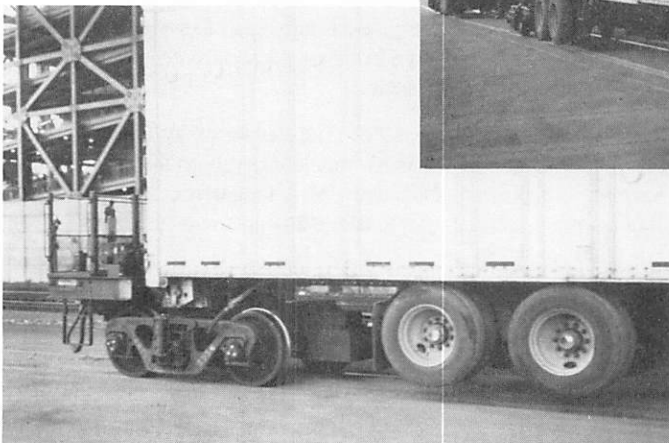
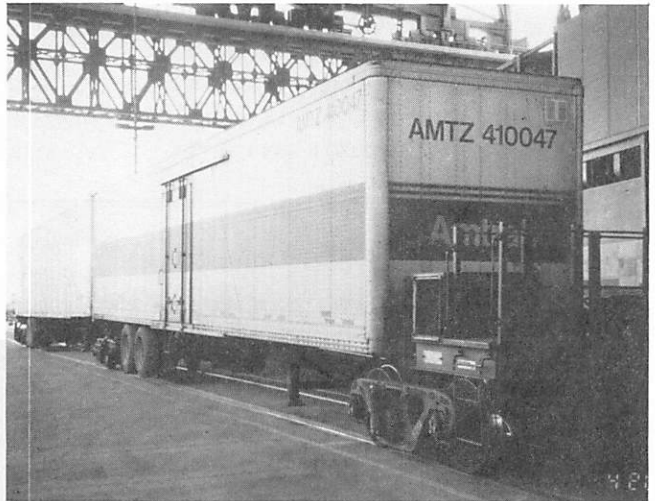
AORTA also submitted new financial projection and alternative route scenarios for the *New Pioneer* to Amtrak. The financial projection indicates that the express-based

train could generate a profit of \$5 million yearly in its third year of operation. **AORTA** studied the alternative routes in view of reports that Amtrak was considering a Portland-to-St. Louis *New Pioneer*. The alternatives studied were Seattle-Portland-Wyoming-Denver-St. Louis, Portland-Wyoming-Denver-St. Louis, and Portland-Salt Lake City-Denver-St. Louis. The resulting scenarios were sent to Amtrak alongside a recapitulation of the original **AORTA** scenario for a Portland-Nebraska-Chicago routing.

Reports have meanwhile reached us that this year's Pacific Northwest tree fruit crop will be huge. With lots of fruit on the way, and not enough trucks to transport it, rail shipment is likely to be a necessity if the region's fruit industry is to avoid major logistical problems. The fruit, like the opportunity that the *New Pioneer* represents, is ripening: will Amtrak - and all its partners - be ready?

For more information on the *New Pioneer* initiative, please contact C.B. Hall at 541-929-6086.

Picture at right: Two roadrailers in Seattle ready for departure on east-bound *Empire Builder*.



Picture at left: Rear end of roadrailer sitting on truck.

nation.”

The 75,000 square foot service and inspection facility will feature full-length service pits. These will allow easy access beneath passenger cars for the performance of routine and heavy maintenance. The site will also house a fully enclosed 66,000 square foot locomotive and coach facility that will accommodate three tracks. In addition to mechanical operations, the building will offer employees upgraded office and locker room facilities.

To improve efficiency, a wheel turning machine, which enables Amtrak to ensure that car and locomotive wheels are shaped correctly, and a train washer facility, which allows trains to be washed and cleansed as they are cycled through the maintenance facility, will also be located within the new facility.

“One of the most important parts of any good rail system is an effective and convenient maintenance program,” said Sid Morrison, Washington State Secretary of Transportation. “Providing clean trains and safe service is fundamentally important to Amtrak and their partners in this project, Sound Transit and Washington State. This facility will benefit Amtrak *Cascades* service and the new *Sounder* commuter rail service. We are pleased to help deliver new and expanded rail service for the residents of the Pacific Northwest.”

Last year Sound Transit awarded Amtrak an estimated \$50 million, ten-year contract for *Sounder* commuter rail car and locomotive maintenance and service. As a result, Sound Transit will not need to construct its own maintenance facility for its 69 unit *Sounder* fleet. *Sounder* commuter rail’s service is scheduled to begin later this year.

“Our partnership with the state is a model that has proven everyone can come out a winner, especially the people of Washington State,” said George Warrington, Amtrak president and CEO. “Amtrak is committed to a lasting relationship and to working with all our public and

private partners to further reduce travel times on the corridor and improve customer service on the *Cascades* and Amtrak’s long-distance trains that serve the region.”

Since 1992, Amtrak and its state, federal, local and private partners have committed more than \$590 million in track and signal upgrades, train equipment, operations and station improvements on the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor.

Ridership in the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor has grown from about 226,000 in calendar year 1993 to more than 565,000 in 1999 — an increase of over 160 percent. So far this fiscal year (Oct. 1, 1999-Mar. 31, 2000) ridership is almost 14 percent ahead of ridership over the same period last year. Ridership for March set an all-time record for Amtrak’s *Cascades* service.

Amtrak, America’s National Passenger Railroad Corporation, serves more than 21 million annually on its national network of intercity trains. Amtrak trains and connecting Thruway Motorcoaches serve more than 500 communities in 45 states. An additional 54 million use commuter service operated by Amtrak under contract to regional transportation authorities.

AORTA Directors Bob Lowry, Pat Noyes (Vice-President), Ray Polani, Tim Wilson, Aloha Wyse and Dan McFarling (President) attended the groundbreaking in Seattle.

For current schedule, fare and reservation information visit www.amtrak.com, www.AmtrakCascades.com, visit a staffed Amtrak station, contact an authorized travel agency, or call Amtrak at 1-800-USA-RAIL.



Future site of train maintenance facility. Amtrak West CEO Gil Mallory and Amtrak President George Warrington talking in background on left.

Portland's three steam locomotives need a place to call home

Efforts are underway to secure a permanent home and maintenance facility for the three steam locomotives owned by the City of Portland.

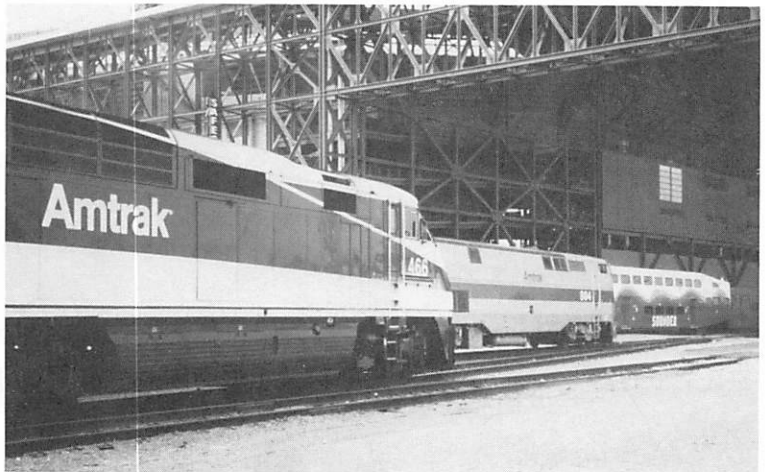
A group of dedicated steam locomotive enthusiasts and Brooklyn residents have joined forces to establish the Oregon Steam Heritage Foundation. The all-volunteer group is looking for contributions to ensure the city's historic steam locomotives have a place to stay. The Brooklyn Yard Roundhouse is one of the primary sites being considered. At least two other locations are being considered for storage and maintenance and/or museum/display facilities.

The three locomotives include former Spokane, Portland and Seattle (SP&S) #700, Southern Pacific (SP) #4449 which pulled the Bicentennial American Freedom train around the United States, and Union Pacific (UP) #3203 (formerly Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company #197).

Both the SP&S and SP locomotives are in operating condition. The UP locomotive is also being restored. Volunteers have expended endless hours of hard work and invested substantial financial commitment to restore and maintain these locomotives.

Contributions to help secure a permanent location for the locomotives should be sent to OSHF, 4205 SE 12th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97202. Contributions are tax-deductible.

Equipment on display at Seattle maintenance facility ground-breaking April 26. California-type locomotive in Cascades service at left, Amtrak Genesis locomotive, and bi-level Sounder commuter rail car. Overhead is the structure to support the removable roof for the new Seattle sports facility under construction.



AORTA TimeTable

Thursday, June 15, 6:30 PM

AORTA Portland Chapter meeting
Portland Union Station, Room 208

Saturday, June 17, 9 am

AORTA Board Meeting
Portland Union Station, Room 208

Thursday, June 22, 10:15 am

Amtrak Portland-Boise Task Force
Boise City Hall, Boise, ID

AORTA's Portland Chapter normally meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month in Room 208 Union Station. The Board normally meets on the 4th Saturday of the month in Portland, Salem or Eugene. Please call (503) 642-4077 to confirm dates/locations.

Late again

Sorry we're late again! This issue of the *AORTA Bulletin* is long overdue. We plan to begin working on the next *Bulletin* immediately. You can help by sending in articles and news stories for publication. Especially appreciated are stories about local transit issues and transportation. Special thanks to CB Hall, Art Poole, Orval Etter, Ken McFarling and Ray Polani for helping with this issue. AORTA relies exclusively on volunteers.