



AOR TA Bulletin

A publication of the
Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates

Issue 154

November 2012

Since 1976

Oregon Rail Administrator: Oregon Talgos due in Spring

by Floyd Smith, **AOR TA** Government Affairs Director

Oregon's two Talgo trainsets, being built in Wisconsin, are expected to be in service on the Cascades Corridor by spring 2013 following testing at Pueblo, Colorado, and final preparation in Seattle.

The long-awaited trains had been expected in Oregon this autumn, but continuing contract negotiations between Talgo and state transportation officials over the costs for spare parts and maintenance have pushed the start date.

"We're shooting for revenue service by spring," said Hal Gard, Oregon Rail and Transit Division administrator. The state's new rail chief was keynote speaker at the **AOR TA** annual luncheon Oct. 6 in Portland.

Gard touted proposed schedule improvements on the Cascades Corridor, which runs between Eugene and Vancouver, B.C., with the addition of the new Talgos. He emphasized that the two trainsets could facilitate the addition of thruway coaches to destinations not served by scheduled trains, add a new morning southbound train from Portland, and originate a late afternoon northbound train from Eugene.

Amtrak, according to Gard, believes the suggested schedule changes will further improve ridership in Oregon. Cascades ridership here just keeps increasing. Train

passengers on the corridor numbered well over 130,000 in 2011, reported the rail and transit chief; coach ridership was about 70,000.

Talgo's representative Ralph Munro noted: "You're going to see success in Oregon from the investment to

continued on pg 4, see "Hal Gard."



Mike Morrison, **AOR TA** Director and NARP Representative inspecting Oregon's new Talgo Bistro car in Wisconsin
photo by Jim Hamre

From the right seat of the cab...

by Donald Leap



Friends, my term as **AOR TA** president is ending and the association's bylaws proclaim that the gavel must pass to another at the

beginning of 2013. Those of you who know me recognize my long-standing love of passenger trains and so, with that motivation, I expect to remain active as **AOR TA** continues to help shape regional transportation policy going forward.

As you recognize, **AOR TA** is always seeking fresh blood. Membership is not

where it needs to be (we're at about 150). We look to a far greater diversity of participants from across Oregon to refresh our organization, which since 1976 has championed insightful rail and transit policy in the Northwest. Accordingly, I set in motion a reorganization process headed by board member Dr. David Arnold.

Dr. Arnold helps broaden our demographic. He's from La Grande, not Portland. He's a retired clinical psychologist and university professor. He's a musician. He's a railroad engineer—on the Wallowa

Union Railroad. He comes to us with a fresh eye and he sees the big picture.

Dr. Arnold's preliminary report to the Oct. 6 **AOR TA** annual luncheon is a great start to breathing new life into our group. Read his reorganization
continued on pg 8, see "President's Message"

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The **AORTA Bulletin** is published by the

Association of

Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates

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.**

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A Proposal for SW Portland Corridor Transit

by Jim Howell

Public transportation in the SW Corridor is inadequate and has to be upgraded and redesigned if long-term needs of the public are to be met. The SW Corridor currently generates less than 9% of TriMet's ridership and yet consumes 25% of total bus hours and 22% of all vehicle hours including MAX and WES.

This poor ridership and inefficient service cannot be blamed entirely on sprawling land development. Much of it has to do with poor system design and operation. The SW Corridor lacks a system of connecting lines able to provide convenient access to and from the entire metro region as well as downtown. Rationalizing the bus service into a multi-destinational network and adding a Rapid Transit Line as an effective alternative to I-5 would significantly increase transit ridership while reducing traffic demand, especially during peak hours.

Multi-destinational transit

Multi-destinational transit networks provide convenient transit access to and from any destination within the area served by the use of connections or transfers. If a transit system is designed around accommodating only single-seat trips, it will fail to become a serious competitor to the private automobile because most destinations in the metro region are not concentrated in a single location such as the central business district (CBD).

To be effective, a Multi-Destinational Transit Network must be there when you need it and must be able to get you to your destination in a reasonable length of time. This requires daily service during most of the day (span of service) with frequent service lines that connect directly to major regional destinations and to each other. This can be achieved with two basic routing configurations, namely the



grid and the hub and spoke.

Experience at successful transit systems has shown that a grid of transit lines running frequently (Frequent Service Transit*) is the most efficient way to attract ridership. The routes are direct and the transfers are fast and reliable. The hub and spoke configuration, with less frequent local service, can be an effective way to provide access between more isolated suburban neighborhoods and to the grid network if their schedules are timed for convenient transfers.

On a regional scale, a hub and spoke configuration cannot provide fast and convenient multi-destinational service because it requires out-of-direction travel for many trips. An exception is where higher speeds on rapid transit lines can compensate for some out-of-direction travel.

The SW Corridor is currently served by a hub and spoke system oriented to the CBD. It has routes of insufficient span of service and frequency, and with no rapid transit. Its only cross-town grid service is provided by the #76 Tualatin, #78 Lake Oswego and WES, none of which provides FST.

Grid Network for the SW Corridor

Following is an example of a basic grid network of Frequent Service Transit that would provide direct access to the entire metro region and would connect to other lines. They

may replace or incorporate parts of some existing lines.

- A new FST line between Lake Oswego and Sherwood via Country Club Road, Boones Ferry Road and Tualatin Sherwood Road. (Major connections at Lake Oswego TC, Tualatin and Sherwood)
- A new north-south FST line between Sherwood and PCC Rock Creek via Elsner road, Roy Rogers Drive and 185th Avenue. (Major connections at Sherwood, TV Highway, Willow Creek TC, Tanasbourne, and PCC Rock Creek)
- A new east-west FST line between Washington Square and Clackamas Town Center via Taylors Ferry Road, Sellwood Bridge, Tacoma Street, Johnson Creek Blvd. and 92nd Avenue. (Major connections at Washington Square, Barbur TC, #35 on Macadam, Sellwood/Moreland, Tacoma MAX Station, #75, #71, #72 and Clackamas TC)
- Retain the #12 Barbur Line. (Major connections at CBD, Barbur TC, Tigard TC and Sherwood)
- Retain the #76 Beaverton/ Tualatin Line and upgrade it to FST. (Major connections at Beaverton TC, Washington Square, Tigard TC, Bridgeport Village and Tualatin)

Local Transit

Local bus routes with service frequencies no greater than 30 minutes should be established where needed. They should connect to the grid bus system and rapid transit. Where two or more local buses connect at a station or other exchange point, their schedules should be coordinated to avoid long connecting delays.

A North-South Rapid Transit MAX Line

(Between Vancouver and Tualatin along the I-5 Corridor)

MAX currently provides a rapid transit alternative to I-84, Highway 26, portions of I-5 north, portions of I-205

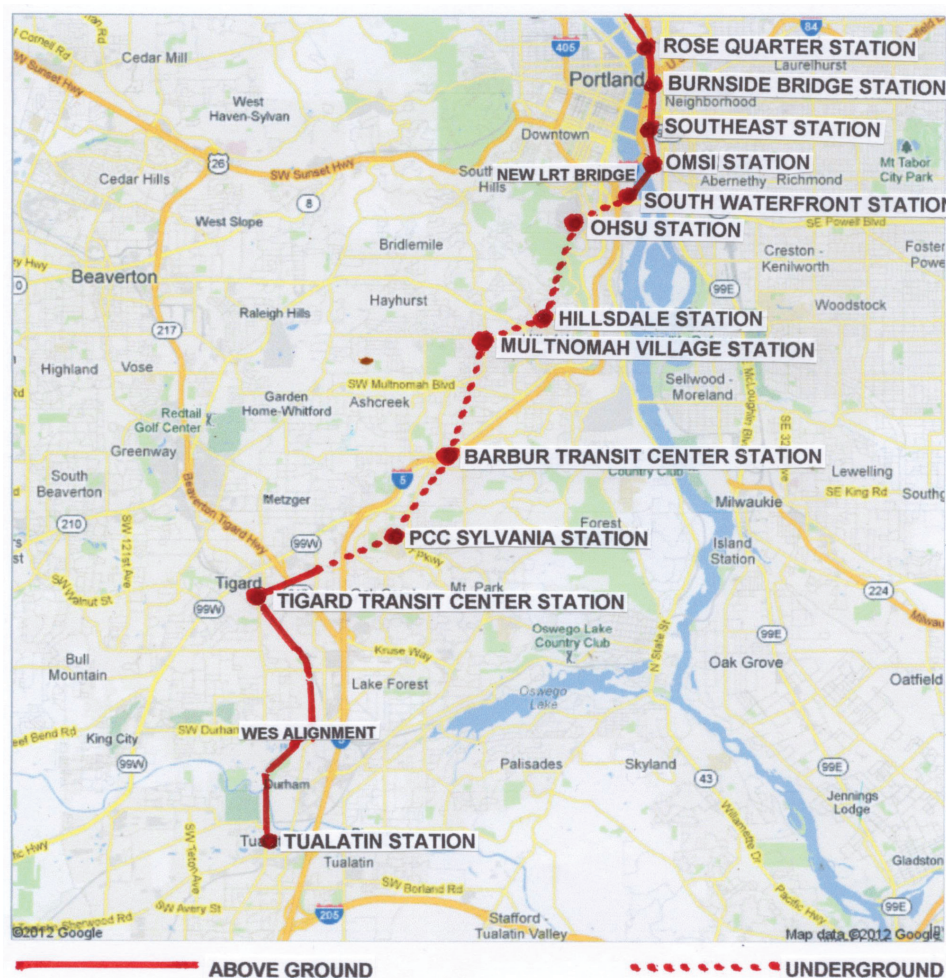
and, soon, the Milwaukie MAX Line in the 99E Corridor. Unfortunately it does not have rapid transit at its core. The accepted concept is to develop a radial rapid transit system with lines on surface streets in the central city that converge on Pioneer Square in downtown Portland. Slow operating speeds through the central city resulting from traffic, bridge lifts, concern for pedestrian safety, train congestion and frequent stops result in a disincentive for commuters to chose MAX for long interregional trips.

If the east-west MAX lines are expected to function with the speed and efficiency of true rapid transit, they will someday have to be connected through the central city in a subway with minimal stops.

In the meantime, the SW Corridor Planning process provides an excellent opportunity to provide true north-south rapid transit. It could provide a viable alternative to I-5, greatly reducing traffic demand while not getting bogged down on downtown streets.

This proposal extends the North Portland Yellow Line south on the eastside from the Rose Garden to OMSI and then across the Willamette River on the new light rail bridge to South Waterfront. While not going through the CBD, this alignment provides excellent connections to and from the CBD with direct transfers to the Blue, Red, Green and Orange MAX Lines. It also connects to numerous downtown FST bus lines at four inner eastside stations.

continued on pg 8, see SW Corridor



MAX YELLOW LINE EXTENSION SOUTH TO TUALATIN
(6.5-MILES UNDERGROUND 8.5-MILES ABOVE GROUND)



Hal Gard

photo by Brian Riley

build ridership.”

Importantly, Union Pacific, on whose tracks Cascades trains operate, supports the proposed schedule, according to Gard. **AORTA** has raised questions about the schedule for its failure to have southbound busses deliver passengers back to Oregon City, a heavily-used station, where northbound trains take on passengers.

Budget crunch. Gard pulled no punches speaking to **AORTA** luncheon attendees of Oregon’s rail financing imbalance. Demonstrating the math, he pointed out that the two-year cost of passenger rail is \$24.5 million. Funds allocated to run the system total \$10 million. The

shortfall is \$14.5 million.

The Rail Funding Task Force has come up with recommendations that may be put before Oregon legislators when they meet in 2013. These ideas include: creation of special taxing districts, use of lottery proceeds, reallocation of railroad property

taxes, charging phone companies, and establishing a rail tax credit.

Complicating the funding challenge is PRIIA, the federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act, which Gard explained shifts the costs of Amtrak onto the states and “injects uncertainty” into financing passenger rail.

Rail on a roll. The difficulties of

passenger rail funding were a minor element of Gard’s encouraging presentation. He proffered that e-ticketing is working well in Oregon as the bugs are worked out, wifi is being improved, and the Oregon-Washington corridor management plan under the direction of John Sibold is showing great promise while negotiations are underway to engage British Columbia.

The plan, inked in April, is designed “to include governance, centralizing fleet management, scheduling, budgeting and capital planning, with a goal of improving passenger-rail performance that benefits riders and economies in both states.”



Dr. David Arnold

photo by Brian Riley



AORTA Fall Membership Meeting

photo by Donald Leap

Further, Gard listed a surfeit of good rail news: an 80 to 90 percent on-time performance of Cascades trains between Portland and Eugene, continued ridership increases on the corridor, recent public investments in Oregon passenger rail of \$156.5 million, which includes the new Talgos.

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AORTA Reorganization: Boost Money and Membership

by David Arnold

We're reaching out. **AORTA** faces challenges of declining membership and financial support. And my report to the annual luncheon on Oct. 6 called for a revitalization of our association—complete with shaking the money tree, luring younger members and bolstering communication.

I laid out the status of finances, membership, and other structural elements, including but not limited to **AORTA**'s vision, purpose, how our work is accomplished, and the human and other resources necessary for our nonprofit to continue its mission in shaping transportation policy regionally and nationally.

This came about as a result of my appointment by **AORTA** President had Donald Leap who asked me to lead an ad-hoc committee, which included board members Floyd Smith and Mike Morrison, to explore our association's status and to recommend improvement. The committee found that, as a volunteer organization, **AORTA** is limited in its effectiveness by both its small and declining membership and a lack of necessary financial resources to carry out its mission and vision.

Through analysis of these issues, the committee made the following recommendations to the general membership and board of directors, as I reported:

1. Seek new and untapped financial resources from foundations and other rail partners along with exploring ways to reduce expenses such as office rent.
2. Identify new ways to solicit membership (such as social media) and attract more young people to our mission.
3. Establish better lines of

communication and collaboration with constituents and other policy organizations.

The ad-hoc committee recognized that changes and improvements in how **AORTA** functions will take time. The committee further recommended that work groups be formed in the coming months to do the strategic planning necessary to carry out these changes.

David Arnold, Ph.D., is a member of the **AORTA** board of directors.



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**More Trains
for Oregon!**

Why more trains are needed in Cascade Corridor

by Donald Leap

1. Current trains are operating at near capacity and are often completely sold out.
2. Greater frequency increases ridership by allowing train schedules to fit travelers' schedules.
3. Other transportation choices are diminishing or disappearing.
4. Amtrak Cascades Talgo trainsets are the most ADA compliant public transportation mode in the country, by offering fully certified rest facilities and extra wide passageways between coaches and the bistro/dining cars.
5. Greater, more cost effective utilization of total passenger train infrastructure, i.e., stations, ticket agents, gate and platform staff.
6. Cost effective investment continues long after construction, since passenger railroading offers good-paying, full-time employment, on-board and at maintenance facilities and stations.
7. Staffing at stations brings greater personal contact with the traveling public.
8. Corridor mobility offers competitive travel times vs. congested, dangerous highways and regional air service.
9. Cascades trains provide convenient, multi-modal connectivity with Amtrak thruway buses and connecting air and sea terminals (PDX, SeaTac, Victoria ferry terminal).
10. Trains offer better utilization of our nation's limited fossil fuel resources; they are clean and green.
11. Comparing equivalent capacity, one mile of railroad costs far less to build and maintain than one mile of interstate highway, plus the resulting infrastructure; even new right-of-way creates far less environmental impact and damage.
12. Amtrak does not subject its passengers to intrusive, privacy-violating security searches.
13. Passenger trains provide a travel choice that, in poll after poll, Americans want.

Support an Expanded Amtrak Cascades Corridor

More trains – Improved on-time
performance – Higher speeds

THE SALEM RIVER CROSSING PROJECT

by Bob Krebs



The Salem River Crossing Project (SRC) does not have a recognized source to fully fund it, and could become very expensive. In the past road

expansion has been the traditional method used to address capacity concerns. The major obstacle to a new Salem River Crossing (SRC) bridge seems to be the cost and who is going to pay for it. Tax dollars available for roads are not as plentiful as they have been. Unfortunately the SRC effort seems to be focused almost totally on a road solution. Care must be taken to avoid “buying” a semi-truck and trailer when a quarter ton pickup would do the job.

Two facts to consider are that over 25% of the traffic crossing the existing bridges goes within one mile of the eastern bridge head and peaking only occurs two to four hours per day Monday through Friday. Transit works well for this type of capacity need.

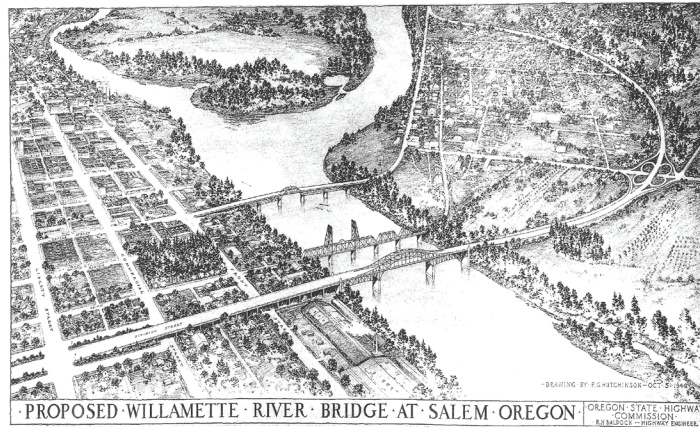
An efficient high capacity, fixed guideway transit corridor with convenient park and ride lots could provide capacity at less than half the cost of the lowest priced road option. A transit solution is better because it, costs less, removes less land from the tax rolls and provides synergy for local businesses.

Portland Metro has successful High Capacity Transit lines that have gained national recognition. Unfortunately the SRC Alternate

Modes Study does not consider any type of enhanced transit that does not currently exist in our community. The potential for innovative transit serving this corridor is very weak in the study.

A new SRC road bridge and approaches are a regional transportation project which should be paid for with state and federal funds. The bridge would provide a fast route for through traffic between Portland Metro and the Oregon Coast. It is ten miles longer but there are fewer traffic signals than the Highways 99W-18 route.

Funding also brings up the question of transportation equity. Eugene



has the Interstate 105 Freeway and several Willamette River bridges built with Federal and State dollars. Hundreds of millions have been poured into highways in the Eugene area. Somehow the Salem/Keizer area has not been so fortunate. The Salem Parkway was once designated the I-305 freeway with state and federal funding. Without that funding source a good portion of a new SRC highway bridge and ramps will have to be paid by local taxes to support regional travel.

The short term economic benefits of

constructing a new highway bridge are soon offset by the long term bypassing of local businesses and competition for local tax resources. In addition to the cost of constructing the bridge, there will be ongoing maintenance and operations costs. Will the local residents end up paying a good portion of these costs too?

According to the Oregon Department of Energy about 85% of money spent for motor vehicle fuel leaves the state. This supports jobs elsewhere and reduces the dollars available to spend at community businesses.

The argument that traffic congestion and delays will be unacceptable is used to justify most urban road projects. Shortly after World War II, the Moses Plan was developed to build a Detroit style freeway grid in Portland. Portland Metro has shown how innovative transportation solutions can be used to maintain mobility in the region. The plan was abandoned in the 1960's in favor of creating a more livable community.

The nay sayers predicted gridlock and an economic downturn. Today Portland is a very livable city with a vibrant business environment. Quite a contrast to Salem/Keizer and Detroit, Michigan.

A SRC Option coupled with a modern high capacity transit corridor is the best choice for our community at this time. It is also the type of project that we can afford. It provides a transportation system that will serve our community well for decades.

ORULE: Freight Haulers Defend Coal Trains

by Art Poole



As the coal train debate pulls Oregonians into camps for and

against, it is instructive to consider the dependence of passenger trains on freight.

This connection was highlighted during the Oct. 9 meeting in Wilsonville of the Oregon Rail Users' League, which hosted a major panel discussion on the controversial subject of moving coal by train from Wyoming and Montana to shipping points along the Columbia and Oregon Coast then on to Asia.

Passenger trains operate on the tracks owned and maintained by freight railroads, mostly Union Pacific in Oregon. Further, robust, financially healthy freight operators are vital to the viability of passenger trains. This reality may be lost on many passenger train supporters and environmentalists who oppose coal trains. But they should take note.

Representatives from UP and BNSF Railway, which owns much of the trackage in Washington, made the point during their ORULE presentation that it is in the best interest of passenger rail supporters and environmentally conscious citizens to work with the freight railroads to

recognize the complexities of the coal situation and to embrace solutions.

Perhaps one of the less troublesome issues, noted by the ORULE speakers, is the annoyance to motorists of long coal trains blocking intersections. Think back a few decades, one panelist said, when lumber was king in Oregon and trains loaded with lumber, plywood and other products would block vehicle traffic for 10 minutes at a time.

Not too pleasant, but few persons complained. We've been there before, and we tolerated it in the interest of Oregon's economic well-being. This is far more multifaceted than imagining the good guys against the bad.

Art Poole is a board member of ORULE, **AORTA** and NARP.

AORTA Delegates View Wisconsin Talgo Plant

by Mike Morrison

During the October NARP Council meeting in Milwaukee, **AORTA** Board members Art Poole and Mike Morrison visited the Talgo US plant and examined two new trains that should soon be running in Oregon. The **AORTA** delegates found the gleaming equipment offers many enhancements over current Cascades trains.

Among the advancements are greater legroom due to the use of slimmer seatbacks, armrest-level AC outlets for each passenger, brighter LED reading lamps, and distinctive high-level windows in the bistro car allowing patrons to see out while standing at the counter. Dining tables and seats are more substantial with one table now providing accessible seating. Bicycle storage space is expanded as well.

The two Oregon trainsets were undergoing static testing at the plant and were scheduled to move to Colorado for certification in early November. Sadly, two other Talgo trains that were built for Wisconsin but then rejected by its new governor face an uncertain future. And most unfortunate, the skilled Talgo workforce has already shrunk to only a skeleton crew. Rail supporters have expressed hope that once the merits of the newest Talgo trains become known, more orders will follow.



Oregon's Custom license plate fees help fund Oregon's trains! Do you have your plate?

NARP Northwest Division Meeting

Saturday, March 2, 2013
Embassy Suites Hotel
Tukwila, WA
(next to Amtrak Station)

Make plans to attend NARP's annual spring membership meeting in March 2013. This event is timed to allow same-day return travel by Amtrak Cascades train, and the meeting venue is just a short walk from the Tukwila Amtrak station. Further details of the program will soon be posted at www.aortarail.org. The meeting will start about Noon.

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From the South Waterfront Station, the line could enter a tunnel under Marquam Hill with stations at OHSU and Hillsdale. It could also be extended as a subway with stations at Multnomah Village, Barbur TC and PCC Sylvania. The line could then extend to the Tigard TC via tunnel, structure and on the surface where it could follow the WES alignment to Tualatin on a second (electrified) track.

Note: Building a tunnel for light rail is not necessarily more expensive than building it on the surface. Land values can greatly increase the cost of surface construction. The 2.9-mile Robertson light rail tunnel through the West Hills, with one subway station, opened in 1998 at a cost of \$184 million. That underground work would be about \$290 million or \$100 million per mile in today's dollars. Compare this to the 7.3-mile Milwaukie Line, now under construction above ground, costing \$1.5 billion or \$200 million per mile.

This 15-mile line between the Rose Quarter and Tualatin and the six-mile Yellow Line from the Rose Quarter to downtown Vancouver** would combine to become a 21-mile regional rapid transit line. There would be at least 20 stations providing connections to four other MAX Lines, many frequent service bus lines and the streetcar system. It would have an end-to-end running time of approximately one hour and would draw many regional commuters off I-5, thus eliminating any need for further freeway expansion. (See attached map)

* Frequent Service Transit (As defined by Tri-Met – Oct. 2005)

** Assumes MAX will serve Hayden Island and extend at least to a terminal station in Downtown Vancouver.

summary on these pages.

By the way, **AORTA's** tasty luncheon at the rail-themed Harvey's Comedy Club, an easy two blocks' walk from Portland's Union Station, was jammed with about 50 intrepid rail and transit supporters. Most were from Oregon but we also welcomed a strong contingent from our sister nonprofit All Aboard Washington who rode Amtrak Cascades 501 into town. Of those arriving, most honored was Ralph Munro, representing our corporate sponsor Talgo. Thanks to all for participating in Rally 'Round Rail and a special thanks to Talgo for its generous support.

The luncheon highlight to be sure was keynoter Hal Gard, Oregon's new Rail and Transit Division administrator. Hal's style is most refreshing. He admits he has much to learn about his new role, but he comes to the job with a genuine interest in passenger trains and transit in the state. I think it's fair to say that Hal really listens. Further, he speaks with authority and a sincere desire to improve public mobility in our state. Read about his message to **AORTA** in this Bulletin (see page 1).

One unfortunate aspect of the luncheon meeting was that time ran short, and our usual report from NARP board member Art Poole of Coos Bay was dropped from the agenda at the last minute. Apologies to Art who gets his say on these pages. Art also has a few words about the debate over coal trains, gleaned from the recent meeting of the Oregon Rail Users' League.

Looking ahead, there's good—no, great—news from across the globe. More and better passenger trains are coming. (In spite of this, Oregon's two new Talgo trainsets have been delayed a few months. It seems

that every imaginable obstacle has surfaced to thwart arrival of this least-cost, most ecologically efficient mode for transporting people.) Still, intelligent policy makers throughout Europe and Asia and increasingly the United States are embracing the intrinsic value of train travel.

I saw dramatic evidence of this during my September trip to InnoTrans 2012 in Berlin, and my October visit to the American Public Transportation Association meeting in Seattle. I was honored at these impressive gatherings to meet with some of the brightest, most innovative transportation leaders on the planet.

Their message is simple: Rail and public transit comprise simply the best way to move Earth's growing population as energy costs rise.

AORTA is here to ensure that lawmakers and planners in the Pacific Northwest understand and act on this before fuel and funding are too rare to access.

As a final thought, **AORTA** welcomes your help. As a volunteer organization, our ability to be effective in Salem, Washington, D.C., and beyond depends upon your willingness to join with the active board members. Let your interests be known. Attend board meetings. Get involved.

The Oregon Legislature will convene soon after the first of the year and lawmakers need to hear our statewide voice demanding expanded passenger service north and south, east and west. National Train Day comes in May, providing an opportunity for you to organize a local chapter outside the Willamette Valley. Offer your own ideas to bolster support. And ride the trains.

Look for me on board—usually at a table near the bistro—talking about the potential for more and better passenger trains in Oregon.