



AORTA Bulletin

A publication of the
Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates

Issue 118

February 1999

Since 1976

Register Now for NARP Region 8 Conference

Building a Base for Expansion: Amtrak West

Ken Skach-Mills

Gil Mallery, Chief Executive Officer of Amtrak West, will be the featured speaker at a one-day rail conference sponsored by the National Association of Railway Passengers (NARP), from 11:30 AM to 5:00 PM, Saturday, March 20, at the World Forestry Center, in Portland, Oregon. Mr. Mallery will speak about Amtrak West's current express packaging service, and goals for expanding Amtrak's West Coast passenger rail services. The conference will include the annual membership meeting of the NARP Region 8, and is held in cooperation with NARP's local affiliate organizations, the Washington Association of Rail Passengers (WashARP) and **AORTA**.

A presentation titled "The Northeast Corridor: A Brief History and Comparison to the Cascadia Corridor" will be provided by WashARP's Tony Trifiletti.

A luncheon banquet will be served at the World Forestry Center's Cheatham Hall at 12:30. Vegetarian and non-vegetarian meals will be available. Mr. Mallery's talk and other program will follow the meal. Informational booths on Amtrak and various other rail issues, including current efforts to reestablish a "Pioneer Route," will be set up throughout the afternoon.

Registrants to the conference are welcome to attend one of two morning tours planned for the same day. A tour of the West Side Light Rail line will highlight the Zoo Light Rail station, the Light Rail maintenance facility near Beaverton, and points in between. This tour will meet at the World Forestry

Center's Cheatham Hall, at 9:30 am. David Zagel, former **AORTA** President, will be leading this tour.

The other optional tour will be of Portland's historic Union Station, including access to some non-public spaces such as the Clock tower and the Boiler House. This tour will meet at 9:30 AM at the information booth just inside the entrance of Union Station. The tour will be led by local historian, Al Staehli. Both tours will conclude in time for participants to reach the World Forestry Center by 12:00. To help cover costs of the tours, a \$3.00 donation is requested from tour participants.

Registration for the afternoon meal and program is \$18.00 (or \$15.00 for students) if received before March 15, 1999. After March 15 registration is \$20.00. A registration form is printing on the back page.

Send registration to:

NARP Rail-Conference
c/o AORTA
P.O. Box 2772
Portland, Oregon 97208

For more information, call Dan McFarling at (503) 642-4077.

Rail/Bus program hanging in balance pg 2
Pioneer making headway 3

**Registration Form for
Rail Conference on back page.**

The *AORTA Bulletin* is published 4-6 times a year by the

Association of
Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates
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).

President	Aloha Wyse	503 244-7595
Vice President	CB Hall	541 929-6086
Secretary	vacant	
Treasurer	Kenneth Peters	503 646-5034
Bulletin Editors	Dan L. McFarling	503 642-4077
	Ken Skach-Mills	503 235-2780

Also serving on the Board of Directors:		Jim Howell
Robert Lowry	Kenneth McFarling	Patricia Noyes
John Nuxoll	Fred Nussbaum	Ray Polani

Region 8 NARP Directors:

James Hamre	Hans Mueller	Art Poole
Jeffrey Schultz	William Weeks	

Annual Membership:

Introductory/senior/student/low income	\$ 10
Regular (family rate, add \$5/additional member)	20
Sponsor	100
Govt/corporate rate (budget under \$100,000/yr)	50
(budget over \$100,000/yr)	100

E-Mail Address: OregonRail@aol.com
WEB site: <http://www.trainweb.com/aorta>

Rail/Bus program hanging in balance

Despite strong endorsement in the Governor's budget, the Republican leadership in the Oregon Legislature has so far failed to include the intercity rail and bus service program in its budget discussions. Continued state funding is critical this session and failure by the Legislature to provide funds could cause the Eugene - Portland section of the Cascadia corridor to lose its federal High Speed Rail designation. This would not only make Oregon ineligible for certain federal funds, but also set back Washington State's exemplary investment in the corridor. Washington has spent \$30-40M per year in the last five years and is embarking on an even more intensive investment program this session.

AORTA members and friends are encouraged to call or write to Legislative leaders (Senate President Adams and House Speaker Snodgrass). Writing is best, but please at least phone. Send a copy of your message to your own senator and representative (see box at right).

Tri-Met chief on the right course!

Fred Hansen, General Manager of Tri-Met, is a breath of fresh air, according to *AORTA* Directors Jim Howell and Ray Polani. Hansen, who began serving as the agency head Oct 12, has been very receptive to public input.

"Focus on light rail has blinded the transit agency's need to make other improvements," says Howell, "such as increased bus service."

Hansen is committed to annual double-digit ridership growth over each of the next three years. *AORTA* is extremely pleased with new emphasis, according to Howell. Hansen is calling for increased frequency, increased hours, and more weekend service on primary trunk lines.

"Hansen is moving Tri-Met in the right direction," says *AORTA* Director Ray Polani. "He is listening and appears to know what needs to be done." Hansen has invited about 30 transit advocates with whom he will meet every two months.

ODOT schedules morning bus

ODOT's Bob Krebs announced on Feb 25 that additional Amtrak Thruway bus service has been added to the Willamette Valley. Effective March 1 there will be service leaving Portland's Union Station at 6:45 am, arriving in Salem at the Capitol Mall at 7:50 am, and terminating at the Amtrak Station at 8 am. Initially the service will be provided with a van. If patronage increases, it is expected the van will be replaced with a full-size bus.

How to Contact Key Legislators

Senate President Brady Adams (503) 986-1600
Oregon State Capitol, S-203 FAX: 986-1004
Salem, OR 97310

Speaker Lynn Snodgrass (503) 986-1200
Oregon State Capitol, Rm 269 FAX: 986-1201
Salem, OR 97310

To learn who your senator and representative are, call 1-800-332-2313, or use the internet:

<http://www.leg.state.or.us/senate.html>
<http://www.leg.state.or.us/house.html>
<http://www.leg.state.or.us/index.html>

Pioneer initiative making headway

by C.B. Hall, *AORTA* Vice President

AORTA's efforts to restore daily passenger train service to the *Pioneer* route reached a new plateau Feb 17, when Sen. Ron Wyden met in Hermiston with persons interested in the restoration initiative. Over 60 people attended the hour-long meeting. *AORTA* Directors Ken McFarling, Dan McFarling, Bob Lowry, and C.B. Hall were on hand, as were *AORTA* legislative affairs consultant Lloyd Flem and Jim Hamre from the Washington Association of Railroad Passengers.

The meeting was hosted by Hermiston Mayor Frank Harkenrider, joined on the dais by the mayors of Echo, Pendleton, and Stanfield; Baker City ex-Mayor Larry Griffith,

who had done much of the meeting's organizing; a representative of the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce; and Sen. Wyden.

Sen. Wyden reacted warmly to the enthusiasm which the good turnout embodied. He listened to a variety of ideas, including the Chicago-Pacific Northwest route which *AORTA* has been backing, a day run between Boise and Portland, and a Portland-Salt Lake service using Talgo equipment.

AORTA cautioned against the two shorter-distance options, which would require subsidies from the states en route. None of the state legislatures along the entire route has

Continued on page 7

Introduction to Lloyd Flem

by Lloyd H. Flem, *AORTA*'s Legislative Affairs Consultant

Oregon and Washington have always been close- historically, geographically, economically, culturally. This year *AORTA* and WashARP have begun a closer working relationship toward their mutual goal of increasing the role of rail and other high-capacity passenger transportation in the Pacific Northwest. One evidence of this is *AORTA*'s contracting with me to assist in Oregon's making a greater investment in our two states' nationally lauded Northwest rail corridor.

I am impressed with the breadth and depth of rail and transportation knowledge held by key *AORTA* members. What I can bring to *AORTA* is thirteen years of what is seen to be effective political rail advocacy as WashARP's (lightly) paid Executive Director. WashARP's collegial, cooperate-with-the-establishment tactics have worked. "Praise and Push," WashARP's practiced motto, has allowed us full access to top transportation decision-makers, public and private sector, at all levels. I'll be helping *AORTA* praise and push its excellent agenda while working with you.

My formal education is in economic geography, with degrees from Washington and Cal-Berkeley. Professional background includes public school and college teaching and public planning, as well as years as a private consultant concerned with transportation, land use and small-scale agriculture.

Prior to my work with WashARP, I served as founding President of the Washington State Farmers Market Association. This past November I completed 15 years as a vegetable farmer, now devoting full time to rail advocacy for the first time. My wife Darleen is an avid rail advocate and is now assisting me.

The Salem scene is similar to that in Olympia. Differences make the process of getting state investment in rail and thruway motor coaches more difficult south of the River. I have emphasized this reality in Olympia. I feel my Washington friends are sympathetic to the greater Oregon political challenge. The bottom line is, however,

Continued on page 5

Portland & Western on track to Astoria

Astoria- Efforts to reopen the rail line between Wauna and Astoria continue. The primary obstacle is debris from a 1996 landslide about 26 miles east of Astoria.

Portland & Western Railroad, a subsidiary of Genesee & Wyoming, purchased the rail line from Burlington Northern in June 1997. P&W's President and General Manager, Bob Melbo, is anxious to line up shippers in Clatsop County before the work begins in earnest.

The results of geological testing in the area of the slide will also be used to determine if the project proceeds.

Melbo signed a contract with the state in November, releasing approximately \$700,000 in federal funds for the project. Portland & Western will provide matching funds for the project, which is estimated at \$875,000. Re-opening the rail line will give a needed boost to the economy of Clatsop County, and will help reduce truck traffic in Astoria and on Highway 30.

Volunteers, donations needed for streetcar

Astoria- Volunteers continue to work on restoration of a 1913 streetcar which will soon be operating along the waterfront (see November 1998 **AORTA Bulletin**). If you are interested in donating time or money to restore the ex-San Antonio, TX, streetcar, call Rosemary Johnson at the Astoria City Hall, (503) 325-5821.

ORS 811.475 states that "A person commits the offense of **obstructing a rail crossing** if the person is operating a vehicle and the person drives onto any railroad grade crossing when there is not sufficient space on the other side ... to accommodate the vehicle ... without obstructing the passage of ... trains."

This is a Class B traffic infraction.

Cherriots General Manager resigns

Salem- R.G. Anderson-Wyckoff, General Manager of the Salem Area Mass Transit District, has taken a new position in Arizona. Anderson, who also served as Salem's mayor from 1991 to 1994, resigned effective Feb 19, to take a position in Arizona.

Light Rail Business Directory goes to press

Portland- March 15 is the planned distribution date for the 1st edition of the **Light Rail Business Directory: A rider's guide to live, work & play by train**. Randy Luethye, Metro Train-Business Connections, is searching for businesses in close proximity to Tri-Met light rail stations to advertise in his new quarterly publication. Businesses wishing to place an advertisement should call (503) 441-7029.

Free bus pass for students?

Portland- Tri-Met General Manager Fred Hansen recently announced he is considering free or reduced price passes for Portland-area youth. Sisters in Portland Impacting Real Problems Together (Spirit) approached Hansen in early February. According to Spirit, as many as 11% of the students from low-income families skip school because they cannot afford the bus fare. Portland and Eugene are the only areas in the state where the school district is not required to provide transportation. Spirit helps youth develop communications and leadership skills. *Editor's Note: We hope the school board will help fund this effort.*

Cherriots pleased with bids

Salem- Salem Area Mass Transit District officials were pleased February 4 when bids for Courthouse Square transit center and office building were opened. Bids ranged from \$17.2M to \$20M for a project that was budgeted at \$22.1M. The total project cost is close to \$34M.

Southern Oregon Signals

Roseburg officials isolate residents

Roseburg- According to the Jan 29 issue of *The News-Review*, Douglas County's bus system will be closing down March 1 because of lack of funding. The Umpqua Regional Council of Governments made the announcement Jan 28. The Umpqua Regional Transit System operates several routes within Roseburg and to neighboring communities. According to *The News-*

Review, busses in morning and afternoon runs are often so full that some passengers have to stand. Many elderly citizens and college students are dependent on the bus. The system began operation in January, 1995.

The system, originally operated by the county, was turned over to URCOG in 1996. URCOG was successful in both increasing ridership and reducing costs. Most of the funding has been coming from the State of Oregon. Appeals for funding from local cities and the county, however, fell on deaf ears.

Kitzhaber proposes improvements

AORTA is pleased that Oregon Governor Kitzhaber's 1999-2001 budget proposal includes \$14M for ODOT rail and intercity bus improvements throughout the state. State funds currently help provide service between Portland and Eugene with one train (roundtrip Eugene-Seattle) and three Portland-Eugene *Amtrak Thruway* buses. The buses provide additional corridor travel options and connect with other trains at Portland Union Station. The Seattle-L.A. *Coast Starlight* also serves the Willamette Valley.

The requested funds would maintain the existing service while adding *Amtrak Thruway* connections to cities in eastern, southern and central Oregon and along the Oregon coast. The funds would also go toward lease/purchase and operation of advanced design trainsets for a additional trains in the Willamette Valley.

ODOT officials are looking favorably toward tilting diesel multiple unit (DMU) trainsets similar to the Adtranz IC3 *Flexliner* that was demonstrated in Oregon in May 1997. DMUs are favored because they would cost less to lease or purchase and could provide more cost-effective operation in Oregon's less heavily-used portion of the Cascadia corridor, due to lower crew requirements and fuel costs. Also, as Oregon's service and market outgrows this technology, ODOT could sell the DMUs to one of the commuter rail operations now under consideration in the Portland area and elsewhere. The Valley service could then switch to longer, locomotive-hauled trainsets such as the Talgo.

ODOT officials traveled to Europe in 1998 to evaluate equipment used on regional rail services there. Their budget numbers are based on lease/purchase of three, two-car, self-propelled trainsets, each seating about 140 people and including small first-class and food service sections. The sets would have seating similar to that currently found on the new *Cascades* trainsets. ODOT will not make final specifications until it has secured funding.

Lloyd Flem: Continued from page 3

Washington will be making another very substantial investment in our NW Corridor rail this biennium. We must help educate the Oregon legislature to invest at least a fraction of that of their neighbors to the north to ensure the survival and growth of rail and connecting busses in and to the Willamette Valley.

Recently I have been privileged to get to speak personally with both Amtrak Board Chairman Gov. Tommy Thompson (R-WI) and Amtrak Reform Council Chair Gil Carmichael. They independently cited Oregon and Washington as leaders and models of partnership for a stronger better Amtrak. Let's do our part to maintain their respect for our corner of the country by continued strong participation by both our states.

**Rail Conference Registrations:
Due March 15**

NARP praises Amtrak number in Clinton budget; Expresses concern about 'high speed' funding

The National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) expressed satisfaction that President Clinton's fiscal 2000 budget, unveiled Feb 4, includes the \$571M for Amtrak promised in Administration testimony a year ago. At the same time, the Association expressed concern about the amount and form of high speed rail funding for corridors nationwide.

Excluding \$5.25M/yr in "guaranteed" funding for hazard-elimination work in designated high-speed corridors, a total of \$89M should be appropriated for all work in such corridors, including a total of \$34M authorized but never appropriated for fiscal years 1998 and 1999.

Out of this, the Administration proposes only \$12M in "real funds." This is for a much reduced technology improvements program (the so-called "Next Generation High-Speed Rail program," authorized for \$25M/yr and funded this year at \$24M). Nothing is proposed for planning (authorized in the big TEA-21 transportation law at \$10M/yr).

For the remaining programs—hazard elimination work (including highway/railroad grade crossings), and new programs for "positive train control" and "nationwide differential global positioning system"—a total of \$35M in "soft money" is designated, that is, money the Administration wants to earmark from "excess" gasoline-tax revenues. It is not clear whether Congress will accept these re-designations since, under TEA-21, most "excess" revenues would go to highways.

Said NARP Executive Ross Capon: "Within the past three months, Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater has given three strong, upbeat speeches on developing rail corridors: in New Orleans on Nov 18, in Charlotte on Dec 1 and in Chicago last Thursday. These speeches have raised expectations. They have substantially increased the route mileage eligible for federal high-speed funds, and thus the need for these funds. To have President Clinton's request fall so

far short of the authorized level is disappointing, to say the least. We believe planning funds are vital. We strongly support the concept of reallocating some 'extra' gasoline-tax revenues to rail, but we do not want adequate funding for passenger rail held hostage to the outcome of this debate."

The Clinton proposal should be seen in the context of continuing big increases in other parts of the transportation department.

Congress has the opportunity to increase high speed funding, as it has increased Amtrak funding in many past years. These factors are relevant:

—The Congressional Budget Office on Jan 29 announced new projections that "non-Social-Security-accounts" would have a budget surplus of nearly \$800M over the next ten years.

—The public strongly supports improvements in intercity passenger rail service.

—Congress allows only Vermont to spend flexible surface transportation funds in TEA-21 on intercity passenger rail (although this money can be spent on most other forms of surface transportation).

—The \$42M in added dollars needed to fully fund existing high-speed rail authorizations equals just 0.15% of proposed FY 2000 federal highway spending.

—A major part of work on high speed corridors improves highway safety as well by eliminating highway/railroad grade crossings or upgrading the equipment that warns motorists or protects against collisions.

NARP has worked since 1967 for better passenger train service in the U.S. and is supported by individual dues-paying members.

	FY 1999 Enacted	FY 2000 Clinton Request	
Federal Highway	27,367M	28,549M	+4%
Natl Hwy Traffic Safety	360M	404M	+12%
Federal Aviation	9,754M	10,131M	+13%
Federal Transit	5,388M	6,088M	+13%
Fedl Railroad (incl Amtrak)	778M	746M	- 4%

Shortlines and Quotes . . .

- *Houston, TX-* According to ARCO Chairman and CEO Mike R. Bowlin, the world is entering “the last days of the Age of Oil.” Bowlin’s comments were made at the Cambridge Energy Research Associates’ annual conference on February 12. Similar statements have been made by the head of Texaco. *Editor’s note: Efficient use of limited energy supplies is also important!*
- Association of American Railroads’ website now lists performance measures for major North American railroad companies. The data, which is updated weekly, includes number of cars on-line, average train speed, average terminal dwell time, etc. Check out the site at www.aar.org.
- The *Washington Post* carried a headline Jan 4: “Widen the Roads, Drivers Will Come: Maryland’s I-270 offers a Lesson as Area Plans To Expand Other Highways, Interchanges.” According to NARP’s Russ B. Capon, “The article gives new respectability to the concept of induced travel. ‘Although the exact magnitude of this effect is much debated, some studies suggest that induced travel might entirely overwhelm any relief from congestion resulting from new road capacity... Along several stretches (of I-270), traffic already has surpassed the levels ... planners forecast for 2010 in their 1984 study of the proposed widening...’” Mark Hansen, a professor of transportation engineering at the University of California at Berkeley, used statewide California statistics in concluding that new road capacity is almost entirely offset by induced traffic within five years.”

Pioneer: Continued from page 3

expressed any desire to provide funding. Instead, **AORTA** emphasized mail and express income would provide substantial revenue to support the passenger service.

Wyden said he would approach Amtrak management soon to seek service restoration, and toward that end, asked interested parties to submit comments, testimonials and plans to his office within the next 30 days.

On the evening of the Hermiston program, Wyden spoke again, this time at a “town hall” meeting in Pendleton, alongside Sen. Gordon Smith. Representing **AORTA** at that meeting, C.B. Hall asked Sen. Smith for his views on the Pioneer restoration. Smith expressed his liking for Amtrak but added his skepticism about providing any subsidy - a word C.B. hadn’t used. When C.B. clarified that mail and express income, rather than any operating subsidy, would cover the passenger train’s costs, the Senator remained dubious, the express income evidently amounting to a subsidy in his view.

In the wake of these meetings, **AORTA** will be working with Sen. Wyden’s office closely over the next few weeks to help his prepare his approach to Amtrak. We will also

be contacting Sen. Smith’s office to reassure him that the new Pioneer will be a business proposition, not a subsidy-sucker.

In the Oregon legislature, Sen. David Nelson (R-Pendleton) introduced SJM 4 which calls on Amtrak to restore the train and asks Oregon’s Congressional delegation to help. Prospects are good for its passage.

As always, we appreciate any assistance **AORTA** members and friends can contribute to this initiative in local communities. Please contact C.B. Hall at 541-929-6086 or cbhall@proaxis.com for more information.

HJR 1 would open highway fund

House Joint Resolution 1, filed at the request of Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber, M.D., calls for a statewide vote in the next regular general election to broaden the use of the highway fund.

The constitutional amendment would allow funds now locked into roadways to be used for policing of the roads, and for “purchase, operation, maintenance and capital construction of public transportation equipment, facilities and services...” No more than five percent of the total revenues could be used for such purposes.

Apology to Eugene

Some Eugene residents took offense to the short article titled "Eugene off-track" in the Nov 98 **Bulletin**. The editor regrets the negative tone of the headline. A response has been promised from Eugene, and we expect to print it in the next **AORTA Bulletin**.

The editor's intent was to point out that steel wheels rolling on steel rails, and on level terrain, are inherently more efficient than rubber tires on any surface. Furthermore, rubber tires (and pavement) create significant solid waste disposal problems, while steel wheels and rails have significant recycle value.

AORTA needs your contributions

AORTA has contracted with Lloyd Flem (see article on page 3) to help educate and persuade lawmakers and others regarding the need for improved transportation. Now we need your increased support. Please make a donation to **AORTA** above and beyond membership fees to support our continued effort to bring improved transportation to Oregon.

AORTA TimeTable

Monday, March 15, 9:30 am - 4 PM

Environmental Lobby Day, Salem

Participation is free. Optional box lunch: \$6.

Call (503) 827-8486 to register. FAX: 224-1548

email: ocn@olcv.org.

Thursday, March 18, 6:30 PM

Portland Chapter, Union Station Rm 208

Saturday, March 20

NARP Region 8 Membership Meeting

9:30 am Union Station Tour

Westside MAX Tour

11:30 am Conference at Cheatham Hall

See article on page 1 for details

Saturday, April 24, 11 am

AORTA Board meeting, Corvallis

Location to be announced.

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.

NARP Region 8 Spring Membership Meeting and Rail Conference REGISTRATION FORM

___ Regular Registration (\$18 each; indicate number of people)

___ Full-time Student Registration (\$15 each, indicate number of people)

A \$3/person donation will be requested for each tour.

List name(s) below. Check meal choice for each person. Check no more than one tour per person if desired.	Meal Choice		Optional Tour	
	Meat	Vegetarian	Light Rail	Union Station
NAME				
NAME				
NAME				
MAILING ADDRESS	PHONE			

Make check payable to "**AORTA**." Return to **AORTA** Rail Conference, PO Box 2772, Portland, Oregon 97208-2772.

Must be received by March 15.