



AORTA Bulletin

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Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates

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Since 1976

National Train Day Special Edition

AORTA welcomes attendees to National Train Day (NTD) events in Portland, Salem, Eugene, Klamath Falls and Coos Bay, Oregon! NTD events are also being held in Ashland, Molalla, and other Portland locations. Never before has National Train Day, and **AORTA**, been so well-represented across the state!

In early 2013 Amtrak decided to ask local organizations throughout the nation to take the lead in coordinating National Train Day events. In April, **AORTA** agreed to be the lead organization for Portland, and is also playing a role in events in three other Oregon cities. Government Affairs Director Donald

Leap and Darrell Austin will be assisting with NTD in Klamath Falls. **AORTA** Vice-President Dr. David Arnold and Secretary Jon Nuxoll are helping coordinate activities in Eugene. Director Bob Krebs and Tim Wilson are assisting with the event in Salem.

PNWC-NRHS. Portland is rich in active rail-oriented rail organizations. The Pacific Northwest Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society has been an active force in Oregon since 1955, perhaps the oldest non-profit rail organization in Oregon. **AORTA** and PNWC-NRHS have worked together on many projects and causes over the

past 37 years.

PRPA. The Pacific Railroad Preservation Association (PRPA) is another, all-volunteer, non-profit rail organization, dedicated to restoring, maintaining, and operating historic railway equipment

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New Willamette Valley Amtrak Cascades Schedules Coming Soon *by Jon Nuxoll*

New Willamette Valley schedules allowing daytrips by rail from



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Portland to Eugene and return are likely in 2013, thanks to delivery of two new Talgo trainsets.

Oregon's two sets of Talgo equipment will bring to seven the number of sets in use on the Cascades between Eugene and Vancouver, B.C., although they will not result in any net increase in Willamette Valley service. However, the additional equipment will allow for more flexible schedules.

In anticipation of that, a 6:00 a.m. southbound bus departure from Portland to Eugene was introduced earlier this year by the Oregon Department of Transportation. ODOT expects to use ridership data from

that to evaluate whether to schedule a southbound morning train at that hour, or to schedule it later in the morning. **AORTA** has expressed its hope for a later morning southbound departure, owing to low ridership with early-morning schedules in the 1990s and missed connections with traffic from Washington points.

Since the Cascades corridor was established in the 1990s, equipment availability has limited scheduling flexibility to maximize use of the current five Talgo sets. That has meant that same-day Cascades trips from Portland to the Willamette Valley are not possible, as the day's

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The **AORTA Bulletin** is published by the

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LTD expansion to Florence sought *by Jon Nuxoll*

A Eugene resident's efforts to bring expanded public transit to Florence recently received a boost with publicity in an extensive Eugene Register-Guard article.

Judy Morse of Eugene's work for transit service between Eugene and Florence was highlighted in a May 4 Register-Guard article. Lane Transit District buses currently run from Eugene/Springfield to Junction City, Veneta, Creswell, Cottage Grove and even up into the Cascades to McKenzie Bridge—60 miles east of Springfield—all for a \$1.75 fare—but not to coastal Florence.

Currently, the only Eugene-Florence transit is a Porter Stage van service, \$46 to \$50 round trip, but current schedules do not allow a same-day trip. Additionally, a free bus four days a week takes gamblers to the Three Rivers Casino and Hotel on the eastern edge of Florence. That service draws about 200 passengers per week, and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians would welcome LTD service, the Register-Guard reported.

Florence Mayor Nola Xavier noted significant support in Florence for expansion but likely resistance from Florence business owners, as about two-thirds of the cost would be

financed through a payroll tax, now at about \$7 per \$1,000 a business spends on payroll annually. While state law would authorize LTD to levy that without permission of a city or its voters, the LTD board reportedly does not seem likely to do so unilaterally, according to LTD spokesman Andy Vobora.

Such service would benefit Florence merchants, though, by bringing daytrippers from Eugene-Springfield to the coast, he noted. It also could connect with Florence's local Rhody Express. LTD's four daily round-trips to McKenzie Bridge are popular with bikers and fishermen using transit to access recreation points along the McKenzie River.

LTD launched Eugene-Cottage Grove service in 1999 after Cottage Grove voters supported expansion in an advisory vote and Creswell's city council also endorsed service. Since then, service has required use of expanded articulated buses, to meet demand, Vobora said.

Morse noted that there is significant support for expansion to Florence. She suggested a surcharge over LTD's regular fare could help cover costs of a Florence extension, according to the Register-Guard.

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of the Pacific Northwest. The gem of their collection is the beautiful and majestic SP&S 700 steam locomotive, on display at Union Station for National Train Day

Friends of 4449 Inc. is another active rail group. Friends volunteers restored and maintain SP 4449, a GS-4 "Northern" type locomotive. In 1974, she was selected to pull the

American Freedom Train which toured the United States.

ORHF. The Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation is the newest of the major non-profit, volunteer rail groups in the Portland area. In September 2012, ORHF opened the Oregon Rail Heritage Center. The museum is open to the public Thursday through Sunday, from 1 pm until 5 pm. Admission is free.

CFM propagates myth about Common Sense Alternative to Columbia River Crossing

By Jim Howell, Policy Director

The lobbyists and public-relations practitioners at CFM Strategic Communications, boosters for the gargantuan freeway bridge known as the Columbia River Crossing, have made a whopping mistake.

They should rethink their claim that the Common Sense Alternative to the CRC is a “myth.” The CSA is no myth. It works. And I will show you how. But first, let’s pry into the CFM muddle.

The PR firm recently published a 64-page “fact book” labeling as myth the Common Sense Alternative, which is vastly more effective and less costly than the much hyped \$3.4 billion CRC.

Truth be told, the CFM notion of a myth is a myth. Yes. Because the fact book’s interpretation of the Common Sense Alternative is wrong. The CSA has evolved in the past two years and has been widely acknowledged.

I call it CSA II. It offers as a key element the building of a new freeway bridge just upstream from the existing Interstate Bridges. This differs from the earlier proposed downstream local bridge illustrated in Spencer Boomhower’s video, A Common Sense Alternative.

CSA II has two phases:

Phase 1 includes a new Columbia River freeway bridge; a new local bridge across the Portland Harbor (Oregon Slough); and a new lift span on the BNSF rail bridge down river.

Phase 2 provides a new multi-modal bridge over the Columbia River for passenger trains, vehicles, bikes and pedestrians as part of a heavy rail bypass of the BNSF railroad. This elevated bypass would stretch from north of the Vancouver Junction to

south of the Portland Junction. In addition, Phase 2 includes a new vehicle, bike and pedestrian bridge between West Hayden Island and Marine Drive. Phase 2 should be studied as an element in ODOT’s Oregon Passenger Rail Project and in conjunction with any West Hayden Island development.

Now, the particulars of Phase 1:

Phase 1 of CSA II would meet all requirements of the CRC’s Purpose and Needs and should be considered in a required supplement to any CRC environmental impact statement. It offers:

- A new upstream low-level Interstate-5 bridge with 8-lanes (6-through lanes, 2 add/drop lanes), a bascule draw-span aligned with the lift spans on the existing Interstate Bridges and a wide fixed span with 72 feet of river clearance aligned with the current bridge humps. This concept was wrongly eliminated for further consideration in 2006.
- A retrofitted BNSF railroad bridge with a new lift span located nearer the center of the river, allowing river traffic a straight shot through all the bridges and reducing the number of I-5 bridge openings by up to 90 percent. The main river channel would be relocated to the new lift span opening and the existing swing span would be permanently closed.
- A new bridge over Portland Harbor (Oregon Slough) for local traffic, light rail, bikes and pedestrians, similar to that in the current proposal. It would reduce peak hour traffic demand on the Marine Drive Interchange.
- Keeping the existing Interstate Bridges for local traffic, eliminating the need for a full Hayden Island

Interchange. These durable bridges would also carry bikes, pedestrians, light rail and buses and, no longer a part of the interstate system, would not require a seismic upgrade.

- Two new light rail stations, one at Hayden Island and the other, a bus-transfer station, at Fourth and Columbia Streets in Vancouver.

Phase 1 of CSA II would be superior to the Locally Preferred Alternative for the following reasons :

- Vastly cheaper. Total project would be under \$1 billion vs. \$3.4 billion for the proposed CRC.
- No tolling for bridge or light rail. You read it right. No tolling required. It’s that fiscally reasonable.
- No demolition. The existing bridges would be repurposed for local traffic, light rail, bikes and pedestrians.
- Safer. It provides lower climbing grades for freeway and light rail, better sightlines, and no steep, curved ramps at the SR-14 interchange.
- No marine obstructions. No bridge impediments for any vessels.
- No turning basin change. The existing ship turning basin remains unchanged.
- More seismically stable. It is a shorter structure with a lower profile.
- SR-14 interchange remains intact. No major changes. No high ramps. No mitigation for taking historic sites.
- Simpler construction. Build a straight, single-deck, freeway-bridge that needs no light rail, bicycle or pedestrian lanes. Those elements would be built into the repurposed,

existing Interstate Bridges.

- No Hayden Island northbound interchange. It would be replaced by accommodating local traffic on the existing southbound bridge.
- Better for bikes and pedestrians. It offers gentler grades and would be safer and quieter. No long corkscrew ramps to the Vancouver riverfront.
- Better transit. It affords faster light rail, lower grades and better sightlines; would be cheaper to operate; connects to the C-Tran bus system at a downtown Vancouver terminal; requires no expensive parking structures; brings less downtown traffic and fewer developmental impacts. Would not require an expensive, elevated transit station on Hayden Island.

Common Sense Alternative II is good public policy and debunks the real myth ballyhooed by promoters of the Columbia River Crossing that a massive, 5-mile-long freeway project coupled to an obscenely expensive light rail and car storage project in downtown Vancouver is necessary in order to solve the transportation problems in the CRC corridor.



photo by Ken Briers, NARP

Oregon Congressman Peter DeFazio is seen here receiving the NARP Golden Spike Award for his tireless advocacy of modern and efficient rail transportation in the Northwest and nationwide. US Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood and NARP Chairman Robert Stewart look on at the April 23 US Capitol ceremony. The award is prestigious: former winners include Walt Disney, Debbie Reynolds, Johnny Cash, Congressman Earl Blumenauer and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

Cascades ... continued from Page 1

first southbound train from Portland (the Coast Starlight) does not leave until mid-afternoon, and the day's third and last northbound train from Eugene (also the Starlight) leaves in the early afternoon.

A scheduling change would likely mean replacing one of the two morning northbound departures from Eugene with Thruway bus service. Train 500's 5:30 a.m. departure is popular with travelers commuting up the Willamette Valley as well as Washington-bound passengers, while Train 504's 9:00 a.m. departure is especially popular with Willamette Valley residents making a day trip to Portland.

Southbound, the 9:00 p.m. Portland departure of Train 509 has the lowest ridership of the four Oregon-sponsored trains, making that likely for replacement with a Portland-Eugene Thruway bus.

Amtrak and the Washington Department of Transportation own the five Talgo sets now in use in the Cascades corridor. Together, the five sets travel 2,606 miles daily, Melbo said. Current scheduling is necessary to also allow each set to be overnight in Seattle for maintenance every fourth night. The first of

Oregon's two sets arrived in the state in April and was scheduled to be on display for National Train Day festivities May 11 at Portland Union Station.

Corridor rail passenger planning bill advances

Salem- A measure authorizing better cooperation between Oregon, Washington and British Columbia transportation departments awaits action from Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber, after passage in the Oregon Legislature.

HB 2918 was proposed by state Rep. Nancy Nathanson, D-Eugene, to allow for better coordination and efficiency in the Eugene-Portland-Seattle-Vancouver, B.C., corridor by authorizing ODOT to enter into agreements with Washington and British Columbia. Nathanson said this would put Oregon in a better position to compete for federal rail funding.

The measure also requires ODOT to develop a "stakeholder outreach program."

A similar measure proposed by Nathanson in the 2011 session died in committee. The bill as introduced would have mandated a minimum of two Portland-Eugene round trips, but that provision was dropped in committee.

The current measure unanimously passed the Oregon House and Senate; as of May 6, it awaited Gov. John Kitzhaber's signature.

"Rail transportation is critical to our local economies and the future of our state," Nathanson said in a press release. "This bill works towards a vision of high speed rail in Oregon that is both necessary and prudent."

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AORTA honors US Secretary of Transportation LaHood

US Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood has been honored with **AORTA's** Bill Naito Rail and Transit Advocate Award for 2013 for his unprecedented support of passenger rail service in America. **AORTA** Past President Donald Leap presented the award to the Secretary on April 23 at the United States Capitol. The accolade, named for civic minded Portland businessman Bill Naito, recognizes leaders who have made noteworthy contributions to advance transportation choices for the Pacific Northwest.

The award bestowed on the Secretary is inscribed as follows:

2013 Bill Naito Rail and Transit Advocate Award is hereby presented to The Honorable Ray LaHood, Secretary of Transportation of the United States,

For having the courage to envision a national high-speed passenger train system with significant improvements to existing intercity passenger rail and

For having the wisdom to support expanding the service of higher-speed passenger trains plying the Pacific Northwest Corridor, projects that promote Oregon jobs, and economic and mobility benefits for America.



AORTA VP David B. Arnold, Ph.D.

La Grande, OR- AORTA Vice President and native Oregonian, with advanced degrees in psychology, is a retired college professor and clinician whose interest in railroading goes back to early childhood railroad influences including a trip by train (behind steam) in the 1940's from Portland to Princeton, New Jersey and the Christmas gift of a Lionel train set purchased from the old Fred Meyer on W. Burnside.

Following a career in higher education and counseling, Dr. Arnold was able to reconnect to earlier railroading career aspirations by becoming involved with the Wallowa-Union Railroad of N.E. Oregon in 2002 and becoming involved with **AORTA** in 2010. Arnold is a Licensed Locomotive Engineer with the railroad and a regional advocate for rail passenger service and **AORTA** in the NE Oregon AREA. Married (Carla) for 28 years and the owner of a golden retriever. He is also a Member of the State (ODOT) Rail Plan advisory committee.



Donald Leap presents Bill Naito Award to US Secretary of Transportation LaHood

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Passenger Trains to Southern Oregon

by Bob Krebs



Currently Oregon Passenger rail plans seem to be focused on the Willamette Valley between Portland and Eugene. **AORTA** receives inquiries

from residents living in other parts of the state about potential passenger rail service to their area. Southern Oregon with over 10% of the state's population seems to be a potential market for new trains. However, a substantial investment in rail infrastructure is required before a commercially viable service can be provided in this region.

To understand what would be required, one must look at the existing rail route between Portland, Eugene and Ashland. The first twenty miles of the line running south from Portland to Parrot Creek was completed in 1869. The track reached Eugene the next year in 1870. A flat valley enabled rapid construction of the railroad to this point. Then the rugged terrain south of Eugene made construction, using men and mules, so difficult that it took two decades to extend the line about 200 miles over the Siskiyou Pass to California.

Much of the track south of Eugene goes through narrow river and creek valleys with many slow speed curves. In some places the distance between two points on the rail route is almost 30 miles longer than the nearby I-5 Freeway. The last passenger train over this route in 2000 took almost 12 hours to go from Eugene to Medford. Unlike Portland to Eugene, where passenger trains operate at 70 and 79 mph, much of the Siskiyou Line is limited to speeds of 25 mph or less.

Major realignments of the track would be required before passenger service would be viable. Like the I-5 freeway was constructed, the Siskiyou Line could be modernized incrementally to handle both freight and passenger trains. There are two essential segments that would need to be built before any new services started.

The track from Riddle to Central Point is out of direction and very slow. A new bypass line would have to be constructed allowing passenger train speeds. The suggested track would go through Canyonville and follow the Days Creek watershed through Tiller and Drew. A short tunnel takes the track into the Rogue Valley where it heads south to Central Point and Medford. Grants Pass would be served by shuttle service on the existing line.

A new rail link would be built between Medford, Ashland and Klamath Falls. This would enable Amtrak to run the "Coast Starlight" train through Medford and provide an alternate trans-Oregon freight route for both the Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroads. State sponsored passenger service could easily be extended from Eugene to Medford/Ashland and Klamath Falls.

On other portions of the route, incremental speed improvements would realign curves, reduce out of direction travel and eliminate road crossing hazards. Grades would be reduced to less than 1% where ever possible for high speed freight operations. Double tracking of the line would occur as merited by the traffic.

These track infrastructure improvements carry a big price tag. Considering Oregon's

current transportation policies and constitutional funding limitations it would never happen. But an innovative approach might be to fund it like a highway. Not with highway funds, but with a weight/mile type fee from the rail users to pay the capital costs.

The freight railroads would be willing to pay for reduced run times that make them more competitive with the trucking industry. Local governments might pay for stations and needed passenger improvements to serve their communities.

Today, passenger train service to Medford, Ashland and Roseburg is just a dream. It needs popular regional support to make it a reality. Resources are available if we choose to use them. It can't happen without building a new modern railroad. Maybe it is time to resurrect that old Oregon tourism motto, "Things Look Different Here" and really make it happen in Southern Oregon.

Editor's Note: At least two other avenues should be pursued by Rogue and Willamette Valley residents to help bring intercity rail passenger service to the area. One is to work for local commuter rail service (see "Rogue Valley Commuter Rail Study" on page 8).

Another is to work for improved local bus connections to Amtrak's Coast Starlight in both Klamath Falls and Eugene. While connecting bus service exists, the schedule does not make good connections with Amtrak's Coast Starlight. Increasing bus ridership will help demonstrate the need for rail improvements.

Coos Bay rail line brings new jobs to Oregon

Coos Bay, OR- A Coos Bay Rail Link freight train transported the first rail shipment of plywood out of the Roseburg Forest Products mill in Coquille since the rail line closed five and a half years ago. This accomplishment marks the full restoration of freight rail service on the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay's 134 - mile Coos Bay rail line. "We, as a community, have done the impossible," said Port CEO David Koch. "We've accomplished what so many naysayers said couldn't be done."

This month, North Bend - based Billeter Marine and Scott Partney Construction completed the final step of repair ing two critical wooden trestles to open the remaining 20 miles of rail line to Coquille.

Roseburg Forest Products' Director of Transportation Jeff Brandt said the return of rail service is very exciting for the Coquille mill and its employees. "Moving product by rail directly out of Coquille can eliminate up to 18 truckloads per day of material being shipped to another mill, where it then is loaded on a rail car," Brandt said.

This will not only allow us to be more competitive by reducing our costs, but it will benefit the community and environment by reducing highway traffic and emissions."

Roseburg also transports wood chips on the rail line to its export shipping terminal on the North Spit of Coos Bay.

The company is one of 11 manufacturers and agricultural producers who have transported wood products, steel, chromite ore and organic cattle feed on the shortline since 2011.

"Shippers moved 2,480 rail cars of commodities across the Coos Bay rail line in 2012. We expect to double shipments on the rail line this year now that we have service to Coquille," said Scott Parkinson, president of the Coos Bay Rail Link-CBR, which operates the railroad.

The Port of Coos Bay purchased the line in 2009-10 and is nearing completion of a \$31 million rehabilitation project. Federal and state investments in the line have brought on-the-ground improvements to every single mile of tracks between Coquille and the rail line's connection in Eugene to the North American rail system.

Almost all of the supplies and work on the tracks and trestles have been provided by companies locally and in Oregon and Washington. Ethel, Wash.-based Balfour Beatty's team completed the major track work, utilizing ties and ballast provided by Conrad Wood Preserving of North Bend, Knife River Inc. of Coos Bay and Babb Construction of Eugene. Other vital partners locally have included Kyle Electric; Reese Electric; Stebbins, Coffey & Collins and Stuntzner Engineering; along with LRL Construction of Tillamook, H&S Construction of Roseburg and several other companies.

The Coos Bay Rail Link began freight rail operations in October 2011 and now employs 12 people, with a total payroll exceeding \$500,000.

From Oregon International Port of Coos Bay News release, April 29, 2013

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Support an Expanded Amtrak Cascades Corridor

More trains – Improved on-time performance – Higher speeds

New signs welcome train travelers to State Capital

by Mike Morrison



Salem- In recent years, visitors to Salem arriving on Amtrak received a less than inspiring welcome to our capital city. They were greeted by a collection of faded, discolored platform signs from which many of the letters were peeling away, reminiscent of a wilderness outpost.

Fortunately the new Administrator of the Oregon DOT Rail and Transit Division, Hal Gard, took notice shortly after assuming office. As of early this year, crisp new signage worthy of an advanced urban center now announces a traveler's arrival at Salem. Even passengers who do not disembark will look out the train window and receive a favorable impression. **AORTA** members like to think that the appearance of these new signs reflects a fresh and reinvigorated approach to passenger rail in Oregon.



photo by Charlie Hamilton, AAW
Salem Amtrak station signs were badly deteriorated in 2012

Rogue Valley rail study

In 2001 a study was completed by local governments in the Rogue Valley area in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Transportation's Rail Division. The study looked at the feasibility of implementing commuter rail service between Grants Pass and Ashland. Projected capital costs ranged from \$3.6 to \$7.6 million. Projected annual ridership ranged from 124,000 to 221,000, depending upon level of service. The conclusion was that "commuter rail in the Rogue Valley was really a case of *when*, not *if*."

In 2006, the State of Oregon's Rail Division was in the process of deciding what to do with three self-propelled Budd rail diesel cars which had been operating between Portland and Astoria for the Lewis & Clark Expedition Bicentennial. The availability of these cars sparked renewed interest within the Rogue Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (RVMPO). In June 2006, RVMPO issued a Draft Report for the Rogue Valley Commuter Rail Project. This study was limited to a commuter rail demonstration project between Central Point and Ashland. The track is owned by the Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad (CORP).

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Near OMSI

Photos by
Dan McFarling,
May 2, 2013



Former Medford, Oregon rail station on North Front Street, now a restaurant, is hidden by foliage. The rail line parallels Front Street.



Three blocks to the south, on South Front Street, Rogue Valley Transit District Transfer Station serves multiple bus routes



Greyhound bus terminal, adjacent the RVRTD Center, is also on South Front Street. RVRTD buses awaiting passengers.