



AORTA Bulletin

A publication of the
Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates

Issue 110

December 1996

Since 1976

Successful commuter rail in Vancouver, BC, completed in 17½ months

□ West Coast Express President Lecia Stewart addresses AORTA banquet

Lecia Stewart, President of West Coast Express, Inc., captured the attention and stimulated enthusiasm of AORTA members at the '96 Annual Banquet Nov 23.

Stewart put the highly successful commuter rail on track in Vancouver, B.C., Nov 1, 1995. While she claims nothing in her background qualified her for the job, the results speak for themselves. The attractive, petite Stewart does not fit the stereotype of a railroad president, but it is clear she knows how to run trains!

"... As President of North America's newest commuter rail system, there is one question I am asked most often. 'How,' people will ask, 'was it possible

to design, build, and open for operation a 43-mile-long commuter system in just 17½ months?'

"... You have to start by breaking all the rules. I know of no other way to bring, or describe the process that brought to market a customer-focused rail system in record-breaking time ... and a little under budget to boot.

"Our assessment during the project phase, and indeed today nearly one year after opening, is that it is not enough to limit yourself to the traditional transportation planning or rail engineering tools. Instead you have to apply the same techniques that are used in developing and launching any new consumer

(Continued on page 2)

ODOT demonstrates alternative to more pavement!

St. Helens- For a few days during Oct, ODOT provided bus service between Warren and Columbia City. While the service proved that diminished roadway capacity, or congestion, can be addressed by providing public transit, that was not ODOT's intent.

The bus was merely used to provide shuttle service for local residents whose driveways and side roads were blocked while ODOT engaged in yet another road building project: \$19.9 million to widen a 7-mile stretch of Hwy 30. *St. Helens Chronicle*, Oct 2, 1996. [See the *IQ Test*, column 1, pg. 12]

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Help save the Pioneer:
Call/write Washington, D.C.
See page 4

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**Association of
Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates**
PO Box 2772, Portland, Oregon 97208-2772

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

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Also serving on the Board of Directors: Jim Howell, Robert Lowry, Kenneth McFarling, Fred Nussbaum, Ray Polani, Ed Rynerson and Timothy Wilson.

AORTA works cooperatively with the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP), but AORTA is an autonomous body. NARP Directors from Region 8 (AK, ID, MT, OR, WA), including Directors-at-Large, include James Hamre, Hans Mueller, Art Poole, Jeffrey Schultz and 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

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product in a highly competitive environment ...

Stewart explained "the greater Vancouver region is the 4th fastest growing area in North America. Each year more than 50,000 new residents arrive in the region... By 2021 the population is projected to grow by ... 70%, from 1.8M to more than 3M."

"What's worse is that the number of [autos] in greater Vancouver out-paces population growth by almost a 2-1 margin." Vancouver now has more autos per capita than Los Angeles, according to Stewart. "Nowhere is this rapid growth more pronounced

**Howell, McFarling, Polani win Naito Award,
Directors re-elected**

At the Annual Membership meeting Nov 24, AORTA President David Zagel announced the winners of AORTA's 1996 Bill Naito Rail and Transit Advocate Award. Jim Howell, Ken McFarling and Ray Polani. received the award "for demonstrating courage, persistence or unusual success in effecting improvement in public transportation in the Portland Metropolitan Area, State of Oregon or Pacific Northwest."

William S. Naito (1925-1996) , a prominent Portland businessman and visionary, gained the respect of AORTA for his decency, courage and leadership.

Aloha Wyse, Fred Nussbaum and Dan McFarling were re-elected to the Board of Directors. Directors-at-Large are elected for a two-year term. Tim Wilson, who recently served as AORTA President, was elected to complete the final year of a position vacated by Andrew Rux.

AORTA WEB site now on-line

AORTA published a Web page shortly before Christmas. As we go to press, the Web page leaves much to be desired; efforts to upgrade it are underway. When the effort succeeds, you will see references to WashARP and NARP. Your comments and suggestions will be welcome. ← See box at left



than in the Northeast sector of our city, the corridor where the West Coast Express operates." She said communities in NE Vancouver are projected to grow by 88% before 2010.

"Transportation infrastructure in the region has ... not kept pace, and the result is the worst gridlock in our entire city." Stewart said that in '93 or '94 "citizens threw up their arms and formed a group known as 'Gridlock' and they pressured our Provincial government, equivalent to your state government, to examine some long overdue transportation alternatives."

(Continued on page 9)

Oregon, Washington, Governors propose 97-98 budgets

Oregon Gov Kitzhaber's 97-98 recommended budget includes \$5.6M in state funds to continue the Willamette Valley corridor service. The service includes a combination of rail (*Cascadia*) and Amtrak Thruway buses between Portland and Eugene. The budget also includes \$17.5M in federal funds for track improvements and capital costs.

Kitzhaber, however, also calls for replacing the gas tax with a new tax "which will link more closely system use and demand."

Editor's Note: No other tax could more closely link "system use" than the gas tax. One of the problems we face is that drivers do not understand the true cost of autos. The best way to help the public understand is to connect those costs with the immediate, out-of-pocket costs one incurs when driving.

In Washington, Gov Lowry says "a more flexible funding source with a commitment to [public] transit and other transportation alternatives is crucial to Washington's economic future." The Governor reported that a recent study estimated traffic congestion costs the state \$1.3B/year in wasted time and fuel, or about \$720/year for Seattle area motorists.

Lowry stated "We simply must find a better solution to the growing problem of gridlock than mile after additional mile of asphalt."

The budget includes \$60M for intercity rail between Seattle and Portland, and \$50M/biennium for regional transit systems, such as those proposed in the Seattle area, Spokane and Vancouver. Funds are also included to improve rail freight, thus helping to relieve the more costly highways of excessive truck burdens. Lowry also proposes to make gasoline subject to the state sales tax, thus increasing the direct, out-of-pocket cost of driving.

While Lowry's statement acknowledges more pavement will not solve the problem, his budget, like Oregon's, includes far more money for roads (billions) than for transit and rail (millions).

Oregon's investment in the corridor is lagging far behind the Washington. Only about \$3.2M of the \$11.5M of state funds appropriated for the rail corridor by the '93 Legislature was actually spent. The '95 Legislature took back about \$8.3M.

Puget Sound adopts commuter, transit plan

With a 58% "yes" vote, a ten-year \$3.9B transit plan was adopted by King, Snohomish and Pierce Counties in Washington. The plan includes a combination of light rail, commuter rail, express buses. The commuter rail service and express bus service is expected to begin operation within three years.

Boise to board commuter rail

Ontario's *Argus Observer* reports the Treasure Valley in Idaho "could have the beginnings of a commuter rail system within a year." The Boise City Council approved \$100,000 for the demonstration project, utilizing the German manufactured RegioSprinter diesel car.

The car will travel between downtown Boise and a Micron Technology plant in southeast Boise, using existing Union Pacific track. The *Argus* said the car may operate as far west as Nampa. The car is designed for 174 passengers. The demonstration is ex-



pected to last 3 to 6 months.

The *Argus* reports Union Pacific's director of passenger operations, Larry Smith, told city officials UP will try to reschedule freight operations to avoid conflict with the commuter service.

Siemens Transportation Systems manufactures the car in Krefeld, Germany. Siemens is the company manufacturing Portland's new low-floor cars in a plant near Sacramento, CA.

Will the *Pioneer* be saved?

US Senators Mark Hatfield (R-OR), and Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), delayed termination of the *Pioneer*, *Desert Wind*, *Texas Eagle*, and Boston section of the *Lake Shore Limited* by Amtrak's Board of Directors. With bi-partisan leadership, Hatfield and Lautenberg were successful in adding \$22.5 million to continue train service.

Candidate Smith claims bring disbelief

During the later stages of the recent campaign for the US Senate, candidate Gordon Smith claimed to have been instrumental in saving Amtrak's *Pioneer*. Early in the campaign, however, Smith wrote off the *Pioneer* as impossible to justify because of scant patronage.

Judging by the dramatic turnaround in his public remarks, however, Smith must have incurred hostile reaction from his home town, Pendleton, and other Eastern Oregon communities.

Smith's claims of having helped save the *Pioneer* brought a storm of incredibility by those who knew better. A headline in the Baker City *Herald* stated, "Amtrak claims unbelievable" and "Smith's Amtrak comments stun [US Sen Ron] Wyden." Baker City resident Peggi Timm, said Smith appears to "suffer from the (U.S. Rep.) Cooley virus."

A letter in *The Observer* from La Grande resident Bruce Lovan called Smith's statements "an outrageous attempt to hide his own words."

Hopefully this embarrassing episode taught Sen Smith something about the need for rail service. We wish Sen Smith well and hope to participate in the educational process as he moves to WDC.

East Oregonians need the *Pioneer*

Baker City residents Charles and Dorothy Neal had a letter-to-the-editor in the Nov 24 *Oregonian*. "The idea of Amtrak's abolishing this route was terrible news to us. This is the only mode of transportation for a lot of people who live in this part of the country. It would impose a hardship on people who have depended upon Amtrak for transportation.

"We think pressure should be brought upon Congress, Amtrak and any other body ..." to retain the *Pioneer*.

Rumor says *Pioneer* may go daily

There is a rumor going through the Amtrak computer system that Union Pacific and Burlington Northern are close to completing a contract with Amtrak to run the *Pioneer* between Chicago and Portland 7 days/week.

The rumor re-routes the train from Chicago via the former Chicago Northwestern to Omaha, on UP via Cheyenne (missing Denver) to Nampa, Idaho, and through the Columbia Gorge to Portland.

This route would also by-pass Ogden and Boise. Retaining Boise on the route would add approximately 11 miles. Ogden would add about 66 miles.

By including cars to carry LCL (less-than-car-load) freight/packages, the train would pay for itself.

While this change may be only a rumor, it points toward strategies that could help make the entire system more efficient and self-reliant.

NOTE: See "Amtrak/Gunderson" on pg. 12.

**AORTA members are encouraged to
contact Senators Wyden and Smith,
and their US Representative, to help
them to understand the
need for rail passenger service.**

**You can reach your
Senators and Congressperson
toll-free by calling 1-800-962-3524.**

and/or write:

**The Honorable Senator _____,
U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510**

or

**The Honorable Representative _____,
U.S. House, Washington, D.C. 20515**

LOCAL LINES: *News around the state*

Coastal Tidings

Sunset improves Clatsop County service

Astoria- Sunset Empire Transportation District is expanding bus service early in '97. Effective Jan 2 SETD expands service to Cannon Beach and Seaside to every hour and takes over operation of the city bus service. The District will begin operation at 6 am, and operate local service on Saturdays. Previously, operations were limited to M-F.

Exec Director Cindy Howe says while Sunset Empire is concentrating efforts on the county's population centers, they are also trying to reach out to the rural areas. Sunset also operates Dial-A-Ride van service throughout Clatsop County.

County voters approved a \$475,000 property tax base last May to provide expanded service. Passage of state ballot measure 47 may reduce the service levels previously approved by county voters.

Some residents of Gearhart, which opted out of the District in May, are expressing regret for their decision and are re-evaluating their position.

More information on the fixed route and Dial-a-Ride may be obtained by calling 325-0563 or 1-800-776-6406. TDD access is 1-800-452-0402.

Astoria Council wants rail corridor protected

Astoria- Controversy over possible rail-banking of the western end of the Burlington Northern line to Astoria continues. A Dec 3 *Daily Astorian* editorial points out that "railbanking is a means by which the waterfront rail line can be protected for future use while giving Astoria the opportunity to give pedestrians access to the waterfront."

The paper praised the mayor and city council for acting to protect the corridor. Some adjacent landowners, smelling a potential windfall, are greedily seeking ways to prevent the railbanking idea.

Bus service to Astoria disrupted

Astoria- According to *The Daily Astorian* (Nov 20) a Pierce Pacific Stages bus was repossessed in Sept "as it sat in front of Portland Greyhound terminal." The owner of Pierce Pacific, which operates between Astoria and Portland, insists an acquaintance stole the bus. The company substituted a van until mid Nov. A full-sized bus then returned to the route. The bus also serves Seaside and Cannon Beach. For information on the service, call (503) 692-4437.

Transit levy passes in Lincoln County

Lincoln City- Lincoln County voters passed a ballot measure in Nov which provides funding for low-cost bus service for the next three years. A ballot measure was narrowly defeated in May.

Tillamook County gets new bus service

Tillamook- Tillamook County expanded its new bus service in early Nov, and now provides two northern loops, two loops through the Three Capes area, and three loops in Tillamook City.

The County initiated the service Oct 14. The demonstration project provides both fixed-route and dial-a-ride service. Fixed route operation includes service between North County and Tillamook City, and between Tillamook City and Netarts/Oceanside, on Mon, Wed and Fri afternoons.

On Tue and Thurs the bus travels between Manzanita and Portland, via Tillamook, Forest Grove, Hillsboro and Beaverton.

Sherry Clements serves as project coordinator. Clements is delighted with the response to the service. "We have already exceeded the ridership projected by the consultant for six months." The service had been operating less than 3 months!

"Besides being a public service that provides important social and medical links, I believe that a good method of transportation enhances property values," stated Clements. A second bus will be placed in service in mid-January.

Oceanside resident Douglas Leedy expressed appreciation for the service in a letter to the Nov 20 *Headlight-Herald*. "I recently enjoyed a ride to Portland and back on a comfortable, clean new bus, expertly driven, and it was a pleasure to see some of the scenery along the Wilson River instead of worrying about the road and traffic."

Rockaway Beach resident Sharon Smith also wrote to the newspaper (Dec 4). Smith said the service makes the area livable for the many residents who "do not drive because of age, disability or lack of [an auto]..." She said many residents need the service to get to medical appointments, shop, meet friends for lunch, and travel beyond the local community.

The service is being funded by the state, county, private businesses, and several cities. The operation was the recipient of three awards at the Oregon Transportation Conference in Seaside on Oct 27-30.

The bus has been dubbed "The Wave." To find out where to "catch The Wave," call the transportation office at 368-4666, Mon-Fri, between 9 am and 3 pm. Tillamook County residents outside the North County area may call 1-800-815-8283. Reservations should be made 24 hours in advance.

Greyhound provided service between Tillamook and Portland in the early 80's. Patronage at that time averaged about 200/month.

In June, 1984, AORTA member Doug Allen and Board member Jim Howell started Citizens' Better Transit, Inc., in competition with the dog. In a few months, the dog left, but patronage grew steadily.

With two daily round-trips, 365 days/year, CBT averaged about 1,000 passengers/month. Howell and Allen planned to add service between Astoria and Lincoln City to draw in more riders, but needed a small subsidy to make it work.

After three applications for \$10,000/yr from the cigarette tax were rejected, Allen and Howell sold CBT to RAZ Transportation in 1990. Fares immediately went up, and frequency was reduced. About a year later, RAZ discontinued the service.

Southern Oregon Signals

RVTD levy fails; General Manager fired

Medford- Rogue Valley Transportation Dist Board of Directors fired General Manager Mike Borwick Nov 21. The termination was effective immediately.

The 3-2 vote came one week after the 7-member Board voted 3-4 against termination. When the motion failed Nov 14, the Board voted 6-1 to accept Borwick's resignation with 3 months severance pay. The resignation was to be effective Jan 3.

When the Board met Nov 21, two Board members who had opposed immediate termination the previous week were absent. The motion to terminate was brought to the floor again and passed.

The last few months have been difficult for RVTD. Service was cut 70% on Sep 23 following the failure of a property tax levy. The \$3.5M/year, 5-year levy was defeated by a 3-2 margin.

Seven of 10 routes, and all evening and Saturday service, were eliminated. Of 50 employees, 20 were terminated, including 16 drivers.

RVTD management drew heavy fire for the service cutbacks from transit riders. On Sep 26, Arlene Warrender presented the Board with a petition bearing 617 signatures demanding Borwick's termination. Warrender had been previously designated "RVTD supporter of the year." The bus drivers also expressed strong dissatisfaction to the Board.

Protests grew louder when the Board gave Borwick \$15,000 severance pay while cutting service.

The *Mail Tribune* called for the Board to ensure the new manager is "an experienced, politically savvy public-transit evangelist. Someone who believes in the virtue and value of public transportation, and has the skills to spread that enthusiasm to a skeptical community." [Editor's Note: *Persons with a conflict of interest, such as paving contractors, developers and auto dealers, should not apply- too bad all cities don't use such criteria*]

Borwick served as General Manager for RVTD since March 1992. According to the *Ashland Daily Tidings*, Assistant General Manager Jerry Ehlers is expected to serve as interim General Manager.

As the AORTA Bulletin goes to press, the Ashland City Council is expected to approve funds to restore service in their city to previous levels. Ashland citizens voted for the levy.

[Of the 17 letters-to-the-editor in local newspapers before or shortly after the levy vote, 16 well-written letters supported transit funding; only one opposed.]

Transit starves, road builders feast

While the transit system which served several Rogue Valley cities falls apart, leaving many people stranded (following defeat of a \$17.5M levy), ODOT plans to spend \$20.3M on more pavement in attempt to ease traffic congestion at *just one intersection* in north Medford.

Editors Note: Experience demonstrates how ineffective more pavement is for solving traffic congestion. How can a state agency claim it lacks sufficient funds to maintain highways while continuing to spread more pavement over the state?

Bikes and peds demonstrate in Ashland

Ashland- Bicyclists and pedestrians joined forces in Ashland to protest against domination by automobiles. One of the 15 bicycles carried a sign, "Smog sucks." Comprised mostly of students, the protesters were striving to bring attention to the need for alternative transportation as the city revises its transportation plan. The paper quoted a 48 y.o. demonstrator: "Gasoline-powered autos aren't sustainable technology."

Management of Lakeview rail line may change

Lakeview- Lake County wants to assume management of the former Southern Pacific branch line between Lakeview and Alturas. The County has contracted with Great Western Railway since 1991, but now wishes to terminate the lease.

The county purchased the line from Southern Pacific, with the help of state dollars, in 1985. As of January 2, the County had received no response from GWR.

Currently, the only mill in Lakeview which uses the line is Fremont Lumber. Fremont loads about 50-60 cars annually. Nevada, California and Oregon Railroad constructed the original line. It connects with the UP in Alturas.

Friend of transit leaves Medford city council

Medford- On July 7, Thomas S. Parks resigned from the Medford City Council. His letter of resignation stated "the city of Medford is very well run. It has a good staff and a great city manager." The recent death of his wife, and a need to "refocus," however, prompted his resignation.

"Don't pave over the entire city. If you build it (roads) they [autos] will come ... the more ... there are, the less enjoyable Medford will be."

Parks urged the city to provide alternatives to automobiles, "walking, buses, bicycles, subways ... we need ... more pedestrian friendly areas ... bike lanes and sidewalks."

Parks asked the city to support Jackson County Commissioner Ric Holt's efforts to expand rail service. Clearly the people of Medford, and the entire state, need more people-centered visionaries and leaders like Thomas Parks.

Passenger rail service in Rogue Valley?

Medford- The Southern Oregon Chapter of National Railway Historical Society (PO Box 622, Medford 97501) recently restored a 1952 diesel locomotive which once hauled logs between Butte Falls and Medford.

Plans call for using the locomotive for passenger/tourist service between Medford and Butte Falls, or between Ashland and Grants Pass. Chapter members completed restoration work at the Willamette and Pacific Railroad roundhouse in Albany.

Central Oregon Semaphores

Dinner train may leave town

Prineville- The Crooked River Railroad Company, which operates a dinner train on the City of Prineville Railway, is threatening to leave town. Operator of the popular dinner train is concerned about aesthetics in the industrial area from which the train embarks on its 19-mile journey to Redmond.

Jerry Price, Manager of the Prineville Railway, explains that the area about which dinner train operators complain is not owned by the city.

While revenue from the dinner train is not a major source of income for the city-owned railroad, it generates tourist dollars at restaurants, motels, and other businesses in the Prineville area. A decision on the possible move is expected in January.

Eastern Oregon News

NP threatens to abandon rail line in NE Oregon

Enterprise- The Idaho Northern Pacific Railroad filed an application to abandon the line from Elgin to Joseph. The Wallowa County Court announced that, if the rail line is abandoned, it intends to give the right-of-way to adjacent landowners. Persons wishing to object to such short-sighted action may wish to write to the Wallowa County Court, 101 S River, Enterprise 97828 or call (541) 426-4543.

**If you haven't already
paid your dues for
1997,
now is a good time!**

See pg 2 for rates and address.

Willamette Valley Whistles

Oh, oh! Ozone is getting worse!

Salem- The Oct 30 *Statesman Journal* sounded the alarm about worsening air pollution in Oregon's capital city. According to the *Statesman*, the city received several pollution warnings from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) during the summer. On two occasions the pollution was reported to be the worst in the state. Salem's population has grown from 107,786 in 1990 to over 118,000 today.

Road vehicles "remain by far the largest contributor to poor air," according to the article.

The article reported that Oregon Environmental Council's Executive Director Jeff Allen advocates increased funding for rail service in the I-5 corridor.

Cherriots improves service

Salem- Salem Area Transit District, aka Cherriots, initiated evening bus service Dec 1. Bus service is extended three hours into the evening, from 6:30 to 9:30 PM. Salem has not had evening bus service since shortly after World War II. The evening service is a real bargain during December and January—it is free!

Cherriots is in the process of awarding a contract to supply 17 low-floor, 30 foot buses, fueled by compressed natural gas.

Tri-Met ridership up

Portland- The minutes for the Nov 20 Committee on Accessible Transportation noted average weekday ridership since Oct '95 is up 7.5%; Sat, up 35%; and Sun, up 35%. Service hours are up 15% on weekdays, 35% on Sat and 50% on Sun.

The minutes also claimed that because of increased demands, service "turndowns" were also up.

[NOTE: If service hours are increasing faster than ridership, turndowns should be lower, not higher!]

(Continued from page 2)

“Subsequent studies identified commuter rail as a fast, cost-effective solution to the traffic problems in the northeast sector. Why? ...

“It’s quick. You can build commuter rail in a relatively short time frame. LRT projects traditionally ... take 5-7 years. A commuter rail system, by traditional planning methodology, would be 3-5 years... I’ll tell you how we did it in 17½ months.

“It’s less costly ... than ... an equivalent highway infrastructure and ... less costly than the LRT option. It uses the existing infrastructure, and consequently it’s a good transportation economic alternative.

“It’s good for the environment and it has a proven track record. I probably don’t need to tell you that people love trains and that ridership on commuter rail is the fastest growing segment of all public transit modes in North America today. It is outpacing all other modes of transit. People are rediscovering commuter rail as a way to get where they want to go.

“Another key decision ... was that adding buses to the corridor was not an option, because the buses would have just been behind the bumper of the bus or the [auto] ahead of them. There was inadequate highway infrastructure to move anything ...

“So a decision was made to build a premium peak hour commuter service and to build it on a tight time frame.

The cost of the project, according to Stewart, was roughly \$200M Canadian (about \$150M US). That includes \$65M to upgrade the Canadian Pacific railway, \$30M for land acquisition and construction of 8 stations, and \$80M for the rolling stock (28 bi-level passenger cars and 5 locomotives).

WCE primarily relies upon third party contracts. VIA Rail (Canada’s “Amtrak”) manages the maintenance. CP Rail crews the trains. Another party manages the parking lots and cash collections.

“We developed all the funding and governance processes and created a fully-staffed, turn-key operating

company. All of this was done in 17½ months... It gives ... a new meaning to the words, ‘fast track.’

The project was “more than just engineering and transportation planning,” according to Stewart. “The task of creating a brand new transportation service demanded incredible, innovative thinking.

“From the outset we knew ... it was essential to know what our customer wanted and who they [are]. And from ... market research we learned ... they [are] more demanding than traditional transit users. They [have] a higher expectation of convenience, comfort, amenities, and service. But we also learned they [are] willing to pay a little bit more to receive them.

“Based on this knowledge, we developed a complete premium service concept that extended everywhere from service and facility design to operating structure and delivery. ... You can’t just encompass or embody that concept in a single element. It has to be experienced from the time people leave their door in the morning to when they arrive at their destination. And no one element will deliver it for you.”

WCE pre-tested everything from system colors, fare system, station configurations and advertising messages with prospective customers. And when the potential riders rejected WCE ideas, it tried theirs instead.

“One thing we learned from ... our customers was ... they wanted an easy and convenient ticket purchasing system. It’s ... critical. So we developed ticket vending machines that work like an automated teller machine and that accepted cash, credit card, bank debit cards.

“Then we took it a step farther and we created the ‘Express Card.’ ... a stored-value smart card with a tiny computer chip that allows customers to store up to \$100 on their card... Within 3 weeks of opening we sold 2000 ...

“... They give us their money now, we achieve their loyalty as customers, and then we get the time value of their money ... in advance ... [and] reduced cash handling costs.

(Continued on page 10)

"It was a very effective way to develop ... customer loyalty and efficient utilization of technology. We're one of the first commuter properties in North America to utilize smart card technology ..."

WCE purchased "state-of-the-art passenger cars" from Bombardier, with roomy seats, work tables, space for bicycles, washrooms, plug-ins for lap tops, public cellular phones and even a Cappuccino bar.

The design team included an architect, urban planner, industrial hygiene expert, graphics designer and landscape architect. "Together they ... planned ... the system, and we tested it, and [when it didn't] test perfectly well, we went back, we changed the mix and tested it again."

"We recruited ... CP Rail freight personnel, people who had not moved anything other than a goat or a bag of grain for 25 years. People said it couldn't be done, and its absolutely mesmerizing to see how they embraced the service, ... how they stepped up to the task in a way that even their own employers said ... could never happen. It can happen if you give them the tools and you give them the training."

Service began Nov 1, 1995, and 1.4 million people rode WCE trains in the first 12 months.

Commuter rail resulted in "... a 250% increase in public transit use in that corridor; 80% of our customers left their [autos]. That's a huge mode shift, one that is very difficult to accomplish. Our market share projections for the downtown core in particular have exceeded the original projections.

"As a result of West Coast Express there are 2,000 fewer [automobiles] on the road during peak hour periods in the week." Ninety percent of the customers say the service exceeds their expectations, according to Stewart. "It's not that they are satisfied. There are 7% that say they are satisfied. 90% say it *exceeds* all their expectations."

WCE won the "International Project of the Year" award, not just in transportation, but in everything

from urban development to major construction projects around the world.

"We won four first place marketing and communications awards. An award of merit from the Canadian consulting engineers. And recently [in a radio poll] the citizens of Vancouver ... voted us the sexiest transit service in Vancouver.

"It is not surprising that the commuters and public alike favor West Coast Express. It makes sense.

"On West Coast Express you can eat, you can drink, you can make a phone call, you can plug in your laptop to a workstation, you can go to the washroom, you can bring your bike ...

*COMMUTER RAIL RESULTED IN
"... A 250% INCREASE
IN PUBLIC TRANSIT USE IN THAT CORRIDOR;
80% OF OUR CUSTOMERS LEFT THEIR [AUTOS].
THAT'S A HUGE MODE SHIFT ..."*

"So what do the customers tell us? They tell us they particularly like the speed and convenience of the train. In fact, they rarely tell us anything they don't like.

"This is particularly important, because in the transit business, this is what we call choice riders, the ones with [autos] waiting for them back in the suburbs should we fail to deliver.

When WCE "went out to survey defectors, ... customers that had been using the service and then abandoned it, " they found none. "The only people we could find who had stopped using the trains were people who had moved out of the...area."

"In some ways, WCE proves you don't need highly sophisticated new technology in order to lure commuters from [autos]. What you ... need are great new ways of planning and designing the system. And what you must have is a greater respect for customers as consumers and the courage to empower front line employees to provide great service.

"In summary I hope these remarks will provide you with some food for thought. Its true we have ruffled a few feathers in trying to nudge the rail industry and the transit industry in our corner of the world into the 90's." *THANK YOU, LECIA!*

SHORTLINES AND QUOTES . . .

- The 5.3 mile light rail line in Denver carries 12,000 people/day. The baggage mishandling system for Denver Airport cost more than the light rail line. The 18-mi light rail line in St. Louis carries 44,000 people/day. Both lines plan major expansions. The expensive Denver airport, however, is still trying to get its act together. *Washington Rail News*, Dec 96-Jan 97.
- In the summer of 1924 8 trains ran daily between Portland and Astoria. And this was the result of private enterprise. There are those who say our population today is insufficient to justify any rail service to Astoria. Since 1924, government has been very involved in transportation. Subsidies, direct and indirect, and by regulations, have distorted the economics. Those who want to perpetuate domination by highways allege that efforts to correct the political distortion of the economics and get people out of automobiles is "social engineering."
- USDOT estimates total congestion costs to be \$168B annually." *Getting There: Strategic Facts for the Transportation Advocate*, The Advocacy Institute, 1707 L Street, NW, STE 400, Washington, D.C.
- "Traffic jams cost businesses an estimated \$40 billion each year and waste 2.2 billion gallons of fuel." Ibid.
- In California, the average speed during rush hour is ... 35 mph and will drop to 18 mph by 2000." Ibid.
- USDOT estimated that traffic delays are projected to increase by four times the current rate by the year 2000. As a result, four million 'person work years' could be wasted each year by 2005." Ibid.
- "If someone were to tell you he had seen strings of noxious gases drifting among the buildings of a city, black smoke blotting out the sun, great holes in major streets filled by men in hard hats, planes circling overhead, unable to land, and thousands of people choking in the streets, pushing and shoving in a desperate effort to get out of the city ... you would be hard-pressed to know whether he was talking about a city at war or a city at rush hour." Alan Boyd, former USDOT Secretary, Ibid.
- "Our motormania is an enemy to urban beauty. The automobile is ugly when parked and disruptive when moving. It has seriously marred the beauty and serenity of most great central cities all over the world ... Some of our ... cities have been permanently disfigured ... If freeways and parking lots are to have the highest priority, our new cities will not be beautiful and our old ones will lose even the limited beauty that they still have." "Must Our Cities Be So Ugly," by John E. Burchard, *The Saturday Evening Post*, Dec 2, 1961.
- "Those who argue that Amtrak must operate without ... subsidy forget a basic truth about transportation ... It is all subsidized. The highway system is heavily subsidized. So is air travel ... High-speed[rail] transportation between Seattle and Portland is essential. We hope that is where Amtrak is headed." *Daily Astorian*, Aug 12, 1996.
- There are some who suggest commercial air service might be a substitute if efforts to continue the *Pioneer* fail! The subsidy required for commuter air service, however, would be much greater than what is required to continue the *Pioneer*. And while rail serves more people at much lower cost, commuter air would be accessible only to the wealthy and business persons. This editor finds such suggestions absolutely ludicrous! Unfortunately, the suggestion of air service as a substitute came from none other than Senator Hatfield. It should be clear that while we are grateful to Senator Hatfield for what he has done for rail and public transportation, what we really need are people who understand the economics of transportation, and how political warping of economics distorts those costs.
- *The Daily Astorian* (Nov 7) urged the Metro Council to "not prostitute their office to the home builders. Their mission is to avoid the mistakes that created Pugetopolis." The editorial criticized Metro Councilor (and developer) Don Morrisette and Chair Mike Burton.
- According to the Nov 17 *Herald and News* (Klamath Falls), a US company has purchased the 510 mile rail line between The Pas, Manitoba and Churchill, Manitoba. That line is the only land link to the this "polar bear capital of Canada which sits on the shore of Hudson Bay. According to the article, Churchill is "too remote to merit a highway." [How often do we hear a community is too small for rail service? How lucky they are in Churchill!]

Roads, roads and more roads

Noti- ODOT held a ribbon cutting ceremony "to celebrate the completion of the Highway 126 Noti bypass on Friday, Oct. 11" according to *Siuslaw News*. The new pavement was hailed as the conclusion of a "three-decade-long effort to improve the safety of the highway."

The final phase of the project, a 2-mile section of roadway, cost \$7.5M. While expanding pavement throughout Oregon, ODOT will be going to the Legislature in '97 to tell them they lack sufficient funds to maintain the current highway system.

[IQ Test: Do you expand your house if you can't afford to fix the leaky roof? Should not we be doing something different?]

Oregon traffic deaths rise

Traffic crashes in Oregon increased by about 4% between 1994 and 1995, according to an annual report issued by the ODOT. Fatalities increased 16% (493 in 1994, 572 in 1995). The typical response to such reports: "safety enhancement projects" (*Editor's translation: more pavement*).

But an editorial in *The Bulletin* (Bend, Nov 26) says that after ODOT spent "tens of millions" on so-called "improvements" to Hwy 20 across the Central Cascades, highway accidents and deaths went up dramatically.

Pennsylvania to purchase RPS equipment

Pennsylvania joined the growing list of states now in the process of purchasing intercity rail passenger equipment. On Dec 18 Pennsylvania's Gov Tom Ridge signed a bill allowing expenditure of \$4.67M in state funds, plus \$18.7M in federal funds to purchase new diesel multiple units (DMUs) for the Keystone Corridor.

The Danish IC3, discussed in previous Bulletins, is an example of a DMU (the IC3 is also available in a electric version). Amtrak will operate the state-purchased equipment.

Tri-Met orders high floor buses

Portland area's Tri-Met are planning to place an order for 118 new buses. But 74 of the buses ordered are old-style, high floor buses. Only 44 of the buses will be low-floor.

According to the American Public Transit Association 538 low floor buses were operating in North America as of June 1996, and 770 more were on order. LFBs have been operating in Canada since 1992. Where they are in operation, problems have been minimal [*Metro*, Nov-Dec 96]

Low floor buses are not just advantageous to people using wheelchairs. They speed up schedules by reducing dwell time because of faster boarding and off-loading.

"These buses won't be delivered for another 2 years," states AORTA Director Jim Howell. "Tri-Met has no excuse for buying old-fashioned, high floor buses." People are encouraged to contact the Tri-Met Board (call 238-5824, FAX 239-6451, or write: Tri-Met Genl Mgr, 4012 SE 17th, Portland, 97202) to encourage purchase of low-floor buses.

Amtrak signs lease with Gunderson

Amtrak signed a lease with Portland-based Gunderson Incorporated, a manufacturer of freight cars and marine barges, for 250 second-hand boxcars to be used in mail and express service.



AORTA Timetable

6:30 pm Thu Feb 20	AORTA Portland Area Chapter meeting Room 208, Union Station
Sat Feb 22	AORTA Board meeting (time and location tba)
3:30 pm We Feb 26	Tri-Met Board meeting Portland Bldg, 1120 SW 5th Ave
12 Noon Sat Mar 22	NARP Region 8 Meeting Tacoma, WA (location tba)
The AORTA Board normally meets at 9 am, 4th Saturday of each month, in Room 208, Portland Union Station. Please always call to confirm meeting times and locations.	