



AORTA Bulletin

A publication of the
Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates

Issue 108

March 1996

Since 1976

AORTA opposes design of South-North light rail project

❑ Flawed route selection process dooms line to low ridership; limits growth potential

Portland- On January 27 the AORTA Board voted unanimously to withdraw support for Tri-Met's South-North light rail project as currently designed.

AORTA does not take the decision lightly, according to President David Zagel. "We worked very hard to bring south-north light rail to the metro area. We campaigned door-to-door in Vancouver to build support for what should have been a wise investment for the future."

Although AORTA is a strong proponent of light rail, and believes the system should be expanded, the board concluded the route selection process has been seriously compromised by special interests. The project will not attract sufficient ridership at a reasonable cost, according to Zagel.

The final straw for the AORTA board was failure to include a viable alignment through the downtown
contd on pg 9 . . . AORTA withdraws LR support

High speed rail advocates gather in Salem

Salem- An all-day Cascadia Rail Stakeholder conference drew 150 rail advocates to Salem on April 12. Eugene Mayor Ruth Bascom had the attendees chanting, "No more Lanes, High Speed Trains!"

Gov Kitzhaber received enthusiastic applause for his pledge to include funds in the 1997-99 budget to move high speed rail forward. The Governor said that high speed rail "is absolutely essential to the future of this state."

The Governor stated "people are increasingly recognizing the importance of this project, not just to the Willamette Valley, but to the entire state."

He said improvements in the corridor will help the state avoid the addition of "extraordinarily
contd on pg 4 . . . see Cascadia Conference

Circulation 1300 and GROWING!

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*Have you paid your
1996 Membership Dues?*

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**Association of
Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates**
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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).

President	David Zagel	(503) 281-0434
Vice President	Art Poole	(541) 269-5340
Secretary	Kenneth Skach-Mills	(503) 235-2780
Treasurer	Kenneth Peters	(503) 643-6490
Bulletin Editor	Dan L. McFarling	(503) 642-4077

Also serving on the Board of Directors:
Jim Howell, Robert Lowry, Kenneth McFarling,
Fred Nussbaum, Ray Polani, Andrew Rux,
Ed Rynerson and Michael Strider.

AORTA works 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, are James Hamre, Hans Mueller, Art Poole, Jeffrey Schultz and William Weeks.

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AORTA loses a friend

Portland- State Senator Bill McCoy (*D-Portland*) died April 19 after a week-long coma following a heart attack.

McCoy shepherded Oregon's fledgling high speed rail project through the 1993 Legislature. His efforts helped to bring increased rail and Thruway bus service to the Willamette Valley, an important first step to building an integrated system that will serve the entire state.

McCoy had only recently attended the Cascadia Stakeholder Conference in Salem (see article on page 1). AORTA is glad Senator McCoy was able to participate in this event before his untimely death. He certainly must have taken great pride in seeing that the seeds he worked so hard to plant are beginning to grow with such enthusiasm.

On Saturday, April 27, the AORTA Board voted to contribute to the scholarship fund set up in Sen McCoy's honor. The Board will also be establishing an award in the Senator's honor. McCoy was an member of AORTA. We'll miss you, Senator.

Are your 1996 dues paid?

Survey reveals strong support for rail

Eugene- A survey conducted by State Representative Floyd Prozanski (*D- Eugene*) revealed strong support for rail and other transit projects. Two questions in the nine question survey dealt specifically with rail transit.

With over 1100 respondents, 81.7% stated they would ride high speed rail ". . . north from Eugene to Portland, Seattle and Vancouver, Canada." 86.3% of respondents stated they support "state funding of alternative forms of mass transit, such as high speed rail, light rail, and buses."

The two questions on rail and transit drew more consensus than any other question on the survey. Responding to a question on land use, 74% expressed opposition to expanding the urban growth boundary to accommodate population growth.

Other questions on the survey dealt with universal health care, public funding for private schools, expansion of video poker, gas tax increases for roads, safety laws and property tax incentives for new companies.

Grace Crunican selected to head ODOT

Salem- The Oregon Transportation Commission announced April 17 the selection of Grace Crunican to head the Oregon Department of Transportation. Crunican, who previously worked as Deputy Director of the Portland Department of Transportation, will be leaving the number two position at the Federal Transit Administration.

Crunican, a native of Oregon, will take a drop in pay of nearly \$24,000 per year in order to return to her home state.

During her stay in Washington, DC, Crunican also worked with the Surface Transportation Policy Project. (STPP). STPP is a strong voice in the fight to bring balance to the nation's transportation policies.

Bruce Warner, Regional ODOT Manager for the Portland area, was the other finalist for the position.

The appointment is subject to approval of the Oregon Senate. *Congratulations, Grace!*

Bordering States Continue Rail Expansion

□ Will the Oregon Legislature continue to sleep?

California continues to expand rail passenger service. On Feb 20 final agreement was reached to begin a \$67M improvement project on the Capitol Corridor between Sacramento and San Jose. Upon completion, 20 round-trips, in addition to the long distance trains, will be able to operate in the corridor. Top speeds of 79 mph will allow trains between Sacramento and San Jose to reduce travel time by 20 minutes.

North of the Oregon border, Washington is putting final touches on a contract to purchase two Renfe Talgo tilt-trainsets.

Under the contract, Washington will continue to lease the Talgo equipment currently operating between Seattle and Vancouver, BC, as *the Mt Baker International*. A second set of leased equipment will be added, probably in May 1996.

Late in 1997, Washington will receive two brand new trainsets. They will be assembled somewhere in the Puget Sound area. Potential sites include Seattle, Kent, Auburn and Bremerton.

A number of the components will be fabricated in other parts of the state. Potential suppliers are in Yakima, Tacoma, Bellingham, Kent, Everett, Auburn and Bremerton.

Translation: Lots of new jobs in the State of Washington for an industry that is clearly growing!

The legislature specified that 25% of manufacturing and assembly be completed within the state.

The tilt-train technology utilized by the Talgo equipment allows it to travel at higher speeds while traversing curves and maintain passenger comfort.

The Talgo is designed for 125 mph service.

Oregon's 1995 Legislature not only failed to appropriate money for rail improvements, but actually withdrew about half the funding approved in the 1993 session. The interim Emergency Board gave last minute approval in January to continue operation of the *Cascadia* (formerly *Mt. Rainier*) and some of the supplementary bus service which began operation in Fall 1994.

Now that the majority of the Valley train/bus service has secure funding through June 97, AORTA will work to re-establish the full level of service originally planned and operated. One of the serious shortcomings within the corridor is the absence of service southbound in the morning, and northbound in the evening.

Are your 1996 AORTA membership dues paid?

Cascadia Conference ... continued from page 1

... expensive lanes” to I-5. Kitzhaber led the crowd in applause for the fine leadership exhibited by Oregon Transportation Commission member, Susan Brody.

One of the highlights of the conference was the announcement that the Oregon Business Coalition for High Speed Rail has secured pledges from the cities of Eugene, Albany and Salem, and from Marion County, to dedicate 10-15% of their share of the Transportation Equity fund to high speed rail. These pledges amount to close to \$8M. Corvallis has passed a similar resolution without specifying the amount of the pledge.

Jim Slakey, Director of the Public Transportation and Rail Division, WSDOT, reported Washington State has already invested \$50M in infrastructure improvements in the corridor. “We can clearly see rail mobility has improved because of this investment.”

He said rail speed limits have been increased in 29 Washington communities, helping to speed up the movement of both passengers and freight.

According to Slakey, Burlington Northern was unreceptive at first when the state talked about restoring passenger service between Seattle and Vancouver, BC. But in May of last year, the service was restored. During the first four months the train was “100% sold out.”

Slakey said we “don’t have time to sit around and think about it; we have to take action.” WSDOT plans to go to their state legislature in January with “at least a \$60M investment” proposal for the state.

Bob Krebs, Manager of the Oregon High Speed Rail Project, ODOT, reported that while Oregon has been slow to get things rolling, momentum is beginning to build.

Krebs stated the Oregon part of the project now creates 25 jobs. Plans call for Oregon products to be featured on corridor trains within the next few weeks. As services are expanded, the number of jobs generated will grow.

According to Krebs, Oregon is working with Burlington Northern and investing \$5M in signal and track improvements between Portland’s Union Station and the Columbia River.

The signalization improvements in Oregon are part of a larger project that will provide positive train separation from Portland to Seattle, and on both sides of the Columbia east of Portland.

The system may serve as a prototype for the entire United States, according to Krebs (*see article on satellite technology in the Dec AORTA Bulletin*).

In the Union Station area, track improvements will allow train speeds immediately north of the station to increase from 10-20 mph to 35 mph.

Krebs said that with the work underway, and with local government pledged support for the rail project, “Oregon is back in the running-- not catching up, but [it] will be a strong partner with the State of Washington.”

Gil Mallery, highly regarded CEO of Amtrak West, stated that letters and phone calls from citizens are needed to get the authorization bill for Amtrak passed in Washington, DC.

Mallery said the authorization bill includes liability and labor reform, two very important keys to improve Amtrak’s position. Currently Amtrak must deal separately with 26 different unions. The labor reform would allow Amtrak to engage in collective bargaining with all 26 unions.

Flexibility for states to use federal gasoline tax revenues is also very important. This reform would allow each state to direct its federal transportation dollars toward the projects that make the most sense. [*Most states already can do that with their own transportation dollars, Oregon is one of only 11 states that cannot*].

Mallery also asked for help in dedicating a half penny of the federal gas tax to Amtrak for capital expenses. Amtrak believes they have the votes needed in the House and the Senate to get the measure passed. The half penny would bring about \$100-125M to Oregon, Washington and California, according to Mallery.

Mallery (& others) gave C-Trans head Les White much credit for improving support for the half penny legislation. White has helped transit industry leaders better understand they share a common interest with intercity rail. The half penny would come from 2½ cents now dedicated to transit.

Mallery stated the future vision includes 17 daily roundtrips between Portland and Seattle, and 8 trains between Portland and Eugene.

Mallery reported that on March 30 over 6,000 people greeted the special Talgo train in Eugene, 1,000 in Salem, and 700 in Albany. "The crowds were whipped up into a feverous pitch, holding up signs and chanting: 'No more lanes; high speed trains!'" The Oregon Business Coalition for High Speed Rail sponsored the trip.

Michael Ongerth, Vice President, Strategic Development, Southern Pacific Lines (SP), discussed the proposed UP-SP merger. He noted that during a previous merger attempt between SP and Santa Fe (SF), some locomotives were repainted with "SP __," others were painted "__ SF." When the merger attempt failed, company officials joked the letters stood for "shouldn't paint so fast."

Ongerth said the UP-SP merger involves the most detailed rail merger operations plan ever submitted. It is "largely an end-to-end merger," according to Ongerth. In areas where the merger would otherwise result in reduced competition (i.e., where SP and UP lines now compete for traffic), a settlement agreement will give Burlington Northern-Santa Fe (BN-SF) trackage rights.

Ongerth said the merger "provides for a significant improvement in intermodal competitiveness that will allow both SP-UP and BN-SF to attract significant additional volumes of traffic off [I-5], back to the railroad."

He stated that the railroads would become "intensely truck competitive in the 21st century."

Willamette Valley shippers will save 500 route miles between here and Chicago following the merger.

Seattle-bound container and piggy-back traffic from California and other southern points is currently off-loaded in Portland and trucked north on I-5. The merger will allow such shipments to continue to Seattle on rail. This will reduce shipping costs and truck traffic in Portland and on I-5.

Ongerth predicted that SP will be unable to survive without the merger.

PacifiCorp CEO Fred Buckman talked about efforts to bring the Olympics to the Pacific NW, perhaps in 2008. "High speed rail is an enormously important piece for making this happen," said Buckman. The Olympics, he declared, would "leave a legacy of infrastructure:" housing, transportation systems and communications systems.

Buckman said if we fail to act quickly to commit local match funding for the rail improvements, we will lose our high speed rail corridor designation. That would translate into several years of delay and lost opportunity, according to Buckman.

Buckman and PacifiCorp, along with Pacific Power, Northwest Natural Gas, OTAK and Amtrak West, established the Oregon Business Coalition for High Speed Rail.

Thank you to Bruce Agnew and the Discovery Institute, and others who helped put together a terrific conference!

Editor's Note: AORTA members attending were uniformly encouraged by the growing support for improved rail service exhibited by a wide variety of participants at this conference: local government leaders, state agencies, developers, business groups, and rail operators (both freight and Amtrak) .

Several speakers echoed the concept that HSR can eliminate the need for much more costly highway expansion. It is important to note that the conference discussed not only the Vancouver, BC - Eugene HSR corridor, but also the opportunity and need to develop complimentary transportation services connecting with the corridor and the symbiotic relationship of commuter rail with improved intercity rail.

Rail work generates protests

Tillamook- The great flood of 1996 severely damaged a number of rail lines in Oregon. Work to repair the line to Tillamook has drawn protests.

The rail line, owned by the Port of Tillamook, includes trackage along Salmonberry River. The river is considered to be the best steelhead spawning area in the state.

Protesters fail to understand that one the reasons the fish are still able to spawn in the river is that a rail line, rather than a roadway, traverses this pristine area. The rail line has been in service for over 85 years.

If Oregon is to maintain a habitat for all life forms, it will need to rely more, not less, on rail to meet transportation needs. Vehicles on roads use far more energy, and cause far more pollution than railway conveyances.

Roadways require much wider rights-of-way to carry the same volume. A road's impermeable surface, unlike the permeable surface of a railway, concentrates water run-off, aggravating erosion. Truck and automobile droppings (oil, grease, fuel, rubber) and emissions compound the problem.

The flood severely damaged the Tillamook rail line. Several news stories following the flood of 96 pointed to roads as major factors contributing to the numerous slides that wiped out homes and disrupted transportation corridors and waterways.

Please be sure your 1996 AORTA dues are paid. Check the address on the envelope that your *AORTA Bulletin* arrived in. If paid for 1996, "PD96" should appear after your name. If it is not, and you believe you have paid, please call (503) 642-4077.

Astoria rail line for sale?

The Jan 10 *Daily Astorian* reported that the Burlington Northern- Santa Fe rail line from Portland to Astoria is likely to be sold or leased within the year.

ODOT's Railroad Services Coordinator Claudia Howells indicated the line from Portland to St. Helens has significant traffic and will have no trouble finding an operator. West of St. Helens, the traffic drops to about two trains per week.

The city expects to take over the western end of the line, approximately 5 miles, in Astoria. The pending contract calls for the rail to be left in place, and allows for the line to be put back in service when demand develops.

Willamette and Pacific Railroad, a well-run shortline, has expressed interest in procuring the line. Bob Melbo, President of W&P, also expressed interest in acquiring or leasing the Cornelius Pass line.

AORTA opposes METRO's proposal to turn the Cornelius Pass line into a hiking/bicycle trail. The line is important to the Astoria branch because it provides a more direct link to the south and allows the rail line to connect with both Burlington Northern and Southern Pacific.

The Port of Astoria is working with W&P, BN, ODOT's Claudia Howells, and industries served by the rail line.

Astoria-Portland Bus Service reduced

Pierce Pacific Stages recently reduced bus service between Astoria and Portland from two round-trips per day to a single round-trip.

Pierce Pacific received heavy criticism in January because passengers were left stranded on several occasions when buses failed to operate. Pierce Pacific is the fourth operator in the last 12 months.

The company can be reached at (503) 692-4437. Schedule and price information is available through Greyhound's toll-free number: 1-800-231-2222.

Baker City boondoggle

Baker City- A \$5,000 study, paid by Oregon Aeronautics Division and Oregon Economic Development Dept, concluded scheduled airline service to Baker City would require a direct subsidy of \$64,000 during the first year. The cost was based on using a 5-passenger plane. A 7-passenger plane would require a \$100,000 subsidy.

Baker City (pop 9,585) has not had scheduled air service since Apr 1980, when Air Oregon discontinued operation.

Unlike the airline, Union Pacific Railroad provides, maintains, and polices its own property, and provides traffic control. But UPRR had to pay a \$263,914.85 "utility tax" to Baker County for 95-96.

Amtrak passengers indirectly help pay these county taxes. In other words, rail passengers would be helping to subsidize the air service (used by business travelers and people with higher incomes).

Pendleton is the closest air lines get to Baker City. Although heavily subsidized, the fare is over \$300 (round-trip). Add to that the cost of getting to and from the airports, and travel between Pendleton and Baker City, an additional 192 round-trip miles. Round-trip Portland-Baker City rail fare is only \$92.

Imagine how much improved Amtrak could be if the communities it serves donated \$6.68 per capita (\$64,000÷9,585). Instead of a 5-seat cracker jack box, Amtrak offers spacious coaches, restrooms, meal service and even sleeping accommodations!

If taxes levied on rail property and operations were used to cover the cost of the rail infrastructure, passenger rail, unlike highway vehicles and airplanes, would require no "subsidy" at all.

In Joseph, OR (pop 1,165), bids to reconstruct and expand a state-owned airport runway recently came in at \$806,115. The state Legislature budgeted \$750,000. The original cost projection, including local, state and federal funds, was \$1.5 million! Let's see: $\$1.5M \div 1,165 = \$1,300$ per capita!

Siskyou line block signals in jeopardy

Steven W. Coons, responding to the Dec 1995 *AORTA Bulletin*, states "I think Central Oregon & Pacific, the present operators of the ... [Siskyou line] in Southern Oregon, is less than interested in allowing passenger trains to use their trackage."

Coons reports that CO&P applied to ODOT, PUC and the FRA "for permission to abandon the remaining sections of Automatic Block Signal System existing from Springfield Junction, OR, to Black Butte, CA."

SP attempted to abandon the signal system in 1990, according to Coons, but was turned down by the FRA. (Thank you, Steven Coons)

Central Oregon

City rejects offer to buy railroad

Prineville- On January 15 *The Bulletin* (Bend) reported Prineville city officials rejected an offer to purchase the City of Prineville Railway.

The offer was made through a Florida broker. The undisclosed businessperson proposed to keep the rail line operating with the same employees, and possibly to expand the system.

The City Council directed staff to send a letter indicating the railroad is not for sale. The railroad has \$5.5M in assets, including \$3M in a reserve fund. Councilman Gerald Blank, member of the city's 3-member Railway Commission, stated the railroad is a part of the city's heritage.

Bend traffic increasing dramatically

Bend- According to the Deschutes County Public Works Department, highway traffic volume is rising faster than vehicle registrations, and vehicle registrations are growing at a rate faster than the population.

Part of the solution, according to county official Dick Johnson, is more sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and public transit. *The Bulletin*, Apr 15, 1996.

The Bulletin (Bend) perpetuates myth

Bend- A Feb 12 editorial in *The Bulletin* (Bend) implied investing in public transit is wasteful. Fortunately, citizens much more enlightened than the newspaper's editorial board responded.

A letter from Kenneth Chard in the Feb 19 *Bulletin* pointed out there are many who are unable to drive because of age, financial or physical limitations. "Even marginally used transit can lessen the [perceived] requirement for new roads . . . Eliminating the need for . . . three new stoplights (\$100,000 each) would exceed the anticipated annual transit subsidy."

"If level of taxpayer subsidy is *The Bulletin's* criterion" we should be eliminating all roads.

The newspaper claimed that because "few people will use transit," it has little merit. Chard replied, "Fewer people actually use the fire department than would use transit, so let's eliminate that, too."

Chard pointed out that Bend is the largest city in Oregon without a transit system.

On Feb 21, Nils Eddy wrote "One of the *Bulletin's* favorite targets is transit: '(It) doesn't pay its way, suffers losses, and loses ridership.' That's not an analysis of transit's shortcomings; it's criticism of an [auto]-based system that squashes other choices."

"The automobile's popularity is due in large part to massive subsidies lavished on it and because much of its cost is hidden from drivers.

"If motorists had to pay . . . the full cost of their travel choice (about \$1.20/mile compared to 55 cents/mile for bus), sticker shock would take on a whole new meaning.

"Cities that have worked at making transit successful have several things in common: strong comprehensive planning, good pedestrian access, public involvement and careful but aggressive management. Transit is an integral part of their long-term development strategy, attracting riders and business.

"Failure to provide a balanced transportation system results in costs that are ultimately borne by the community . . .

Willamette Valley Whistles

Mayors ask public to contact Congress

Salem Mayor Roger Gertenrich, Keizer Mayor Dennis Koho, and Eugene Mayor Ruth Bascom wrote a Guest Editorial for the Apr 10 *Statesman Journal* asking for citizens to speak up for Willamette Valley rail service.

"The Legislature and congressional delegation need to hear from citizens that passenger rail is an important transportation option to our increasingly congested I-5 corridor. Without substantial state support for intercity rail in the 1997 Legislature, Oregon will lose its position on the Vancouver BC to Eugene national high-speed rail corridor.

The Mayors remarked that upgrading the existing rail lines from Eugene to Vancouver BC would be much more cost-effective than freeway widening. They said rail would promote cleaner air, enhance tourism, result in better core area development and preserve open space.

The rail improvements will also improve "our international trade position," stated the Mayors.

"The Legislature and congressional delegation need to hear from citizens that passenger rail is an important . . . option to our increasingly congested I-5 corridor. Without substantial state support for intercity rail in the 1997 Legislature, Oregon will lose its position on the Vancouver BC to Eugene national high-speed rail corridor.

Editor's Note: It is encouraging to hear mainstream officials promoting rail as an alternative to highway expansion. A few years ago, rail supporters were considered fanatics and dreamers when we made similar statements.

area. AORTA requested consideration of a subsurface (cut & cover) alignment along 4th Ave, or alternatively, an interim, low-cost, 1st Ave alignment. Neither was given.

The 5th/6th Ave alignment will result in serious conflicts between bus and light rail on the transit mall. During construction, all bus routes will be dispersed throughout the downtown area. Even after construction, some routes will be unable to return because of capacity limitations on the mall.

AORTA research concluded that, after spending \$300M for transportation "improvements," peak hour capacity on the mall will actually be decreased!

One of the reasons behind the opposition to alternative alignments appears to be a fear that other routes would reduce auto capacity in the downtown area. Because the 5th/6th alignment will force some bus routes permanently off the mall, the selected alignment will do just that. Buses will have to compete with automobile traffic.

AORTA's 4th Ave subsurface alignment, however, would retain the current capacity of Portland's award winning transit mall, and added significant future capacity for light rail expansion. The subsurface alignment, unlike the mall alignment, would avoid increased conflict with auto traffic.

Another serious flaw in the 5th/6th Ave alignment is the lack of capacity to accommodate increased ridership and new lines (e.g., Barbur Blvd light rail). The downtown area would have to be torn up yet again in order to expand the system! (See "Crime on Portland's Transit Mall" in the Dec 95 *AORTA Bulletin*).

Using cost figures obtained from light rail line construction in Edmonton, Alberta, the short 4th Ave subway could be constructed for the same amount as that budgeted by Tri-Met for the 5th-6th Ave alignment. Using techniques employed in Edmonton, the subsurface alignment could be

constructed with much less disruption to downtown businesses.

Following is the text of AORTA's resolution concerning the S/N light rail project:

AORTA strongly supports the development of a complete Light Rail network in the Portland area. AORTA also fully supports development of rail transit service in the South/North corridor.

However, the AORTA Board of Directors finds it CANNOT in good conscience continue to support the South/North Light Rail Project as currently designed. In a variety of forums AORTA has repeatedly and strongly raised the concerns listed below and suggested other solutions. AORTA has reluctantly arrived at this decision after careful review of the facts and overall process.

AORTA is a volunteer citizens' group that has no other interest than to see the advancement of rail and transit service, but only if this can be done cost-effectively. Our members have proven expertise in the area of transportation, planning and urban design . . . With the Metro Council's final Tier I decision on December 21, 1995, AORTA believes it has exhausted all of its means for providing a constructive influence on the design of the South/North Light Rail Project.

Our concerns include the following:

1. Transportation no longer Primary Focus: *The project's focus has drifted away from its primary goal of providing cost-effective, alternative transportation, competitive with automobile travel.*

2. Political Influence over Technical Analysis and Consensus-based Decisions: *Political influence, especially from vested development interests, has been allowed to shape the project much more than solid technical analysis and consensus-based community decisions. As a result, the general public interest is not being served.*

3. Public Input Process Manipulated: While the project decision-making included numerous opportunities for public involvement, there have been too many cases where project and agency staff were observed manipulating the process in order to achieve their desired conclusions. Legitimate citizen questions, concerns and suggestions have been at best marginalized and at worst ignored.

4. Downtown Mall Alignment Insupportable: This organization cannot support a Mall surface alignment in downtown, the most critical link in the project. This alignment will do irreparable damage to bus service, severely diminish the carrying capacity of the Mall and actually decrease Tri-Met's ability to move increasing numbers of people quickly to and through downtown. Yet, this is the only alternative which will be carried forward for further analysis.

5. Clackamas Town Center Alignment Insupportable: This organization cannot support a route that operates between Milwaukie and Clackamas Town Center. This segment is unjustifiable, especially since an alternative route directly to Oregon City has more suitable land use patterns and much better ridership and cost estimates.

6. Costs Too High: We cannot support a project budget of \$66,000,000 per mile (1994 \$ and exclusive of the two new bridges) when the Banfield MAX was built for only for one-third that cost per mile (adjusting for inflation). This proposal is approaching costs that are normally associated with grade-separated heavy rail systems in large metropolitan areas. Yet our new line would have slow operating speeds and would not be able to accommodate aggressive or long-term ridership growth.

7. Ridership Too Low: Despite the higher cost, this project will only attract twice as many riders after ten years of operation as Banfield MAX did during the same startup period. This poor performance is the more troublesome, given that this project would be connected to a much more mature transit system in 2015 and should benefit from anticipated "transit-oriented" development.

8. Overriding Pursuit of Federal Funding Distorts Process: The decision-makers' pursuit of federal funding at any cost has artificially rushed the project decision-making schedule, made it solely dependent on the makeup of Oregon's congressional delegation and has contributed to the poor process.

9. Other Transit Projects in the South/North Corridor are More Cost-Effective: a combination of diesel-powered Commuter Rail on existing tracks and bus service improvements could go a long way to serve the transportation needs of this corridor, at a fraction of the cost of the current South/North Project proposal.

Editor's Note: Any technology, no matter how beneficial, can be distorted to the point it becomes detrimental. When special interests manipulate a technology to serve their own objectives, the public interest is usually not well served.

When the public interest is given top priority, all citizens, including those "special interests," benefit. Building safe, cost-effective, environmentally benign transportation strengthens the entire community. The economy requires a healthy, prosperous community in order to sustain long-term growth. It is a tragedy that greed, and fears stirred up by greed, have driven this project so far off course.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

In order to provide better and more frequent communication to our membership, the AORTA Board, at the April 27 meeting in Eugene, voted to begin publishing a "members only" newsletter. This will be *in addition* to the newsletter you have been receiving. The Dec 95 AORTA Bulletin was mailed to more than 1296 people. Additional copies are made available at major events. The new, "members only" version of the AORTA Bulletin will shorter, and will be mailed between regular editions. In order to receive the "members only" newsletter, and ensure you receive all editions of the full-size edition, please make certain your membership dues are paid.

Shortlines and Quotes

- If you are a member of the American Association of Retired Persons, Doras Briggs, Kensington, CA, would like you to convey to that organization the importance of passenger rail travel, and the need for a dedicated source of capital funding for Amtrak. Briggs, a dedicated activist for intercity rail. She is working toward the adoption at AARP's Biennial Conference in Denver of three resolutions in support of rail service. The resolutions raise a number of important issues. E.g.: air-pollution-caused health problems associated with automobiles, and the need for mobility for those unable to drive. AARP's National Activities Office address is 601 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20049.
- Amtrak awarded a contract to build high-speed passenger rail equipment to a French-Canadian group. Vice President Al Gore announced the selection of the consortium of Bombardier and GEC Alstom to build the 150 mph trains. GEC Alstom is the French manufacturer of the TGV, a train that set the world speed record for rail transportation at over 320 mph! The new train may be called the "American Flyer." The equipment will be constructed in Plattsburgh, NY and Barre, VT. The contract calls for the construction of 18 trainsets. The equipment utilizes tilt-technology to maintain passenger comfort at faster speeds on curves. Each of the six-segment articulated trainsets will seat 345 passengers.
- *Seattle*- Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority will be returning to the voters in the fall with a \$3.5B transit proposal (over ten years). The proposal includes a 10-mile light rail proposal (the original proposal called for 70 miles of light rail), commuter rail, express bus service and HOV lanes. In March 1995 Seattle-area voters defeated a \$6.7B proposal.
- A tire fire in Pennsylvania caused the closure of I-95 (maybe those old auto and truck tires are good for something after all!). And closure of the "freeway" had some significant side-effects. The R3 West Trenton rail line weekday average ridership increased by about 1800! Additional gravel parking was quickly added in Yardley and Woodbourne to accommodate the surge in riders. Cars were added to all peak hour trains, and two extra three-car trains (unscheduled) were added in the morning. Cars were also added to trains to accommodate returning passengers in the evening. The R7 Trenton line, which parallels I-95 from Eddington to Bridesburg, encountered even greater increases in ridership. As with the West Trenton line, SEPTA added cars to existing trains, and two new trains, to accommodate riders. Early statistics after the interstate was reopened indicate the rail service is seeing a 5-6% increase in ridership. Gotta match? *[Thank you to DVARP and electronic mail for this interesting story]*
- April 19: Anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing. This tragedy shook the nation to its very roots. The blast killed 168 people. Much attention has been appropriately focused on this senseless act of terrorism. Can you imagine the reaction if an event like this happened again? Perhaps 2-3 times in one year? The tragic reality is an "Oklahoma City bombing" occurs in the US about every 36 hours! And it receives *very little* attention! Every 1½ days, approximately the same number of people suffer violent deaths on US highways. Many, like the occupants of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, are innocent men, women and children. In Europe and Japan, high speed trains have been transporting millions safely for decades! *[Editor's Note: I believe there have been no passenger fatalities or serious injuries on HSR anywhere in the world!]* HSR provides faster transportation than US highways. It requires far less fuel, far less land. It is environmentally benign. A well maintained rail system is the safest form of transportation. How did we get so far off track?

Salem residents protest new lanes

At a Grant Neighborhood Association meeting on May 1, residents learned the City of Salem has dropped plans to increase the number of lanes and to eliminate on-street parking on Summer Street.

Residents protested plans to accommodate more traffic through their neighborhood, a major access route to the Capitol Mall from the north.

According to Sue Geniesse, the draft Regional Transportation Systems Plan is not all bad.

“On the positive side, the plan proposes new bike lanes throughout Salem ... It also recommends improvements to the transit system, renovation of the Amtrak Station, and expansion of other approaches to encourage commuters to use other means of travel to their jobs.”

Geniesse states increasing the number of lanes would fragment the neighborhood, increase traffic danger, decrease property values. “An increase in road capacity accommodates a further traffic increase, which will create a [perceived] need for even wider streets.”

On-street parking helps to slow traffic because the proximity of stationary vehicles adjacent to travel lanes causes drivers to ease up on the pedal. It also helps create a pedestrian friendly buffer.

Lynda and Dale Shepardson only recently purchased a home on Summer.

“We moved into the neighborhood because of its charm and proximity to work and to downtown. We wanted to be less dependent on our automobile,” stated Mr. Shepardson. “If the city were to add a lane to Summer, and eliminate the parking, it would have destroyed the neighborhood.”

Shepardson stated city transportation planners failed to consider how the project would affect the community. “I think they finally heard what we were saying. Maybe this will be a turning point. I hope the planners now understand their role is not to move motor vehicles, but to meet the need for our mobility without destroying healthy communities.”

Shepardson is a member of AORTA.

Cherriots campaign underway

Salem Area Transit District, or “Cherriots,” will be going to the voters on May 21. On the ballot will be a measure to provide funding to maintain and expand service over the next 3 years.

Cherriots operates 19 bus routes, carrying over 3 million riders annually.

The proposal would add five “Park & Ride” express bus routes, evening bus service (today the last bus leaves downtown Salem at 6:15 pm), and increase frequency of service on the more popular routes.

Persons wishing to help may send contributions to:

YES for Cherriots!
PO Box 372
Salem, Oregon 97308

⌚ AORTA TIMETABLE	
Fri-Sun May 10-12	RAIL FAIR at Union Station
Sat 8:30a-4p May 18	Regional Rail Summit, Benson HS
Sat 4pm May 18	AORTA Board Meeting (location tba)
Thur 6:30pm June 20	AORTA Portland Chapter meeting Rm 208, Union Station
Sat 9 am June 22	AORTA Board Meeting Salem or Portland
Thur 6:30pm July 18	AORTA Portland Chapter Rm 208, Union Station
Sat July 27	AORTA Board Meeting Rm 208, Union Station
<p>AORTA Board normally meets at 9 am, the 4th Saturday of each month in Room 208, Portland Union Station. The Portland Chapter normally meets at 6:30 PM the 3rd Thursday of each month, at the same location. Call (503) 642-4077 to verify meeting time/location.</p>	

Special Thanks to the following who helped contribute toward this Bulletin: Steven Coons, Orval Etter, Ken McFarling, Fred Nussbaum, Jerome Sheldon

Are your 1996 dues are paid?
Check your mailing label. It should say “PD96.”