



THE TRAINMASTER

PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER Room 1, Union Station Portland, Oregon 97209

May 1981

Chapter Phone No. 226-6747

Number 240

PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER TIMETABLE

Thur, Fri, Sat
May 14-16

National Transportation Week equipment display at Swan Island. Several locomotives along with other cars from Amtrak will be displayed. Also at the display will be the sternwheeler Portland.

Friday May 22
7:30pm

Regular monthly meeting of the Pacific Northwest Chapter. NOTE: The meeting is being held one week later due to a conflict with the return of #4449 from Oakland.

The May meeting will be held at the Union Pacific Clubhouse which is located at the south end of the Albina Yard. It is one block south of the intersection of North Interstate and Russell Street on the west side of Interstate Avenue. Take Tri-Met bus No. 2 or 3.

The program will feature steam on the Southern Pacific through color slides provided by Tom Nosera. In addition, there will be the popular auction of railroaders items.

Friday June 19
5:00pm

The annual picnic and steam at Washington Park. This popular event returns with a picnic at the pavilion at Washington Park and the Portland Zoo Railway's 4-4-0 steamer providing rides. The Chapter will provide hot dogs and refreshments while members will contribute a pot luck. This is a family event and has proven to be popular with kids. There will be a sign up sheet at the May meeting.

Friday Sept. 18
7:30pm

Regular September meeting of the Chapter. A spectacular sound and slide show of #4449's rebuilding and trip to California along with the Railfair will be presented. Look for more details in the June Trainmaster.

Sat, Sun October
3&4

Spend an electrifying weekend in Yakima. Freight operations on the Yakima Valley Transportation Company on Saturday and a chartered streetcar ride over the line on Sunday. More details as they become available.

SUMMARY OF MINUTES - REGULAR CHAPTER MEETING - APRIL 17, 1981

The meeting was called to order by President Ben Fredericks at 7:40 pm in the Union Pacific clubhouse.

Ed Immel reported on the 4449 excursions: The southbound trip is sold out. Equipment for the train has been a problem. Amtrak equipment stored in Seattle was not usable. Finally cars were obtained from the Sierra Railroad, S.P. and Amtrak. The equipment will arrive in Portland on a special train scheduled to arrive on Wed., April 22nd. Insurance, fuel and food have been arranged for. There will be a total of 14 cars on the southbound train. Space is still available on the northbound trip for which extra cars may be available from the Reno Fun Train.

December Banquet: Jim Whaley reported that the banquet will probably cost from \$12 to \$14 a person. It will be held at one of the Thunderbird Motels based on the quotations received so far. More definite information will probably be available at the May meeting.

Chapter Library: Jim Schmidt advised that he will present a list of books at the May meeting from which the members will be asked to choose titles to be added to the library.

Museum Site: President Ben Fredericks reported that no answer has been received from Portland Mayor Frank Ivancie about the Chapter's proposal. Portland Terminal RR Co. manager Al Strong has replied that the company is considering several proposals for use of the site. Ben stated that the Chapter will continue to pursue the business car track area for a museum site.

4449 Slide Show: Terry Parker proposed that a slide show of the 4449's 1981 operations be presented in June in a hired hall with the public invited. He asked members to submit slides to be used in the program. The Chapter would reserve the right to duplicate the slides but the originals will be returned. The Chapter would probably have to rent a meeting room for the program.

June meeting: Ben Fredericks asked for suggestions for a location for a June picnic meeting. Shady Dell, Glenwood and Washington Park were suggested. On a show of hands the preferences were #1 Washington Park and #2 Shady Dell.

May meeting date: President Ben Fredericks reminded the membership that the May meeting will be on the 22nd, one week later than usual due to the return trip of locomotive 4449.

The Chapter's officers presented Cora Jackson with a railroad apron in recognition of her many years of effort on behalf of the Chapter. Cora and Lee Jackson were also presented with complimentary tickets for the Klamath Falls-Portland portion of the 4449's return trip.

Respectfully submitted,

Chuck Storz, Secretary

MAY ISSUE OF THE TRAINMASTER

The May issue of The Trainmaster is shorter than usual due to the staff and all the Chapter officers being heavily involved in the northbound trip of the 4449. The June issue will return to a length of six pages or more.

EDITORIAL ON AMTRAK by Jerry Hilton

(Editor's note: The following editorial is anti-Amtrak and is presented to give one of the two sides of the Amtrak question. In an early issue we will present a pro-Amtrak editorial.)

It really looks like there is a strong likelihood that the entire Amtrak system will be scrapped outside the Northeast Corridor and Los Angeles to San Diego as a result of the new administrations's budget cuts.

Looking at it as they must, newcomers to the scene with little knowledge of the history of Amtrak's operations, we would find it hard to disagree.

Lte's face it. Amtrak has been a ten year disaster!

The bureaucrats running Amtrak have made virtually every possible mistake, and they have never come to grips with Amtrak's principle cost problem, the operating union contracts.

Let us cite a few glaring examples: Amtrak's equipment purchases have probably done more to lead Amtrak to its current position than anything else. Start with the equipment that it selected when it was formed. Instead of selecting the best available equipment it opted to buy only stainless steel exterior cars. But many of the newest and best maintained cars were carbon steel painted cars like those from the Empire Builder. The BN laughed and sold them to Mexico and New Jersey. UP laughed and sold theirs to Auto-Train and Alaska RR. Then Amtrak decided that railroad cars did not require regular winter-time maintenance on the air-conditioning systems. We all know what happened in the summer of '72.

Motive power. The locomotives that Amtrak bought from the member railroads were a diverse and motley collection to say the least. But when it came time to purchase new motive power, instead of buying SDP-40's or SDP-45's which were then a current model, and had been well proven in rugged service on the Great Northern, Southern Pacific and other lines (and why they did not buy those engines we will never understand) they opted for a new model, the SDP40F. This engine has just one little flaw. It tends to derail at speed. Something the other second generation passenger engines never did. Also, they could not be converted to HEP power easily. So now all but 37 of the large fleet of them have been traded in on F40's, at vast and unnecessary cost to Amtrak. Perhaps fatal cost...

New cars. The Amfleet cars have worked out well. They were built on an existing body design and production was relatively smooth. Their small windows do make you feel like you are riding in a prison, but for eastern corridor routes that is probably true. But for long haul use in the West, the Superliner cars were yet another disaster. First they decided on a double deck car. Only time will tell is that was a wise decision, but considering the curvature of some routes and the condition of the track, I would have kept the center of gravity as low as possible. Then, instead of getting cars based on the Santa Fe's proven design, they went to another builder and wound up getting their cars years late.

Routes and stops. Many of Amtrak's routes were politically motivated, with all that that implies. But other decisions seem to be based on nothing more than shortsightedness. Take the Amtrak Empire Builder for example. Many of the small

EDITORIAL ON AMTRAK (continued)

town stops were eliminated, supposedly to save time. Watertown, Wisc. would be a good example. Not on a freeway, the closest transportation center is Milwaukee, well over an hour's drive away. And it always contributed its share of passengers to the many Milwaukee Road trains that stopped there. Yet the Builder's route was extended to Grand Forks, ND and to Yakima, WA, so that the few minutes that were saved by eliminating traditional stops on the route were lost many times over by the detours. And why, when the Milwaukee Road dropped its speed limit to 40 mph a couple of years ago didn't Amtrak re-route over the CB&Q route, the traditional route of the Empire Builder, instead of suffering the loss of the bulk of its patronage.

And so we come to the crossroads, and possibly the end, of the Empire Builder and all Amtrak service in our area and most of the nation.

As I see it the only chance to save Amtrak is if Congress takes the bull by the horns and legislates some drastically needed changes.

First and foremost, they must legislate some changes in the work rules. It is ridiculous that a crew should get a days pay for travelling 90 miles in as many minutes. According to the newspaper accounts, the Chicago to Milwaukee service now recovers 60% of its costs. If frequency was increased, which many agree would increase ridership, a crew could easily make two round trips in an 8 hour day, and should get 8 hours pay for that, not 4 days pay. Then we are sure that cost recovery would be much higher. (It would help to replace the Turbos with more fuel efficient trains. We understand they burn up to 3 times the fuel of a locomotive hauled Amfleet train).

Will Congress legislate work rule changes? We doubt it. The unions are very powerful, and the operating unions have in the past indicated a preference for no jobs rather than accept crew district changes.

Next, Congress should legislate a wholesale change in the management of Amtrak, perhaps hiring a consulting firm that would be paid on the basis of the greater Amtrak's increased efficiency and recovery of costs, the higher they would be paid. Of course the consulting or management firm would have to have wide powers to hire and fire, change routes and stops, and fares, powers that we have rarely seen politicians delegate. They would have to have congressional power to deal with railroads that are reluctant to run trains on time.

Will these things happen? Will Amtrak be saved? The odds against are high but the stakes are high too.

(Reprinted from the Wisconsin Chapter's Sparks and Cinders)

PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER

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(An Oregon Non-Profit Corporation)

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PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the National Railway Historical Society and the Pacific Northwest Chapter is open to all persons 16 years of age and over who are interested in railroads and railroad history. Dues for the Pacific Northwest Chapter are \$15.00 a year. Membership includes six issues of the NRHS Bulletin (national publication) and nine issues of the Pacific Northwest Chapter's publication The Trainmaster. The Pacific Northwest Chapter meets on the third Friday of the month except during July, August and December. Meeting location and time are given in the monthly issues of The Trainmaster. Write to the Pacific Northwest Chapter at the address given on this page for an application or for more detailed information.

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