

**COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES
KITITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON
STUDY SESSION**

TUESDAY

1:30 P.M.

January 28, 2003

Those in attendance: Commissioners Max Golladay, Perry Huston, and Bruce Coe

Others: Shannon Carlson, Deputy Clerk of the Board; Nick Henderson, Louis Musso III, Mike Ceka and 2 members of the public.

STUDY SESSION PASSENGER/COMMUTER RAIL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSIONERS

At 1:30 P.M. a study session was held to discuss the proposal of a passenger rail district.

LOUIS MUSSO III, explained that he has been working on a developing a passenger rail district since 2001. To create a rail district there is no impact on surrounding property assessments. The preparation work has been completed to be able to put the proposal on the ballot. According to Federal regulations Amtrak would have first pick if they would want to run the commuter rail. If they didn't want to take the contract then it would go to Burlington Northern Santa Fe and if by chance they did not want the contract then it would go to a short line operator. Once the Passenger Rail District is established there is Federal funds that can be obtained to fund the construction of a depot and to purchase the equipment. The rail district can either own or lease a train. The average cost of a commuter train is \$3,000,000.00. The money that is needed to complete a volpy study could come from federal dollars so that way there is no local money going into this project. The feasibility study would establish how many people would use the train, how many trips would the train need to make in a day and week, and how much the price should be for tickets. In comparing the commuter train (Down Easter) that runs between Maine and Boston, an unlimited monthly trip ticket is \$336, and the distance between the two is 107 miles so it is very comparable to Ellensburg and Auburn. When traveling from Ellensburg to Auburn once someone arrives in Auburn they are 20 minutes from the Sounder to go to Seattle and 15 minutes from Union Station to go to Tacoma. On a "good day" (traffic) the commuter would not be faster but on a "bad day" (traffic) the commuter would be faster. In the long run when adding up expenses for gas, and wear and tear on a vehicle the commuter may also be cheaper.

Sales point is that it is convenient. There is not that wonder of what the pass will be like or traffic. It is also safer and less stressful. Mr. Musso III estimated about two - three thousand travel to the Westside for employment. It costs \$50,000 to conduct a volpy study that the passenger rail district could fund. The way the law is written is the depot can be funded 90% by federal dollars. The rest could be made up by a bond, state funds, or levy. Mr. Musso III would like to have a public hearing to determine if the possibility of creating a passenger rail district could go on the ballot for a vote.

With Trendwest opening there is a big interest bringing in a commuter train to bring in more tourists and also for college students commuting to the Westside for the weekends and holidays. It would be better for them since there has been an increase of vehicle accidents involving college students.

COMMISSIONER GOLLADAY asked who owns the depot and the train cars? Who sets the standards for what the depot has to be? Mr. Musso III explained that the estimate for both the Cle Elum Depot construction and Ellensburg Depot renovation would be between 8-10 million dollars. The land is leased through Burlington Northern Santa Fe. Currently the Ellensburg Depot land lease is for 20 years. The City of Ellensburg is in the process of turning the depot over to Historic Ellensburg who would then turn it over to the Passenger Rail District. Passenger Rail District would own the train and the depots and the land would be leased from BNSF.

MIKE CEKA, from the City of Cle Elum expressed that there is an interest in seeing a commuter rail service created. Amtrak doesn't come through Cle Elum/Ellensburg now because there is not a passenger rail district.

COMMISSIONER HUSTON suggested that instead of placing the Passenger Rail District on the ballot for May to wait until there is more than just one issue to vote on to get a better turnout from citizens.

COMMISSIONER GOLLADAY suggested they have another study session with the City of Ellensburg, City of Cle Elum, and a representative from Amtrak and BNSF to see where the level of support is at, because without the city's support the rail district can't happen.

MR. MUSSO III agreed that waiting until November to place the Rail District on the ballot was a good idea and they would have a chance to promote the idea longer.

COMMISSIONER GOLLADAY suggested having another study session within 30 days with the city representatives and rail representatives.

At 2:45 P.M., the Study Session was adjourned.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD


Shannon L. Carlson

KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON


Max A. Golladay, Chair