

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

**TUESDAY**

**1:30 P.M.**

**MARCH 29, 2005**

Those in attendance: Commissioners Perry Huston, David Bowen, and Alan Crankovich

Others: Shannon Carlson, Deputy Clerk of the Board; Louis Musso III, Beth Marker and Mary Pittis.

**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.

With Suncadia 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. He explained that according to statute when a rail district is created the Board of County Commissioners are the Commissioners of the rail district.

Beth Marker explained that she thought having the passenger rail service was an economic benefit to Kittitas County especially with the increased growth occurring in the Upper County and gas prices increasing. She thinks people would use the passenger rail to commute to the west of the cascades. She said that other entities are looking at passenger rail services. Mary Pittis also spoke strongly in favor of a passenger rail and the positive aspects that it would bring to Kittitas County.

Mr. Musso answered some questions that the Commissioners asked with regards to the service, the actual rail cars and bonds. Chairman Huston suggested to Mr. Musso that he figure out the auditing and administration. September 7<sup>th</sup> is the last day for a Resolution to be past placing the issue on the ballot. He also suggested that Mr. Musso send a letter to the Board asking to set a public hearing to pursue the placing the creation of a rail district on the ballot.

At 2:30 P.M., the Study Session was adjourned.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD

KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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Shannon L. Carlson

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Perry D. Huston, Chair