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In Memoriam: Ken Uznanski

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Former WSDOT Rail Office Manager Ken Uznanski passed away unexpectedly on July 7 in Olympia. Ken was considered a national leader in the development of intercity passenger rail programs and was instrumental in launching Amtrak Cascades passenger service in the Pacific Northwest.

After graduating from the University of Notre Dame and working for the North Dakota DOT, Ken joined WSDOT in 1992. In 1994, the Washington State Legislature directed WSDOT to work with Amtrak, the Burlington Northern Railroad and others to establish a new passenger rail service between Seattle and Portland, and in 1995, a new service between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C. Ken's leadership was instrumental in launching these services, helping WSDOT win the AASHTO President's Award in Rail Transportation in 1995 and Ken receiving the award personally in 1996.

Other notable achievements include the expansion of WSDOT's Grain Train Program; the establishment of the department's short line grant and loan programs; additional daily passenger trains between Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver, B.C.; and the purchase of three specialized trainsets from Spanish manufacturer Talgo. Ken also led WSDOT's efforts to fund upgrades to train stations across the state, developed a streamlined contracting process with BNSF Railway, and the publication of rail plans that ultimately led to WSDOT receiving nearly \$800 million in federal grants to continue the expansion of Amtrak Cascades service.

Ken left WSDOT in 2009 and joined Amtrak as the Principal Officer for Corporate Policy and Development.

Outside of work, Ken was very involved in activities with his two children including volunteering for school programs at St. Michael's Catholic School in Olympia; coaching youth baseball; and serving on the Board of Directors and as League Treasurer for the Capital Little League in Olympia.

A memorial service for Ken will be held at St. Michael's Catholic Parish at noon July 14. St. Michael's is located at 1208 11th Avenue SE in Olympia.

