

9 Jan 2022 "All the Passes are closed, Jay" Here is an idea!

Dear Jay,

There really is no idea that's new under the sun. In 1980 when I was planning to run for governor in the state of Washington, I asked Slim Rasmussen if there was anything that he thought a guy from Seattle could do that might appeal to the people from Eastern Washington. As you may remember Slim Rasmussen was a railroad engineer who had served in the state Senate from Tacoma for a number of years. He was very plainspoken and very down to earth.

Slim looked at me and said "Jim, if you want to do something for Eastern Washington finish boring the tunnel under the cascade mountains from North bend to Ellensburg." He then told me that there had been a plan put together in the highway department in the 30s to drill a tunnel under the Cascades so that both railroad and automobile traffic could continue across the state during the wintertime.

1980 was the year I ran against John Spellman and Ron Reagan and got my comeuppance in November. No one really thought I was serious about a tunnel under the mountains, but the idea is a very sound one in the present day of climate change. The situation that occurs today is that the People that this weather is going to be a one off. Soon getting commerce over the mountains is going to be a real problem. I don't know how many times when I was in the legislature the North Cascades Highway was closed. The same has happened on I- 90 and slides on the railroad tracks have been problems over and repeatedly for passenger trains and freight trains going north from Seattle and then over the Stevens Pass. If you want to read some interesting history look up J.J. Hill's struggle to get the railroad over Stevens Pass

I suspect with a little research into the archives of the Department of Transportation in the state of Washington you can find the plans that were done many years ago. In Seattle and in Washington state we have often waited too long to put in the transportation improvements that would make sense if one looked at the economy of the state of Washington. Whether you're shipping wine or wheat or potatoes or any other agricultural product they ultimately must pass over the mountains to get to the ports of Tacoma or Seattle. If you were seen as a forward-looking governor by making such a proposal it would boost both your credentials as a good governor and as someone thinking about the future of the country. Our combined ports are not called Chicago West for no reason.

Railroads are a much more efficient way to transport goods across the country as well as moving travelers from place to place. This country is in the thrall of the airline industry and the trucking industry and has been since the discovery of oil. Now the world is faced with the problem of how to move goods and people without making the carbon footprint worse and worse. Everywhere you look people are trying to find ways to avoid using oil to move the products of our economy around. A sea level train from downtown Seattle or Tacoma direct to Spokane would be much more efficient than going out to Sea Tac and going through all the rigamarole air transportation to get on a plane and fly less than 300

miles to Spokane. The carbon used to make that trip to Spokane would be considerably less than it is in the present circumstance. Especially if the train were electrified as they are in Europe. The same is true for travel to Portland or Vancouver BC.

I am absolutely certain it's possible because I am now living in a country where they have high speed rail. France and other parts of Europe have decided long ago that rail traffic was the way to move people efficiently across Europe. They recently installed a high-speed rail train from Paris to Bordeaux in the southwest of France where I have a home. It takes 3 hours rather than six hours on the highway. Our refusal to learn from the world how to move forward more quickly it's going to be our downfall in the long run. . Running trains up over Stevens Pass in the future is going to be the costliest way to move freight from the ports of Seattle and Tacoma to Chicago and points east.

The country is now struggling with a snarl in transportation because of COVID-19. If one looks to the future one can see that the northwest passage is opening up. Climate change is melting the ice in the Arctic. Soon much of the commerce from China going to the East Coast will bypass Seattle and Tacoma and Los Angeles in every instance possible. You could convene a meeting of railroad and trucking people to hear people's ideas. The wisdom of Ike about transportation is going to come back whether it is R's or D's who run the country if we are going to maintain our present level of leadership in the world. You might invite Amazon to the meeting.

I watch you every day and think what a tough job you have keeping ahead of the curve.

Your friend Jim