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BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

BNSF RAILWAY COMPANY,)	DOCKET TR140382 and
)	DOCKET TR140383
Petitioner,)	
vs.)	
)	PREFILED TESTIMONY OF
YAKIMA COUNTY,)	JOHN HOOD
)	
Respondent.)	
_____)		

1: Please state your full name and job title.

My name is John E. Hood. I am a Senior Engineering Technician with the Yakima County Department of Public Services.

2: Can you provide a short summary of your testimony?

Yes. It is my opinion that closing the Barnhart Road and North Stevens Road crossings will increase the risk of vehicle collisions and injuries or even deaths in Yakima County. This opinion is based on my decades of experience operating trains in Yakima County, including over these crossings.

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3: Please describe your background and qualifications.

I am a certificated locomotive engineer. I spent about 20 years operating trains and locomotives in the Yakima Valley before coming to work for Yakima County.

I was hired by the Burlington Northern Railroad as a locomotive engineer in 1980. I operated trains between Pasco, Yakima and Cle Elum. In 1985, I became an employee of Washington Central Railroad (WCR) when WCR purchased the line from the Burlington Northern Railroad. From 1985 to 1996, I worked as an assistant operations manager for WCR. My job duties included managing overall operations of trains in the territory, which included Yakima and adjacent counties. At the time I was also a certified locomotive engineer instructor. In 1996, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad acquired WCR and I became an employee of the Burlington Northern Acquisition Company (BNAC). My job duties at BNAC stayed essentially the same. My title at the time was assistant trainmaster. I worked for BNAC until 1997.

I took a three-year break from the railroad business in 1997. In 2000, I was hired as the general manager of the Toppenish Simcoe and Western Railroad. This was a short line railroad operating in Yakima County between Toppenish and White Swan. In addition to the being the general manager, I was also the locomotive engineer. I served in this capacity until 2005, when Yakima County did not renew its contract with the Toppenish, Simcoe and Western Railroad, and the company was dissolved.

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4. While employed with BNR, WCR or BNAC, did you operate trains in the vicinity of the Barnhart Road and North Stevens Road Crossings in Yakima County?

Yes. I operated trains and locomotives over these crossings countless times.

5: Are you familiar with the Barnhart Road and North Stevens Road crossings?

Yes. I am familiar with these crossings. I have operated trains and locomotives over these crossings many times. I have also performed in-person inspections of the crossings.

6: Please describe these crossing to the best of your recollection.

The Barnhart Road and North Stevens Road crossing are rural farm crossings. They are located between Toppenish and Granger, along a straight section of track. There is excellent visibility at both crossings. No buildings, trees or other structures obscure visibility at either crossing. Both crossings have crossbuck warning signs and stop signs to warn the public of the crossing.

7: Were you involved in any collisions with vehicles while operating trains between Pasco and Yakima between 1980 and 1995?

No. I was not.

8: Were you involved in any collisions with vehicles while operating trains between Toppenish and White Swan between 2000 and 2005?

Yes. I was in one collision.

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9: Please describe the collision.

The collision occurred near the intersection of US 97 and Branch Road, where the tracks crossed the highway. US 97 is a busy highway in a relatively developed section of Yakima County north of Toppenish. A semi-truck loaded with lumber stopped on US 97 at the crossing, and then proceeded to pull out directly in front of the train. Because it was well known that traffic often failed to stop on US 97, I had slowed the train way down. The train collided with the middle of the trailer at less than 4 mph. The trailer was overturned, but nobody was injured.

This collision illustrates the opinion I have formed based on my experience operating trains that the most dangerous crossings in Yakima County are those in urban areas, often involving busy roadways like US 97.

10: Have you ever been involved with a collision involving farm equipment?

No.

11: Based on your experience operating trains in Yakima County, are there certain types of crossings that pose a greater risk of collision than others?

Yes. Based on my experience operating trains and locomotives in Yakima County, the risk of collision is highest at crossings in urban areas, particularly the downtown areas of the numerous municipalities crossed by the railroad line. I have had numerous close calls in urban areas and am aware of other close calls and actual collisions that have occurred in these areas.

In my experience, rural farm crossings such as Barnhart Road and North Stevens Road are not and have never been a problem.

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12: In your opinion, should the crossings at North Stevens Road and Barnhart Road be closed?

No.

13: Can you explain the reasoning behind your opinion?

Both crossings are used by local farmers and the general public. In my experience, these crossings are not a significant safety concern. I am not convinced that diverting farm equipment to busier crossings at Satus Longhouse Road, Indian Church Road, Meyers Road or South Track Road will result in a net safety improvement. These crossings have their own unique safety issues and are not necessarily any safer than Barnhart Road or North Stevens Road. I don't see how shifting traffic from one crossing to another will increase public safety.

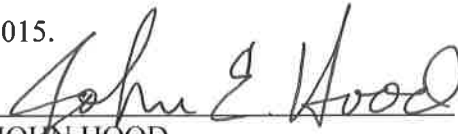
To the contrary, I agree with my colleagues that closing the Barnhart Road and North Stevens Road crossings will probably result in a net **decrease** in public safety. This is because farm equipment that would have used Barnhart Road and North Stevens Road will now have to travel to adjacent crossings by way of SR 22 and South Track Road. Vehicles on both roadways travel at high rates of speed and the risk of vehicles colliding with large, slow-moving farm equipment is real. Increasing the volume of farm equipment on these roads increases the danger to the travelling public of Yakima County. For this reason, I think that closing these crossings is more dangerous than keeping them open.

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DECLARATION

I, JOHN HOOD, declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that the foregoing PREFILED TESTIMONY OF JOHN HOOD is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

DATED THIS 10th day of February, 2015.



JOHN HOOD

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DATED THIS 12th day of February, 2015.

MENKE JACKSON BEYER, LLP


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1
2
3 CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

4 I am over the age of 18; and not a party to this action. I am the assistant to an
5 attorney with Menke Jackson Beyer, LLP, whose address is 807 North 39th Avenue,
6 Yakima, Washington, 98902.

7 I hereby certify that the original and three copies of the foregoing have been sent
8 by Overnight Delivery to Mr. Steven King, Executive Director and Secretary,
9 Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission, 1300 South Evergreen Park
10 Drive, S.W., Olympia, Washington, 98504; and a .pdf version electronically filed
11 (www.utc.wa.gov/efiling) and emailed (records@utc.wa.gov). I also certify that true and
12 complete copies have been sent via electronic mail to the following interested parties:

13 Mr. Tom Montgomery
14 Mr. Bradley Scarp
15 Attorneys at Law
16 Montgomery Scarp, PLLC
17 1218 Third Avenue, Suite 2500
18 Seattle WA 98101

19 Mr. Ethan Jones
20 Associate Attorney
21 Confederated Tribes & Bands of the Yakama Nation
22 P.O. Box 151
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25 Mr. R. Joseph Sexton
26 Attorney at Law
27 Galanda Broadman, PLLC
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29 P.O. Box 15146
30 Seattle WA 98115

Rayne Pearson
Administrative Law Judge
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
1300 South Evergreen Park Drive SW
Olympia, WA 98504

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that
the foregoing information is true and correct.

DATED THIS 12th day of February, 2015.


KATHY S. LYCZEWSKI

PREFILED TESTIMONY OF JOHN HOOD - 8

Exhibit No. _____ (JH-1T)

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