

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON STATE
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Application of)	DOCKET NO. TR-040293
)	
THE CITY OF MARYSVILLE,)	ORDER NO. 01
WASHINGTON)	
)	
Petitioner,)	
)	ORDER GRANTING REQUEST FOR
Requesting Disbursement from the)	DISBURSEMENT FROM THE GRADE
Grade Crossing Protective Fund)	CROSSING PROTECTIVE FUND
.....)	

BACKGROUND

- 1 On December 12, 2003, the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) sent a “Notice of Opportunity to Apply for Grant Monies from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund” to various interested parties from the public and private sectors that were either directly eligible to apply for Grade Crossing Protective Fund (GCPF) grants, or represented local agencies that were eligible. The notice directed interested parties to submit applications for funding consideration to the Commission by February 17, 2004.
- 2 On February 17, 2004, the city of Marysville, Washington filed an application with the Commission, requesting disbursement from the GCPF to pay for a project related to improving safety at five public grade crossings. The crossings are located at the intersection of the tracks Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF) and 4th Avenue, 80th Street, 88th Street, 116th Street, and 136th Street, in Marysville, Washington.
- 3 In the vicinity of the crossings, the BNSF rail line runs parallel to State Avenue. The five railroad-highway grade crossings for which GCPF disbursement is sought all involve roadways intersecting with State Avenue. Each of the five roadways cross the BNSF tracks within 100 feet of its intersection with State Avenue. All of the roadway intersections are controlled by highway traffic signals and all of the railroad-highway grade crossings are equipped with

flashing light signals and gates. Because of the close proximity of the roadway intersections and the railroad crossings, traffic queues resulting from red signals at the roadway intersections frequently extend back over the BNSF tracks, thereby exposing motorists to the possibility of being trapped on the tracks when a train is approaching. Because of this possibility, each of the highway traffic signals is interconnected to the corresponding railroad warning signals.

- 4 Interconnection of the signals allows the highway traffic signals to clear vehicle queues prior to the arrival of a train at a crossing. When a train approaches the crossings, the highway traffic signals cycle to green to clear any vehicles between the tracks and the roadway intersection while the railroad warning signals and gates prevent any more vehicles from entering the crossing area.
- 5 The BNSF main line through Marysville averages 10 freight trains and 4 passenger trains per day, traveling at 50 mph and 79 mph respectively.
- 6 Marysville proposes to install battery back-up systems for the highway traffic signals that are interconnected to the railroad warning signals are each of the five crossings. The proposal is essentially the establishment of a back-up power source that would continue to clear vehicle queues from the BNSF tracks in the event of a power outage in the vicinity. There is currently no back-up power available to the highway traffic signals. If a power outage occurred, there would be no mechanism to clear vehicle queues from the tracks.
- 7 The railroad warning signals are equipped with battery back-up systems, and would continue to operate in the event of a power outage.
- 8 The application includes supporting information on recent incidents of power outages that affected the five roadway intersections. From December 27, 2002, to October 28, 2003, there was a combined total of about 11 hours of power outage at the five intersections. Most of the power outages in the area are attributed to severe weather conditions.

- 9 The cost of installing battery back-up systems at each location ranges from \$8,200 to \$13,600. The average cost of each improvement is \$10,000.
- 10 Because of the established need for interconnection between the highway traffic signals and railroad warning signals at each of the five locations, the potential for power outages in the vicinity of the crossings, and the potential consequences to the public at the crossings in the event of a power outage, Commission Staff recommended disbursing funds from the GCPF for the project; however, due to limited amount of GCPF funds available for disbursement, Commission Staff recommended limiting disbursement to \$10,000 to apply towards one crossing of the city's choosing. There are currently funds available for this disbursement. Commission Staff verified that the applicant would pay for the upgrades at the remaining locations.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 11 (1) The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission is an agency of the State of Washington having authority to approve and administer disbursements from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund. *Chapter 81.53.271 RCW and 81.53.281 RCW.*
- 12 (2) The project for which disbursement from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund is sought is eligible for funding consideration under the Grade Crossing Protective Fund Policy and Interpretive Statement in Docket No. TR-031384, and complies with the requirements of RCW 81.53.271 and RCW 81.53.281.
- 13 (3) Commission Staff investigated the request based on the review criteria specified in the Grade Crossing Protective Fund Policy and Interpretive Statement in Docket No. TR-031384, and recommended that it be granted, subject to specified conditions.

- 14 (4) This matter was brought before the Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting on June 9, 2004.
- 15 (5) After examination of the application filed by the city of Marysville on February 17, 2004, and giving consideration to all relevant matters and for good cause shown, the Commission grants the request for disbursement of funds.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 16 The request of the city of Marysville seeking disbursement from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund for the installation of a battery back-up system at a highway traffic signal interconnected with railroad warning signals at a public railroad-highway grade crossing is granted, subject to the following conditions:
- (1) Expenditure from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund must not exceed \$10,000.
 - (2) The city of Marysville must use the GCPF disbursement towards installation of a battery back-up system at one of the five roadway intersections specified in the application.
 - (3) Payment will be made upon presentation of claim for reimbursement for materials, and verification by Commission Staff that the work has been satisfactorily completed.
 - (4) The project must be completed, and the associated request for reimbursement from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund must be on file with the Commission no later than May 31, 2005.

The Commissioners, having determined this Order to be consistent with the public interest, direct the Secretary to enter this Order.

DATED at Olympia, Washington, and effective this 9th day of June, 2004.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

CAROLE J. WASHBURN, Secretary