

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON  
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

BNSF RAILWAY CO.,	)	DOCKET TR-143222
	)	
Petitioner,	)	ORDER 01
	)	
	)	ORDER GRANTING PETITION TO
COWLITZ COUNTY and PORT OF	)	RECONSTRUCT A PUBLIC
KALAMA,	)	HIGHWAY-RAIL GRADE CROSSING
	)	AT TOTEFF ROAD IN COWLITZ
Respondent.	)	COUNTY
	)	
	)	USDOT: 092446J
.....	)	

**BACKGROUND**

- 1 On August 29, 2014, BNSF Railway Co., (BNSF or Petitioner) filed a petition with the Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) seeking approval to reconstruct a railroad-highway grade crossing at Toteff Road in Cowlitz county. BNSF proposes to add two additional tracks, reconfigure the roadway, upgrade the warning devices, install median barriers, and upgrade the train detection.
- 2 Cowlitz County (County) and the Port of Kalama (Port) consented to entry of an Order by the Commission without further notice or hearing. The County is the road authority for Toteff Road and the Port is the road authority for a portion of Hendrickson Drive which intersects with Toteff Road in a “T” configuration. Hendrickson Drive is impacted by the reconstruction of the crossing.
- 3 Toteff Road is a two-lane minor collector street with one lane in each direction. The County estimates average daily vehicle traffic over the crossing at 581 vehicles. Toteff Road is a designated truck route with up to 55% commercial motor vehicles traveling over the crossing. Toteff Road is not a school bus route. The posted legal speed limit is 35 miles per hour.
- 4 BNSF currently maintains two mainline and three spur tracks at this location. Up to 45 freight trains per day traveling up to 60 miles per hour operate over the mainline tracks. Up to two freight trains per month operate on the spur tracks at up to ten miles per hour. Currently, ten passenger trains traveling up to 79 miles per hour operate over the mainline tracks. Once the reconfiguration of the crossing is complete, Amtrak will add two additional round trips.

- 5 Railroad warning devices at the mainline tracks at the Toteff Road crossing consist of crossbucks, cantilever mounted lights and gates, multiple track signs, and advance warning signs. The spur tracks are protected by stop signs and crossbucks.
- 6 The proposed modifications to the Toteff Road crossing are a partnership among BNSF, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to improve Amtrak Cascades intercity passenger service. BNSF proposes to construct an additional mainline track which will be located east of the existing mainline track. This new track will allow for unimpeded movement of Amtrak Cascades through the crossing. An additional siding track will also be constructed on the west side of the existing mainline tracks which will be used to facilitate incoming and outbound slower moving grain trains without impeding the flow of rail traffic on the mainlines.
- 7 In addition to improving passenger service, the proposed modifications will improve the grade and crossing surfaces; and the turning radius for large trucks; increase the sight distance for vehicles traveling on Hendrickson Road toward the crossing; signalize all approaches to the crossing including the spur tracks; and install constant warning train detection which will provide motorists with the same warning times even when trains are traveling at varying speeds over the crossing.
- 8 The proposed crossing configuration is the result of numerous meetings of project stakeholders which included value engineering and hazard analysis exercises. Through this extensive analysis process, grade separation of the crossing was discussed and ultimately ruled out. The Petitioner and Respondents agree that the results of these analyses support modification of the existing at-grade crossing. Commission staff supports the proposed design, as well.
- 9 The footprint of the crossing will be adjusted to accommodate the two additional tracks and a signalized gated “couplet” roadway design is proposed. The couplet will remove sight distance restrictions created by fencing on private property; improve turning radius for large trucks; and facilitate access to the Port of Kalama Industrial Park. All approaches to the crossing will be protected by active warning devices and a “No Left Turn” blank out sign will be installed and interconnected with the railroad signals on Toteff Road. The interconnected blank out sign will restrict turning movements during all train activity. BNSF also proposes to install median barriers to discourage drivers from driving around downed gates.

10 The proposed upgrades are in the interest of improving Amtrak Cascades service and safety and convenience for roadway users.

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 11 (1) The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission is an agency of the state of Washington having jurisdiction over public railroad-highway grade crossings within the state of Washington. *Chapter 81.53 RCW.*
- 12 (2) The proposed reconstruction of a crossing involving a public railroad-highway grade crossing, as defined in RCW 81.53.010.
- 13 (3) RCW 81.53.261 and WAC 480-62-150 require that the Commission grant approval prior to reconstructing a public railroad-highway grade crossing within the state of Washington.
- 14 (4) Commission staff investigated the petition and recommends that it be granted. All traffic control devices must comply with all applicable standards specified in the U.S. Department of Transportation *2009 Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.*
- 15 (5) After examination of the petition filed by BNSF Railway Co., on August 29, 2014, and giving consideration to all relevant matters and for good cause shown, the Commission grants the petition.

### ORDER

#### THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 16 The petition of BNSF Railway Co., to reconstruct a railroad-highway grade crossing at Toteff Road and the Respondents' tracks in Cowlitz county is granted, as follows:
- (1) The modifications must conform to those described in the petition.
  - (2) Traffic control devices must comply with all applicable standards specified in the U.S. Department of Transportation *2009 Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.*
  - (3) Petitioner must notify Commission Staff within 30 days upon completion of this modification project.

The Secretary of the Commission has delegated authority over this matter pursuant to Order 03 in Docket A-090485. The Secretary finds this Order to be consistent with the public interest.

DATED at Olympia, Washington, and effective October 27, 2014.

**WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

**STEVEN V. KING, Executive Director and Secretary**

**NOTICE:** This is an order delegated to the Secretary for decision. In addition to serving you a copy of the decision, the Commission will post on its Internet Web site for at least fourteen (14) days a listing of all matters delegated to the Secretary for decision. You may seek Commission review of this decision. You must file a request for Commission review of this order no later than fourteen (14) days after the date the decision is posted on the Commission's Web site. The Commission will schedule your request for review for consideration at a regularly scheduled open meeting. The Commission will notify you of the time and place of the open meeting at which the Commission will review the order.

The Commission will grant a late-filed request for review only on a showing of good cause, including a satisfactory explanation of why the person did not timely file the request. A form for late-filed requests is available on the Commission's Web site.

This notice and review process is pursuant to the provisions of RCW 80.01.030 and WAC 480-07-904(2) and (3).