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January 3, 2013

Mr. David Danner, Executive Director
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
1300 S. Evergreen Park Dr. SW
PO Box 47250
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

RE: Piert Road/Cochran Road Railroad Crossing
TR-112127, TR-112128, TR-100572

Dear Mr. Danner:

I am writing to request a delay in the closure of the Cochran Road railroad crossing in eastern Benton County that was approved in WUTC Order TR-112128. The closure was originally requested by Benton County on the basis that the Cochran Road crossing would be rendered unnecessary by the construction of an extension to Piert Road. Once completed, Piert Road would provide an alternate access route to the same area served by the Cochran Road crossing. Unfortunately, the extension of Piert Road remains under construction and so the immediate closure of the Cochran Road crossing would bar landowners from accessing their property.

The Piert Road project was anticipated to be completed by December 31, 2012 which would provide access to the properties east of the railroad. The crossing is being used by the Army Corp of Engineers to access their pump station on the Columbia River and a farmer to access his fields. Once Piert Road is completed both will have access off Piert Road and the need for the Cochran Road crossing will cease to exist.

The need for the new extension to Piert Road to be completed before Cochran Road could be closed was set forth expressly in a December 19, 2011 e-mail from former Benton County Engineer Malcolm Bowie to Deputy Assistant Director, Transportation Safety, Kathy Hunter. The importance of the new road was also referenced in section 3 of the WUTC's Order (noting that "[t]he County states that a nearby roadway is being constructed and the Cochran Road access is no longer needed").

There have been several unanticipated delays on this project. The first problem was a right of way delay. The project was let in May 2012, before all of the right of way was secured. In August, we still hadn't resolved the right of way issue and opted to move forward with the project as we continued to work on the right of way. This resulted in a 2½ month delay.

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At the preconstruction conference, we were informed by Williams Northwest Pipeline that there were underground gas line crossings at the beginning of the project that did not meet depth requirements. Our consulting engineer was apparently unaware of this resulting in another short delay.

On the North end of the project, we found Cascade Natural Gas gas lines that we were unaware of that had to be relocated. Gas lines have to be relocated by the gas company. We were required to work with their time schedule which once again created a delay.

The next delay was the installation of a large pipe in the Corp drainage ditch. There was so much seepage water entering the ditch that we could not draw the ditch down far enough to be able to install the culvert. The seepage water was irrigation water and we needed to wait until the irrigation company closed the canal for the winter. With the canal empty, seepage water would slow and we would then be able to place the culvert in the ditch. This has been completed.


We are now in a weather delay. With the ground frozen, we cannot work on subgrade. Once the ground thaws, we will be able to finish subgrade, place top course and then when the weather warms up, pave the road.

We are estimating completion of the road to be April 30, 2013.

We are asking that the closing date in TR-112128 be extended to April 30, 2013. Should the road be completed prior to that date, WUTC will be notified so the closure of Cochran Road crossing can take place.

If you have any questions, please contact this office.

Sincerely,



Steven W. Becken
Public Works Manager

C: Bryan Thorp, Project Engineer
Larry Moser, Financial Administrator
Reid Hay, Deputy Prosecuting Attorney