

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Petition of	DOCKET TR-250565
TOWN OF HARRAH,	ORDER 01
Petitioner,	
COLUMBIA RAIL,	GRANTING PETITION TO MODIFY A RAILROAD-HIGHWAY GRADE CROSSING AT BRANCH ROAD, HARRAH
Respondent.	
	USDOT: 099226M

BACKGROUND

- 1 On July 23, 2025, the Town of Harrah (Town or Petitioner) filed with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) a petition (Petition) seeking approval to modify a public railroad-highway grade crossing identified as USDOT 099226M, located at the intersection of Branch Road and a spur track off of Columbia Rail’s Yakima branch line at milepost 9.3 in Harrah, Yakima County.
- 2 Respondent Columbia Rail consented to entry of an Order by the Commission without further notice or hearing.
- 3 Branch Road is a two-lane rural local roadway with a posted vehicle speed limit of 30 miles per hour. Average annual daily traffic through the crossing is 1,200 vehicles. Branch Road is part of an established commercial vehicle route with approximately 15 percent commercial vehicle traffic and is part of an established school bus route with four school buses using the crossing each school day.
- 4 Warning devices at the Branch Road crossing consist of advance warning signs, reflectorized crossbucks, Yield signs, and Emergency Notification System signs. No freight trains currently use this track, but the maximum authorized train speed is 10 miles per hour.
- 5 The Town intends to construct a sidewalk along the north side of Branch Road as part of the Safe Routes to School program. At the crossing of the spur track, the sidewalk surface will taper down to track level. According to the Petition, the Town intends to create a safe, stable, and accessible pedestrian crossing surface between the rails to connect the

two sections of sidewalk, ensuring a smooth transition for pedestrians, including those with mobility challenges. This project will improve safety for crossing users.

- 6 Pursuant to the procedure specified in RCW 81.53.060, Commission staff (Staff) arranged for publication of a legal notice in the Yakima Herald, a newspaper of general circulation in the Yakima area. The notice directed any person wishing to comment on the Petition to respond in writing to the Commission. The Commission did not receive comments or objections regarding the proposed crossing modifications within the comment period.
- 7 Staff has investigated the Petition and recommends that it be granted subject to the following conditions: (1) the project must conform to the description in the Petition, (2) the Town must complete the proposed modifications within three years, and (3) upon completion of the project authorized herein, the Town must notify the Commission within 60 days. Acceptance is subject to inspection by Staff, verifying that the crossing is in full compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and the conditions specified herein.

DISCUSSION

- 8 RCW 81.53.060 requires that the Commission grant approval prior to modification of a public railroad-highway grade crossing within the state of Washington. We find that the proposed modifications will improve safety, mobility, and convenience for crossing users. Accordingly, the Commission grants the Petition subject to the conditions that Staff recommends.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 9 (1) The Commission is an agency of the State of Washington having jurisdiction over public railroad-highway grade crossings within the state of Washington.
- 10 (2) The Branch Road crossing, identified as USDOT 099226M, is a public railroad-highway grade crossing within the state of Washington.
- 11 (3) RCW 81.53.060 requires that the Commission grant approval prior to modifying a public railroad-highway grade crossing within the state of Washington. See also WAC 480-62-150.
- 12 (4) Staff investigated the Petition and recommends that it be granted with the conditions set out in paragraph 7, above.

- 13 (5) This matter came before the Commission at its regularly scheduled open meeting on August 28, 2025.
- 14 (6) After examination of the Petition filed by the Town on July 23, 2025, and giving consideration to all relevant matters and for good cause shown, the Commission grants the Petition.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 15 The Town of Harrah's Petition to modify a public highway-rail grade crossing located at the intersection of Branch Road and Columbia Rail's track in Harrah is granted. Approval of the Petition is subject to the following conditions:
- (1) The project must conform to the description in the Petition.
 - (2) The Town of Harrah must complete the proposed modifications within three years.
 - (3) Upon completion of the project authorized herein, the Town of Harrah must notify the Commission within 60 days. Acceptance is subject to inspection by Commission Staff, verifying that the crossing is in full compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and the conditions specified herein.
- 16 The Commissioners, having determined this Order to be consistent with the public interest, directed the Secretary to enter this Order.

DATED at Lacey, Washington, and effective August 28, 2025.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

JEFF KILLIP,
Executive Director and Secretary