

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON STATE  
AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

BNSF RAILWAY,	)	Docket No: TR-150189
	)	
Petitioner,	)	
	)	REBUTTAL TESTIMONY OF
vs.	)	HENRY HOLLANDER
	)	
WHATCOM COUNTY,	)	
	)	
Respondent.	)	

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**Q: Please state your full name and job title.**

A: My name is Henry Hollander. I am currently the Division Chief and Fire Marshal for Whatcom County Fire District #21, which is also known as North Whatcom Fire and Rescue Services.

**Q: Please describe your position with Whatcom County Fire District #21 and your previous positions with that agency or others of a similar nature.**

A: I have been employed by Whatcom County Fire District #21 for over 20 years. Duties for my current position include Resource management, EMS and fire suppression. Previous to my current position I was Firefighter. That involved EMS and Fire Suppression.

**Q: Are you familiar with the proposed closure of Valley View Road by BNSF?**

A: I have reviewed [or “become aware of “] the submittal by BNSF seeking the closure of Valley View Road at its point of intersection with the railroad tracks on a spur west of the railroad mainline near Custer.

**Q: Please describe the proposed closure of Valley View Road as you understand it.**

A: The proposed addition of a railroad siding for greater storage capacity and staging area for railroad cars has been accompanied by BNSF's judgment that closure of Valley View Road is preferable for the safety of people traveling north and south on Valley View Road over the railroad tracks.

**Q: Specific to your consideration of this matter in light of your work as Division Chief for Whatcom County Fire District #21, what problems would the closure of Valley View Road at the BNSF tracks cause for Fire District #21 and its constituents?**

A: The southern boundary of Fire District #21 in this particular area is Bay Road, approximately 1.5 miles south of the railroad tracks in question over Valley View Road. With the closure of a station house to the east near Custer, our district's station house nearest to this crossing is located at 4581 Birch Bay – Lynden Road, several miles northwest of the area of proposed closure. Presently our route to a fire or to provide Basic Life Support (BLS) to our constituents south of the railroad tracks in this area would be to go east on Birch Bay – Lynden Road, southeast on Portal Way, and then directly south on Valley View Road. The proposed closure, if it occurs, would force us to adopt an alternate route to that destination, either by traveling south to Bay Road, then east, and then back north to the source of the call for aid, or east on Birch Bay – Lynden Road to Ham Road, then south on Ham to Arnie Road and from there to the source of the aid call. Because the roads involved in the alternate route are either less conducive to safe travel at higher speeds (Ham & Arnie) or involve greater travel distance (Bay Rd.), response time to an aid call south of the closure area would be lengthened by approximately one to two minutes from our station house. A similar amount of time would be added to response from our station house to the east located at Birch Bay – Lynden and Enterprise Roads.

Our units and personnel are "in quarters" (at the station house) approximately 66 – 75% of the time. If we are not "in quarters" because of our response to other aid calls, personnel from District 21's 9408 Odell Road station near Blaine, or Fire District 7's manned station at 4047 Brown Road Ferndale (closest mutual aid for fire service in this area) could be dispatched to respond, and for units from those stations, the closure of Valley View Road could add up to three minutes to their response time for a fire or BLS response (for District 7 responding to Valley View north of the closure and for District #21's Odell Road units responding to Valley View south of the closure).

From my perspective in District #21, for advanced life support (ALS) services delivered by medic units housed at Fire District 7's station at 1886 Grandview Road, the closure of Valley View Rd. should cause relatively little impact on response times either north or south of the proposed point of closure on Valley View Road because of alternate routes to that area from the Grandview Road station house. I believe that District 7 personnel have confirmed that relative lack of impact for ALS response from that station.

The nature of emergency response calls is such that time is of the essence. By rule of thumb for fire suppression professionals, a fire doubles in size with the passage of each minute of delay in response. Thus a delay of one minute means the fire will be about twice as large as if units had arrived a minute earlier. A four-minute delay means that a fire will be approximately 16 times larger at point of our arrival than what would have been the case four minutes earlier.

Though the area affected by the proposed closure of Valley View is relatively lightly populated, the likely delays in response times for fire suppression and BLS, ranging from 1 – 4 additional minutes, is the reason I am concerned and am opposed to the closure of Valley View Road as proposed by BNSF. While the response times for this area are not unusually high (currently 8 – 10 minutes, and likely to go to 10 – 12 minutes upon closure), our goal is always to reduce response times within the limits of safety, rather than increase them to the detriment of our mission.

DECLARATION

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

Dated this 21 day of October, 2015.

  
Henry Hollander