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BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION  
COMMISSION

BNSF RAILWAY COMPANY,	) DOCKET TR140382 and
	) DOCKET TR140383
Petitioner,	)
vs.	)
	) PREFILED TESTIMONY OF
YAKIMA COUNTY,	) CURTIS PARRISH
	)
Respondent.	)
_____	)

1. **Please state your full name and address.**

Curtis Parrish, 230 Division Street, Toppenish, WA 98948.

2. **What is your occupation?**

My brother and I own SP Farms and Ranch (“SP Farms”), a general partnership. We farm approximately 2,500 acres and also have some ranch land. We primarily grow spearmint, grapes, hay, hops and corn. We farm land located on both sides of the BNSF line.

3. **Does SP Farm’s farming operations use the railroad at-grade crossings at North Stevens Road and Barnhart Road?**

SP Farms uses the North Stevens Road crossing extensively. We own and farm two 80-acre parcels that are bisected by the BNSF line near the N. Stevens Road crossing. The parcels are owned by Nomu Financial, LLC, and are outlined in red as

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parcel number 32003 on the map attached hereto as Exhibit A. The North Stevens Road crossing allows for convenient access to the portions of these parcels falling on either side of the BNSF line.

**4. What impact would the closing of the railroad at-grade crossings at North Stevens Road and Barnhart Road have on SP's farming operations?**

The closure of the North Stevens Road crossing would have both operational and economic impacts on our farming operations. Geography and farming practices necessitate that farm equipment move efficiently between the portions of our field on both sides of the BNSF line. We presently accomplish these moves by way of the North Stevens Road crossing. If the crossing is closed, our equipment must travel a more circuitous route.

The closest alternate crossing is about a mile to the southeast on South Track Road near North Harris Road. This crossing has a bridge with a weight limit and cannot be used by our heavy farm equipment. The closest alternate crossing we can actually use is further to the southeast at Wapenish Road. Use of this crossing in either direction requires travel on SR 22 for a distance of approximately 1.1 miles. A slightly greater distance to the northeast is the crossing at Meyers Road. Use of this crossing in either direction requires travel on SR 22 for a distance of approximately 1.5 miles.

Regardless of what alternate crossing is used, significant additional transportation time will be required as a normal course of SP Farms' operations if the North Stevens Road crossing is closed.

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3 I will give one example. We have just completed harvesting corn on the parcels  
4 located near North Stevens Road. The harvest required the use of a combine. The  
5 combine was accompanied by a grain cart into which the combine dumps corn. The  
6 combine was also followed in the field by a tractor-pulled stalk beater. On a regular  
7 basis, semi-trucks arrived on site, were loaded, and hauled away corn. All of this  
8 equipment was able to quickly cross the BNSF line by way of North Stevens Road.  
9 There was minimal disruption to harvest operations.  
10

11 If the North Stevens Road crossing is closed, future corn harvests will require this  
12 caravan of large, slow moving farm equipment (combine, grain cart, tractor with stalk  
13 beater, semi-trucks) to travel more than a mile on SR 22 each time we need to cross the  
14 BNSF line. This is just one example. The same impacts would occur for all aspects of  
15 our farming operations, from field preparation in early spring through planting and then  
16 harvest in late fall.  
17

18 **5. Is there a safety risk associated with travel by farm equipment on SR 22?**

19 Yes. I have lived in the area of these crossings my whole life. SR 22 is the  
20 primary route that agricultural commodities are exported out of this region as well as  
21 within this region. Most of the corn brought to local food processing facilities, such as  
22 the Del Monte canning facility in Toppenish, comes by way of SR 22. The highway is  
23 also the primary route utilized by semi-trucks to access I-82, and then to other locations  
24 in Washington State and beyond.  
25

26 As one example, SR 22 is the primary route by which cattle are brought to the  
27 Washington Beef facility in Toppenish, and by which processed beef is exported from  
28 that facility to the market. I have always understood the number of cattle processed by  
29

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3 the facility to exceed 1,000 per day. I located an article from the Yakima Herald-  
4 Republic which reports that number to be 1,500 per day. I am attaching a copy of that  
5 article as Exhibit B. Regardless the precise number, a sizeable number of semi-trucks  
6 bring cattle to the Washington Beef facility each day. And a sizeable number of semi-  
7 trucks export beef products from the Washington Beef facility on SR 22 each day. This  
8 is just one example that illustrates the nature and volume of traffic on SR 22.  
9

10 I have driven a semi-truck in this area. In my experience, a significant safety  
11 hazard exists where heavy semi-trucks encounter slow moving farm equipment. It can  
12 often be difficult for trucks to slow in time. They are often rushed, with employer-  
13 dictated delivery schedules. Passenger vehicles travelling behind a semi-truck cannot  
14 always see around the truck and may not understand why the truck has slowed or that  
15 there is farm equipment ahead. This can lead to unpredictable maneuvers by passenger  
16 vehicles.  
17

18 This hazard is exacerbated where visibility is poor. SP Farms often moves its  
19 farm equipment during the early morning and evening hours. Particularly in late fall, this  
20 means our farm equipment will be on the roadways in the dark. In my view, this presents  
21 a serious safety hazard to our employees and equipment as well as other vehicles on SR  
22 22.  
23

24 **6. Have there been any collisions involving SP Farms equipment on SR 22?**

25 Yes. I don't recall the exact date but it was about 15 or so years ago. One of our  
26 John Deere tractors was pulling a mint chopper down SR 22. An oncoming passenger  
27 vehicle crossed the center lane and collided with the mint copper.  
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3 **7. Would the closure of the railroad at-grade crossings at North Stevens Road**  
4 **and Barnhart Road divert farm equipment onto SR 22?**

5 Yes. The closure of North Stevens Road will divert heavy, slow-moving farm  
6 equipment onto SR 22.

7 **8. What types of farm equipment would be diverted onto SR 22?**

8 We rotate the crops we grow on the 80 acre parcels near the North Stevens Road  
9 crossing. Due to different practices associated with different crops, it is difficult to  
10 predict the types of farm equipment that will be diverted onto SR 22 in a given year.

11 This year, we planted corn on these fields. As an illustrative example, corn production  
12 this year has required the transport across the North Stevens Road crossing of the  
13 following equipment:  
14

- 15 • Disc rippers (pulled by tractor);
- 16 • Rollers (pulled by tractor, often behind disc rippers);
- 17 • sprayers (we contract this out);
- 18 • tractors for side-dressing and establishing irrigation channels;
- 19 • Combine for harvesting corn;
- 20 • Corn cart;
- 21 • Corn stalk beaters (pulled by tractor)
- 22 • Corn stalk beaters (pulled by tractor)
- 23 • Semi-trucks for loading and exporting corn from the property;
- 24

25 In addition to whatever we grow on our land, we also do custom grape harvesting  
26 on property south of the BNSF line near the North Stevens Road crossing. We rely on  
27 that crossing to transport grape harvesting equipment.

28 At present, we are able to use the North Stevens Road crossing to move this  
29 equipment between those portions of our farmland on either side of the BNSF line and  
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SR 22. None of the farm equipment identified above has to travel along SR 22. If the North Stevens Road crossing is closed all of the farm equipment listed above will be diverted onto SR 22 for a distance that exceeds a mile each time work is needed on these parcels.

DATED THIS 25<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2014.

  
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CURTIS PARRISH

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DATED THIS 12th day of February, 2015.

MENKE JACKSON BEYER, LLP



KENNETH W. HARPER

WSBA #25578

*Attorneys for Respondent Yakima County*

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Yakima, WA 98902

(509) 575-0313

(509) 575-0351/Fax

[kharper@mjbe.com](mailto:kharper@mjbe.com)

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2  
3 CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

4 I am over the age of 18; and not a party to this action. I am the assistant to an  
5 attorney with Menke Jackson Beyer, LLP, whose address is 807 North 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue,  
6 Yakima, Washington, 98902.

7 I hereby certify that the original and three copies of the foregoing have been sent  
8 by Overnight Delivery to Mr. Steven King, Executive Director and Secretary,  
9 Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission, 1300 South Evergreen Park  
10 Drive, S.W., Olympia, Washington, 98504; and a .pdf version electronically filed  
11 (www.utc.wa.gov/efiling) and emailed (records@utc.wa.gov). I also certify that true and  
12 complete copies have been sent via electronic mail to the following interested parties:

13 Mr. Tom Montgomery  
14 Mr. Bradley Scarp  
15 Attorneys at Law  
16 Montgomery Scarp, PLLC  
17 1218 Third Avenue, Suite 2500  
18 Seattle WA 98101

19 Mr. Ethan Jones  
20 Associate Attorney  
21 Confederated Tribes & Bands of the Yakama Nation  
22 P.O. Box 151  
23 Fort Road  
24 Toppenish WA 98948

25 Mr. R. Joseph Sexton  
26 Attorney at Law  
27 Galanda Broadman, PLLC  
28 8606 35th Avenue NE, Suite L1  
29 P.O. Box 15146  
30 Seattle WA 98115

Rayne Pearson  
Administrative Law Judge  
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission  
1300 South Evergreen Park Drive SW  
Olympia, WA 98504

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that  
the foregoing information is true and correct.

DATED THIS 12<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2015.

  
KATHY S. LYCZEWSKI