

# HIGHLANDS ASSOCIATES

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April 26, 1999

Secretary  
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission  
P. O. Box 47250  
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

Re: Docket No. TR-981102

Dear Secretary,

Regarding the Commission's consideration to amend and/or repeal rules per the above referenced Docket No., I am submitting a couple of general comments that I feel should be considered. My comments especially pertain to my experience with the Commission in and around a community for which I provide community development services; the community being Tonasket, Washington. My comments are intended to be in the interest of the City of Tonasket; however, they are my own and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Tonasket City Council or their appointed officials.

First, I strongly support reporting requirements regarding public and local jurisdiction notification for any railroad company activity that will affect a surrounding community. Communities like Tonasket are nearly always significantly affected by a railroad's activity within and near the incorporated area.

Secondly, I suggest developing rules that require planning of railroad activity that is consistent with a community's comprehensive plan, especially in regards to transportation/circulation facilities and utilities. More specifically, communities need greater influence in the placement of railroad crossings especially when such crossings are necessary to provide access to growth areas and/or public facilities. In small towns like Tonasket, the railroad severely limits access to the river shoreline area where public access areas are located. There needs to be rules that provide greater authority for a community to choose where crossings will be located.

Thank-you in advance for your consideration of these issues.

Sincerely,



Chris Branch  
Senior Associate

pc: Tonasket Mayor and City Council

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