BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

BNSF RAILWAY COMPANY, Petitioner, v. CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, Respondent SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, WEST VALLEY FARMS LLC, and SKAGIT COUNTY, Intervenors.	DOCKET NO. TR-070696 WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF GARY NORRIS

Q. Please state your name and business address.

A. My name is Gary A. Norris, P.E. and P.T.O.E. My business address is 3150 Richards Road, Suite 200, Bellevue, WA 98005. My business e-mail address is: garyn@gsassoc-inc.com.

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Q. By whom are you employed and in what capacity?

A. Garry Struthers Associates, Inc.
Gary Norris - Senior Project Manager

Q. What are your qualifications?

A. Please see my resume, which is attached as Exhibit A.

Q. Please state your qualifications to provide testimony in this proceeding.

A. My employer, Garry Struthers Associates, Inc. (GSAI), prepared the traffic impact analysis of the proposed closure.

Q. Have you presented testimony before this Commission in other cases?

A. I have presented testimony in the proposed crossing closure of 156th Street in the Marysville area of Snohomish County.

Q. What is the purpose of your testimony?

A. The purpose of the GSAI testimony is to summarize the process, analysis, findings, conclusions and recommendations of the traffic impact analysis of the proposed Hickox Road railway crossing closure.

Q. What work did you perform in response to the request to close the BNSF/Hickox Road railway crossing?

A. GSAI prepared a traffic impact analysis to assess the impact of the proposed closure on the transportation system.

Q. What is a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA)?

A. A traffic impact analysis evaluates the traffic-related impacts of a proposed action on the transportation system.

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Q. What guidelines are used in development of a TIA?

A. The underlying authority for the development of a TIA is the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). A standardized process for identifying traffic-related impacts has been developed by the traffic engineering community and is commonly employed to address SEPA requirements. Many jurisdictions have TIA guidelines which focus the study to meet the needs of the local SEPA authority. The analysis techniques employed are commonly accepted practice for the professional traffic engineering community.

Q. What is SEPA?

A. SEPA is an acronym for the State Environmental Policy Act. It provides a way to identify possible environmental impacts that may result from governmental decisions. These decisions relate to issuing permits for private projects, constructing public facilities or adopting regulations, policies or plans. SEPA helps decision-makers understand how a proposal will affect the environment. The information can be used to change a proposal to reduce likely impacts or to deny a proposal when adverse environmental impacts are identified.

Q. What are TIA guidelines?

A. TIA guidelines are outlines of the desired scope of work for the preparation of a TIA. The guidelines focus the study in areas where the SEPA authority requires special evaluation.

Q. What are some of the commonly accepted analysis practices and techniques?

A. The commonly accepted analysis practices and techniques include: identification of the peak hour traffic flow, evaluation of crash data, roadway geometrics standards, emergency response times, analysis and evaluation of level of service. In all cases the

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study employed commonly accepted standards of the industry. With regard to the level of service analysis, the study used *Synchro* to evaluate the level of service as determined by the Highway Capacity Manual.

Q. Was a TIA prepared for the potential closure of the BNSF/Hickox Road railway crossing?

A. Yes, and it was documented in a report.

Q. What was the name of the report?

A. *Hickox Road* Railway *Crossing Closure Traffic Impact Analysis*, which is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

Q. Did anyone else at your firm assist with the preparation of this report?

A. Yes. Ms. Lesley A. Struthers, E.I.T., assisted.

Q. What is Ms. Struthers' professional and educational background?

A. Please see Ms. Struthers' resume, which is attached as Exhibit C.

Q. What was the purpose of your report?

A. The report was written to investigate the probable short-term and long-term traffic impacts created by the closure of the BNSF/Hickox Road railway crossing as part of the Mount Vernon Siding Extension Project.

Q. What was the scope of the report?

A. The report presents an analysis of traffic conditions during an average weekday p.m. peak. An analysis of traffic conditions during major events is not included in the analysis. Only future funded transportation improvement projects are included. For the purpose of this report, 2006 is defined as the horizon year. To address federal requirements, an analysis of traffic conditions 20 years in the future with the proposed

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action is also presented and defined as the future year. The future year for this study is 2026.

Q. What was the study area of your analysis?

A. The study area includes the transportation network potentially impacted by the closure of Hickox Road. It is located adjacent to I-5 in Skagit County in the northwestern part of Western Washington, between Seattle, Washington and Vancouver, B.C. The study area lies within the southwestern part of Skagit County in a broad delta and flood plain, both of which extend inland through the rich and fertile Skagit Valley. The majority of the study area resides in the unincorporated town of Conway and the southwestern tip of the City of Mount Vernon. The study area is bounded by Blackburn Road on the north, I-5 on the east, Fir Island Road on the south, and Dike Road on the west.

Q. What alternatives were assessed?

A. Initially, only two alternative conditions were analyzed:

1. No Action—BNSF/Hickox Road railway crossing remains open; and
2. With Closure—closing the BNSF/Hickox Road railway crossing.

The "No Action" alternative is characterized by an unaffected roadway capacity on Hickox Road. The "With Closure" alternative is characterized by a complete closure of the BNSF/Hickox Road railway crossing located approximately 550 feet west of Old Highway 99, with all BNSF/Hickox Road railway crossing traffic diverted to other roadways in the study area.

Upon review of the draft TIA, all agencies expressed concern about additional options being explored. Thus, three additional alternatives were developed to meet the

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project objectives, and at the same time maintain access to the west side of the railway along the Hickox Road corridor. These alternatives include:

- Realign Hickox Road to the south of the proposed siding;
- Widen the existing crossing to accommodate the siding; and
- Move the proposed railroad siding to a new location south of Hickox Road.

Q. What roadway information was collected?

A. The roadway information collected included roadway classification, geometry, channelization, speed limits and intersection control types.

Q. How was the average daily traffic volume data collected?

A. Automated traffic counters were used to collect average daily traffic volumes, speed data and classification data. TC2 staff collected the data using a six day, 24-hour smart machine, which is connected to a tube that lies on the roadway.

Q. When was the average daily traffic volume data collected?

A. The data was collected from February 3 through February 8, 2006.

Q. How was the peak hour turning movement traffic volume and pedestrian/bicycle volume data collected?

A. DN traffic staff collected p.m. peak hour turning movement traffic volumes and pedestrian/bicycle volumes. This data was collected by field observation.

Q. When was the p.m. peak hour count data collected?

A. Data was collected between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. in February 2006.

Q. Do the collected traffic volumes accurately represent the average weekday conditions?

A. Yes, they accurately reflect the average weekday conditions. Although the data was collected in February, monthly adjustment factors provided by Skagit County Public Works were used to adjust the data to reflect an annual average traffic flow scenario.

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Q. What crash data was collected?

A. Crash data for the latest available three years was collected.

Q. What are some of the agencies that were contacted?

A. The following agencies were contacted: Skagit County; Skagit County Medic One; Skagit Transit; City of Mount Vernon; Skagit County Fire District No. 3; Skagit County Diking District No. 3; LTI, Inc. (Milky Way); Conway School District; and, Mount Vernon School District

Q. What was the 20-year growth scenario based on?

A. It was based on Skagit County planning data as represented in the City of Mount Vernon's traffic assignment model.

Q. How was future year traffic volumes generated?

A. The 2026 p.m. peak hour volumes were generated with the aid of the City of Mount Vernon's traffic assignment model. The 2026 forecasts were developed based on land use growth projections for the study area consistent with the current City of Mount Vernon and Skagit County Comprehensive Plans. The modeling process involved four steps similar to the process used for creating the 2006 With Closure assignment. The steps are as follows:

- Generate a 2006 p.m. peak hour assignment calibrated against 2006 p.m. peak hour turning movement counts;
- Generate a 2026 p.m. peak hour assignment for the "No Action" condition;
- Subtract the 2026 p.m. peak hour "No Action" assignment from the 2006 p.m. peak assignment; and
- Add the intersection approach and volume difference between the 2026 "No Action" and 2006 existing assignment to each intersection movement based on the turning movement percentages derived from the 2006 existing ground counts to obtain the 2026 "No Action" p.m. peak hour assignment.

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P.M. peak hour turning movement volumes for the 2026 "With Closure" alternative were developed through a 2026 p.m. peak hour model run with the closure of the Hickox Road railway crossing. The model process is the same as the 2026 "No Action" scenario with the exception that a 2026 "With Closure" model was prepared and subtracted from the 2006 existing to estimate the future impact of the proposed railway crossing closure.

Q. What year were the existing conditions evaluated?

A. In the year 2006.

Q. What are the existing conditions of the roadway facilities within the study area?

A. Blackburn Road is a two-lane minor arterial that runs east-west from Cedardale Road to Britt Road. Traffic controls on Blackburn Road include a signal at South Second Street and a stop sign at the intersection with Britt Road as well as a stop sign on the minor intersecting streets of Cleveland Street, Gunn Road and South Third Street. The speed limit is 25 m.p.h.

Anderson Road is a two-lane local access road that runs east-west. Traffic control on Anderson Road includes a stop sign at Old Highway 99. The speed limit is 35 m.p.h.

Pederson Lane is a private driveway that runs east-west from Old Highway 99 to a farm. Traffic control on Pederson Lane includes a stop sign at Old Highway 99.

Hickox Road is a two-lane minor collector that runs east-west from I-5 to Dike Road. Traffic control on Hickox Road includes stop signs at Old Highway 99 and Dike Road. The speed limit is 35 m.p.h.

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Stackpole Road is a two-lane rural local access road that runs east-west from Conway Frontage Road to Dike Road. Traffic control on Stackpole Road includes stop signs at Conway Frontage Road and Dike Road. The speed limit is 35 m.p.h.

Peter Johnson Road is a two-lane rural local access road that runs east-west from Conway Frontage Road to Dike Road. Traffic control on Peter Johnson Road includes stop signs at Conway Frontage Road and Dike Road. The speed limit is 35 m.p.h.

Fir Island Road is a two-lane major collector that runs east-west from Pioneer Highway to the west where it intersects with Best Road. Traffic controls on Fir Island Road include stop signs at Conway Frontage Road and Pioneer Highway. The speed limit is 35 m.p.h. in the study area.

Old Highway 99 is a two-lane major collector that runs north-south from Blackburn Road to Hickox Road. Traffic controls on Old Highway 99 include a signal at Blackburn Road as well as stop signs on the minor intersecting streets of Anderson Road, McFarmland Lane, Pederson Lane, Jack Lane and Hickox Road. The speed limit is 35 m.p.h.

Conway Frontage Road is a two-lane minor collector that runs north-south from Hickox Road to Fir Island Road. Traffic controls on Conway Frontage Road include a stop sign at Fir Island Road as well as stop signs on the minor intersecting streets of Stackpole Road and Peter Johnson Road. The speed limit is 50 m.p.h.

Pioneer Highway is a two-lane major collector that runs north-south from Fir Island Road to the south where it intersects with I-5 at the SR-534 interchange at Smokey

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Point. Traffic control on Pioneer Highway includes a stop sign at Fir Island Road. The speed limit is 50 m.p.h.

Dike Road is a two-lane minor collector that runs north-south from Britt Road to Fir Island Road. Traffic controls on Dike Road include stop signs at Britt Road and Fir Island Road as well as stop signs on the minor intersecting streets of Stackpole Road, Peter Johnson Road and Hickox Road. The speed limit is 40 m.p.h.

Britt Road is a two-lane collector that runs north-south from Blackburn Road to Dike Road. At the Britt Road and Dike Road intersection, Britt Road is a minor collector; east of Dike Road it is an urban collector. Traffic controls within the study area include a stop sign at Dike Road as well as a stop sign at Blackburn Road. The speed limit is 35 m.p.h.

Q. What are the existing traffic operations at intersections?

A. Volumes:

Average weekday daily traffic on Hickox Road is 340 vehicles with a 50/50 percentage split in the eastbound and westbound directions. The average weekend volume was 220 vehicles per day with the same 50/50 split by direction. Skagit County data indicated the average weekday volume on Hickox Road was 380 vehicles per day. The highest volume of the day occurred during the p.m. peak hours of 4:00 to 6:00.

The volumes varied from a low of 17 entering vehicles at the Stackpole Road/Dike Road intersection to a high of 1,316 entering vehicles at Fir Island Road/Pioneer Highway intersection. With the exception of Fir Island Road/Pioneer Highway and Pioneer Highway/I-5 southbound ramps, the p.m. peak hour volumes at

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the key intersections in the study area were very low, which is consistent with the rural nature of the area. The total intersection approach volume for all study area intersections is 7,872 vehicles per hour. The highest volume occurs at the Fir Island Road/Pioneer Highway intersection (1,316 vehicles per hour [v.p.h.]) and the Pioneer Highway/I-5 southbound ramps (1,233 v.p.h.). The lowest p.m. peak hour approach volume occurs at the Stackpole Road/Dike Road intersection (17 v.p.h.). The average p.m. peak hour approach volume is 492 v.p.h.

Level of Service:

All analysis intersections currently operate at an acceptable and high level of service (LOS) during the p.m. peak hour, with the exception of the Fir Island Road/Pioneer Highway intersection, which currently operates at LOS D during the p.m. peak hour. LOS D, however, is an acceptable LOS for the study area.

Accidents:

The latest available three-year accident history included the period from January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2005. There have been very few accidents at the analysis intersections during the last three-year period. The Old Highway 99/I-5 northbound ramp intersection has experienced one accident during the latest three-year period, with an accident rate of 0.609 accidents per million entering vehicles. The Old Highway 99/I-5 southbound ramp intersection has no accident experience during the latest three-year period. The Pioneer Highway/I-5 northbound ramp intersection has experienced two accidents during the latest three-year period, with an accident rate of 0.252 accidents per million entering vehicles. The Pioneer Highway/I-5 southbound ramp intersection has experienced six accidents during the latest three-year period, with an

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accident rate of 0.445 accidents per million entering vehicles. The Anderson Road/I-5 northbound ramp intersection has experienced three accidents during the latest three-year period, with an accident rate of 0.109 accidents per million entering vehicles. The Anderson Road/I-5 southbound ramp intersection has experienced one accident during the latest three-year period, with an accident rate of 0.453 accidents per million entering vehicles. There have been no fatalities at intersections within the study area.

Q. Have there been any fatalities at the BNSF/Hickox road railway crossing and when?

A. The vehicle/train accident history at the BNSF/Hickox Road railway crossing was obtained from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). There have been a total of two reported vehicle/train accidents at the BNSF/Hickox Road railway crossing since 1975. In 1990, an eastbound vehicle on Hickox Road collided with a northbound freight train. The train was proceeding through the crossing and was struck by the vehicle. The incident occurred at dark under cloudy conditions. The motorist did not stop and was killed.

Q. What were other access issues?

A. Other access issues included overall access to the study area, impact on emergency vehicle response for medical aid, police and fire. In addition, concern was expressed regarding the impact on large agricultural vehicles in terms of roadway geometry.

Q. What did the existing transit system in the study area consist of?

A. It consisted of: Skagit Transit (SKAT), a public bus system; and, school buses in the Conway School District and Mount Vernon School District.

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Q. Does SKAT have regular scheduled service on Hickox Road?

A. No

Q. Does SKAT have regularly scheduled service within the study area? And, if so, where?

A. Yes. SKAT's Route 208 North provides service on Blackburn Road.

Q. In the existing conditions is Hickox Road used by school buses?

A. Yes. The Conway School District has a bus stop located at the Dike Road/Hickox Road intersection and the bus uses Hickox Road to reach the next destination.

Q. What was the existing non-motorized transportation?

A. Pedestrians, bicycles and rail.

Q. What are the existing pedestrian and bicycle volumes on Hickox Road?

A. Counts indicated one pedestrian and two bicycles at the Old Highway 99/Hickox Road intersection. No other pedestrian/bicycle volume was noted.

Q. What are the existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities?

A. Dedicated pedestrian or bike facilities in the study area exist at the following locations:

- Anderson Road/Old Highway 99—sidewalks on three of the four corners of the intersection;
- Blackburn Road/Old Highway 99—sidewalks on the four corners of the intersection; and
- Blackburn Road—Old Highway 99 to Britt Road—north side has an asphalt walkway separated from traffic by an extruded curb.

Some of the roadways in the study area have asphalt shoulders that can be used by pedestrians and bicyclists:

- Anderson Road has paved shoulders from Old Highway 99 through the I-5 interchange;
- Conway Frontage Road has eight-foot-wide shoulders from Old Highway 99 to Fir Island Road;
- Old Highway 99 and Pioneer Highway/SR-534 have asphalt shoulders on the I-5 interchange and within the WSDOT right-of-way boundaries;
- Fir Island Road has asphalt shoulders within the study area; and

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- Old Highway 99 from Blackburn Road to Conway Frontage Road has asphalt shoulders varying in width from four feet to eight feet

Q. What are the existing rail facilities?

A. Blackburn Road:

BNSF Railway crosses Blackburn Road at grade between Railroad Avenue and Third Street South. There is a single track approximately 200-feet west of Railroad Avenue. The crossing is controlled by a cantilever flashing light signal with automatic gates.

BNSF Railway crosses on Blackburn Road.

Pederson Lane:

BNSF Railway crosses Pederson Lane at grade west of Old Highway 99. One track crosses Pederson Lane approximately 390 feet west of Old Highway 99. The crossing is controlled by a sign without automatic gates.

Hickox Road:

BNSF Railway crosses Hickox Road at grade approximately 550 feet west of Old Highway 99. The crossing is controlled by a flashing light signal with automatic gates.

Stackpole Road:

BNSF Railway crosses Stackpole Road at grade approximately 1,020 feet west of Old Highway 99. The crossing is controlled by a stop sign and cross bucks.

Peter Johnson Road:

BNSF Railway crosses Peter Johnson Road at grade approximately 1,110 feet west of Old Highway 99. The crossing is controlled by a stop sign and cross bucks.

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Fir Island Road:

BNSF Railway crosses Fir Island Road at grade between Jones Road and First Street. The track crosses Fir Island Road approximately 220 feet west of Jones Road. The crossing is controlled by a cantilever flashing light signal with automatic gates.

Q. What improvements are planned/programmed?

A. There are no planned or programmed highway transportation improvement projects in the vicinity of the study area. Roadway maintenance in the study area is scheduled on an annual basis.

Q. What is a horizon year?

A. The horizon year is the year evaluating the impact of the proposed action at the time the impact of the action is realized.

Q. What was the horizon year used for in this analysis?

A. The proposed closure of the BNSF/Hickox Road railway crossing is anticipated in the 2006 time horizon. Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis, 2006 is assumed to be the horizon year.

Q. What is the impact on traffic operations at intersections for the horizon year?

Volumes:

Traffic volume data for the 2006 "No Action" alternative is the same as the existing conditions. Under the "With Closure" alternative, existing traffic on Hickox Road will be diverted to other roadways in the study area. The average 2006 total intersection approach volume for all study area intersections under the "No Action" alternative is 492 v.p.h. compared to the average of 494 v.p.h. for the "With Closure" alternative. The largest increase (26 vehicles) occurs at the Anderson Road/Old

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Highway 99 intersection and the largest decrease (21 vehicles) occurs at the Hickox Road/Dike Road intersection.

LOS:

The LOS for the 2006 "No Action" alternative is the same as the existing condition analysis. All key intersections are estimated to operate at acceptable LOS under the "With Closure" alternative.

Accidents:

Under the "No Action" alternative, the traffic accident rate for the study area will remain the same. Under the "With Closure" alternative, the study area traffic accident rate will remain essentially the same since the overall traffic volume for the study area is unchanged. Some intersections will experience an increase or decrease in traffic volume to accommodate the closure but these volumes are not large enough to result in the potential for measurable increased accidents.

Q. What is the impact on access in the study area for the horizon year?

A. Under the "No Action" alternative, traffic access for the study area will not be impacted. Impact of the "With Closure" alternative is limited to a small area within the study area. The area includes Hickox Road west of the railway crossing and Dike Road within one-half mile of the Hickox Road/Dike Road intersection. Under the "With Closure" alternative, the Blackburn Road/Britt Road intersection on the north end of the study area will be the alternative route for trips to and from the north. Stackpole Road or West Johnson Road will be the alternative route for trips to and from the south. During the p.m. peak hour, the average travel time from the Hickox Road/Dike Road

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intersection to the adjacent I-5 access points and Old Highway 99 increases an average of five minutes under the "With Closure" alternative.

Q. What is the impact on emergency response in the study area for the horizon year?

A. The "No Action" alternative in 2006 is equivalent to existing conditions. The "With Closure" alternative will have minimal impact on response time for police service and Skagit County Medic One given that the location of the dispatched vehicle varies. Fire response would come from Skagit County Fire District No. 3 station located on East Hickox Road, which would have the largest potential increase in response time.

Stackpole Road is the most likely alternate path for fire vehicles as it is the closest east-west road. The travel distance and time to the Hickox Road Area along this route from the fire station east of I-5 has a potential increase of three miles and a seven-minute increase in response time. Emergency response along the two north-south roads, Conway Frontage Road and Dike Road, will not be impacted.

Q. What is the impact on transit services for the horizon year?

A. The "No Action" alternative is the same as the existing condition for transit service. There will be no impact to existing transit service. The closure of BNSF/Hickox Road railway crossing will not impact transit service because Hickox Road does not have service. Conway School District bus service in the study area will be impacted with the closure as currently there is a bus stop at the Hickox Road/Dike Road intersection and Hickox Road is used as a pass through.

Q. What is the impact on non-motorized transportation for the horizon year?

A. The "No Action" alternative in 2006 is equivalent to existing conditions. The "With Closure" alternative will not significantly impact non-motorized traffic because the

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volume of non-motorized traffic in the p.m. peak hour observed was very low. The "With Closure" alternative may inconvenience pedestrians and bicyclists, who will be forced to use other significantly longer routes. The few pedestrians and bicyclists who use the area may experience some inconvenience under the "With Closure" alternative.

Q. What future year was used for the purpose of this analysis?

A. The future year of analysis is normally 20 years after the horizon year; therefore, 2026 is the future year being used.

Q. What is the impact on traffic operations at intersections for the future year?

Volume:

The 2026 "No Action" results of the forecast indicate that p.m. peak hour volumes are expected to increase by 96 percent between 2006 and 2026. Under the "With Closure" alternative, 2026 p.m. peak hour traffic will be diverted to parallel east-west roadways, such as Blackburn Road to the north and Stackpole Road and West Johnson Road to the south. The total 2026 p.m. peak hour intersection approach volume is 15,617 v.p.h. for the "No Action" alternative and 15,626 v.p.h. for the "With Closure" alternative. The highest 2026 p.m. peak hour approach volume occurs at the Anderson Road/I-5 northbound ramps for both the "No Action" (3,177 v.p.h.) and "With Closure" alternatives (3,183 v.p.h.). The lowest 2026 approach volume occurs at the Stackpole Road/Dike Road intersection for the "No Action" (33 v.p.h.) alternative and at the Hickox Road/Dike Road intersection for the "With Closure" (36 v.p.h.) alternative. The average total 2026 intersection approach volume for all study area intersections is 977 v.p.h. for the "No Action" alternative and 976 v.p.h. for the "With Closure" alternative.

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LOS:

Twelve of the 16 intersections are estimated to operate at an acceptable LOS in the 2026 time horizon. The remaining four intersections are estimated to operate at LOS F, which is below the standard for the study area. In fact, the delay at the Anderson Road/I-5 ramp intersections under the 2026 "No Action" and "With Closure" alternatives exceeds the delay thresholds in the analysis software.

Q. What is the impact on access to the study area for the future year?

A. Under the "No Action" alternative for 2026, traffic circulation will utilize the existing road network. It is expected that with projected increased traffic volumes, travel times through and to the study area will dramatically increase if the transportation improvements discussed in the traffic operations sections are not constructed. Alternative traffic waiting under the "With Closure" alternative remains the same as the 2006 routings.

Q. What is the impact on emergency response access to the study area for the future year?

A. Under the "No Action" alternative, emergency response service will use current routing to service calls. The "With Closure" alternative will increase the Skagit County Fire District No. 3's response time to the Hickox Road/Dike Road intersection area and the Britt Road/Dike Road intersection area. Response time is increased as Hickox Road is the most direct route from the fire station located on East Hickox Road, east of I-5. By 2026, another fire station may be required in or near the study area due to anticipated growth along the Blackburn Road corridor. With the addition of another fire station, the potential response time impacts may be mitigated. The travel distance and time to

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the Hickox Road/Dike Road intersection will potentially have an increase of three miles and seven minutes, the same as in 2006.

Q. What is the impact on transit services for the future year?

A. Under the "No Action" alternative, there will be no impact to service. SKAT does not have any planned/programmed service scheduled on Hickox Road for 2026. The land use setting of the study area is agricultural, natural resource land; therefore, it is unlikely that the area will develop to a point where transit service would be beneficial for the area. For that reason, the closure of Hickox Road will not impact future transit service.

Q. What is the impact on non-motorized transportation for the future year?

A. Under the "No Action" alternative, the railway crossings at Blackburn Road, Hickox Road, Stackpole Road and West Johnson Road will continue operations with their present control configurations. The impact of the closure will not significantly affect non-motorized traffic because the volume is relatively small in the p.m. peak hour. Under the "With Closure" alternative, the potential for train and pedestrian/bicycle accidents will be eliminated.

Q. What is the impact on planned/programmed improvements for the future year?

A. There are no planned or programmed highway transportation improvement projects in the vicinity of the study area, therefore no impact.

Q. What were the findings on impacts to traffic operations at intersections?

- Hickox Road in 2006 is carrying 340 vehicles per day, with a p.m. peak hour volume of approximately 32 vehicles split between the eastbound and westbound directions.

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- All intersections are presently operating at an acceptable LOS per the study area standards. LOS D is within acceptable limits.

- There have been relatively few accidents in the study area during the latest three-year period with accidents limited to the I-5 interchanges. The highest number of accidents occurred at the Pioneer Highway/I-5 Southbound ramp (6). Even so, the accident rate was only 0.609 accidents per million entering vehicles, which is significantly less than the statewide average for similar intersections.

- Under the "With Closure" alternative, total intersection approach volumes during the p.m. peak hour are estimated to increase by 24 vehicles. This results from the increased circulation through the study area intersections resulting from the closure of the Hickox Road railway crossing.

- Although there are some very minor differences in the 2006 p.m. peak hour intersection delay with the closure, the LOS remains within acceptable limits at all study area intersections.

- Under the "With Closure" alternative, the study area traffic accident rate will remain essentially the same since the overall traffic volume for the study area is unchanged. Some intersections will experience an increase or decrease in traffic volume to accommodate the closure, but these volumes are not large enough to result in the potential for measurable increased accidents.

- Under both alternatives the 2026 traffic volumes in the study area are expected to approximately double over the 2006 p.m. peak.

- With the increased volumes in the 2026 p.m. peak hour, the LOS at four of the sixteen intersections exceeds acceptable limits. With significant reconstruction of the intersections, the LOS can be improved to acceptable and relatively high levels.

- Under the With Closure alternative in 2026, the same four intersections experience a failed level of service. With the same improvements, an acceptable and high LOS is achieved.

Q. What were the findings on impacts to study area access?

A.

- In 2006 and 2026, under the "No Action" alternative, the street network in the study area remains unchanged.

- In 2006 and 2026, under the "With Closure" alternative, traffic will be required to divert to alternative routes, increasing their average trip length by two to three miles for those properties within three-fourths of a mile of the Hickox Road/Dike Road intersection. The "With Closure" condition will eliminate an alternative route that might be needed during catastrophic blockage of alternative routes.

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Q. What were the findings on impacts to emergency response?

A.

- Skagit County Fire District No. 3's response time to the study area will increase by seven minutes and three miles. However, this appears to be within national response time standards of the National Fire Protection Association.

- Stackpole Road will be a reasonable alternative route to the study area in an emergency condition, because it is the closest east-west road to Hickox Road.

- Other emergency services response times will not be significantly impacted as they are dispatched from their present locations and have easily accessible alternative routes to the area.

- The Skagit County Fire Marshal and the Skagit County Fire District No. 3 Fire Chief are opposed to the railway crossing closure as it would reduce access for emergency response.

Q. What were the findings on impacts to truck access?

A.

- In 2006, Hickox Road has approximately 50 heavy vehicle trips per day and six heavy vehicles during the p.m. peak period. In 2026, Hickox Road is estimated to serve approximately 80 heavy vehicle trips per day and eight heavy vehicles during the p.m. peak period.

Q. What were the findings on impacts to transit services?

A.

- There are no anticipated impacts to SKAT transit services with the closure of the BNSF/Hickox Road railway crossing.

- Currently SKAT has no scheduled service on Hickox Road. Therefore, the "With Closure" alternative will not impact the transit services currently operating.

- There are anticipated impacts to Conway School District school bus service under the "With Closure" alternative.

- Currently, the Conway School District has a bus stop located at the Hickox Road/Dike Road intersection. Rerouting of the school bus will be required under the "With Closure" alternative.

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Q. What were the findings on impacts to non-motorized transportation?

A.

- The volume of non-motorized traffic is relatively small. In the p.m. peak hour, one pedestrian and two bicyclists were observed.

- The "With Closure" alternative is not expected to have a significant impact on pedestrian or bicycle traffic

Q. What were the conclusions of the analysis?

A.

- The "With Closure" alternative will not create a significant adverse impact on traffic operations at the study area intersections. Four of the sixteen intersections will require upgrades to the existing traffic control systems by 2026 regardless if the crossing is closed or not.

- Response time by the police, sheriff and Skagit Medic One in general should not be impacted by the crossing closure.

- Response time by Skagit County Fire District No. 3 will be impacted by the closure due to the location of the existing fire station on Hickox Road east of I-5.

- Transit service by SKAT will not be impacted by the closure.

- The Conway School District bus service will be impacted because a bus stop is located at the Hickox Road/Dike Road intersection.

- The BNSF/Hickox Road railway crossing closure should not have an impact on the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.

- Future highway transportation improvements for the study area will not be affected by the closure.

Q. What were the recommendations?

A.

- It is recommended that the Hickox Road railway crossing be closed in conjunction with the Mount Vernon siding improvement project to support improved train service on the BNSF line between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C.

- It is recommended that the WSDOT's Rail Office work with Skagit County Fire District No. 3 to mitigate the impact of the closure on fire service response.

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- It is recommended that the Conway School District develop new bus routing to serve students within the study area with the closure of the Hickox Road railway crossing.

Q. Does the WSDOT's study understate the impact of the closure on fire protection and emergency medical services by referencing only a .6 minute increase in response time with no explanation of how this conclusion was derived as one commentor suggested?

A. No. The report does not reference a .6 minute increase in response time. As stated in chapters 3, 4 and 5 of the WSDOT TIA, a seven minute and three mile increase in response time from the Cedardale Station is estimated.

Q. Was the agricultural use of the area considered in the traffic impact report, if so how?

A. Yes. The agricultural use of the area was considered. Turning movements of larger trucks were evaluated since agricultural areas generally use larger trucks in the transport of goods, etc. Chapter 7 of the TIA recommends widening the Stackpole Road/Dike Road and the Hickox Road/Dike Road intersections to more readily accommodate larger trucks if the Hickox Road railway crossing is closed.

Q. Has Skagit County, the City of Mount Vernon, Skagit County Fire District No. 3 or the Dike District designated Hickox Road as an evacuation route?

A. No. Neither the Skagit County Emergency Management Plan nor the Skagit County Emergency Management Evacuation Route Map identifies Hickox Road as an evacuation route. Evacuation routes for thy City of Mount Vernon, Fire District No. 3 and the Dike District are designated by Skagit County. Hickox Road has not been designated as an evacuation route. There is no signage within the study area indicating any evacuation routes.

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Q. Does this end your testimony?

A. Yes.

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

DATED this 8th day of October, 2007 at Olympia, Washington.

Gary Norris

GARY NORRIS

DECLARATION OF SERVICE

Lisa M. Savoia declares I am a citizen of the United States of America, over 18 years old and competent to testify to the matters herein. On October 8, 2007, I served by e-mail and first class mail, postage prepaid, a true and correct copy of the foregoing document on the following:

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DATED this 8th day of October, 2007 at Tumwater, Washington.

Lisa Savoia, Legal Assistant

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GARY NORRIS, P.E., P.T.O.E

Senior Engineer

Total Professional Experience: 31 years

Education:

University of Washington, M.S., Civil Engineering, Transportation Planning, 1977

University of Washington, B.S., Civil Engineering, Traffic Engineering, 1973

Professional Registrations and Licenses:

Professional Traffic Operations Engineer, WA, 2004

Professional Engineer, WA, 1980

Professional Engineer, OR, 1998

Professional Engineer, ID, 2003

Brief Summary of Experience:

Mr. Norris is a senior engineer with 31 years experience in transportation planning and traffic engineering, as both a consulting engineer and a traffic engineer/planner for local governments. While at GSAI, he has managed the development PS&E for major signal and illumination projects, work zone traffic control plans for large public works projects, and traffic impact analyses for proposed railway crossing closure and other development proposals. He has conducted in excess of 1,000 traffic impact analyses. As Renton's City Traffic Engineer for ten years, Mr. Norris was responsible for planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the City's transportation facilities. He managed the City of Renton's $10 million Capital Improvement Program and the $1.2 million transportation department budget. He determined mitigation measures, established design standards, reviewed design plans, and inspected construction of roadway widening, traffic signals and street lighting projects. Mr. Norris established the first computerized master control of the City's traffic signal system and established a traffic mitigation program to help fund area-wide capital facility improvements. As Transportation Planning Engineer for the City of Bellevue for five years, Mr. Norris conducted a long-range transportation study to identify transportation facility improvements and coordinated transportation issues with Bellevue's Planning Commission. He is a past president of the Washington State Section, Institute of Transportation Engineers.

Ridgefield Grade Crossing Consolidation Study; Ridgefield, WA, Project Manager: Evaluate traffic related impacts of potential rail crossing closures within the City of Ridgefield, Washington. The study provided a traffic impact analysis of two railway crossing closure alternatives for the existing railway crossings at Mill Street and Division Street in the City of Ridgefield, Washington in order to accommodate high-speed rail service. The traffic-related impacts of various grade crossing closure alternatives in light of existing and potential future development of the Port of Ridgefield were evaluated.

Key tasks included working with all stakeholders to determine the study area/intersections to be analyzed, collection of existing and proposed traffic data, analysis of effects of each closure condition on traffic within the defined study area, development of conclusions and recommendations, and drafting of a report to the client. GSAI coordinated closely with all stakeholders throughout the development of data, the analysis and development of conclusions.

S. Holgate Street Railway Crossing Closure Traffic Impact Analysis; Seattle, WA, Project Manager: Addressed the WSDOT Rail Office's need for a traffic impact analysis to evaluate the potential closure of the Holgate Street Railway Crossing located between First and Fourth Avenues South in the City of Seattle. GSAI gathered roadway data to document conditions on the existing roadway that included roadway information, average daily traffic volumes, turning movement traffic volumes, pedestrian/bicycle traffic, accident data, 20-year growth scenario, planned and programmed improvements, travel time analysis, traffic simulation modeling, grade crossing safety analysis, truck access analysis, transit and non-motorized transport, and emergency response.

Kelso/Kalama Traffic Impact Analysis for EIS; Kelso, WA Project Manager: Prepare the traffic impact analysis portion of the project's environmental impact statement. The analysis involved an assessment of traffic volumes conditions in the existing and 20-year horizon year of the impact of consolidating or closing several railroad crossings between Kelso and Kalama, Washington. GSAI prepared an existing conditions analysis of five railroad crossings along 18 miles of the railway corridor. GSAI also evaluated the traffic impacts at the crossings under four different scenarios in the existing and 20-year horizon. The analysis considered impacts on motor traffic, pedestrian and bicycle traffic, emergency vehicle response, and train delays. The analysis also evaluated the level of service at 27 intersections that could be affected by the different scenarios.

S. 277th Street Reconstruction Project - Phase III; Signalization and Illumination, Kent, WA, Project Manager: Preparation of plans, specifications, and cost estimates for the reconstruction of three signals and 35,000 lineal feet of illumination along the S 277th street corridor between 72nd Avenue South and the West Valley Highway. The illumination system was designed per King County, WSDOT, City of Kent, and City of Auburn standards. The project also included ITS elements, such as CCTV, ramp metering and fiber optic interconnect. In addition to permanent signalization, the project included temporary signals at each of the three intersections, and temporary illumination at the interchange.

I-5, SR 161 Interchange and SR 18 Interchange Triangle Improvements (Hazardous Materials Investigation and Report); King County, Washington, Project Manager: Providing a comprehensive investigation of hazardous materials sites along the project corridor in order to prepare a report that includes surveys and descriptions of hazardous materials sites, an analysis of the extent of confirmed hazardous materials, status of enforcement actions, a summary of impacts to the overall project and recommendations for improvement. The report is being prepared in accordance with the Hazardous Materials section of the WSDOT Environmental Procedures Manual and the associated Hazardous Waste Discipline Report checklist.

Burlington Traffic Analysis; Burlington, WA: Mr. Norris was the project manager for the development of a traffic mitigation fee to fund necessary improvements in the Burlington Boulevard corridor. The study estimated potential 20 year traffic growth in the Burlington Boulevard corridor and assigned the growth to various development parcels. The list of transportation improvements scheduled for the next twenty years "per trip fee" was established using the cost estimate. This fee is to be assigned to new growth impacting the Burlington Boulevard corridor.

Holgate Street Railway Crossing Traffic Analysis; Seattle, WA: Project Manager for traffic impact analysis for WSDOT Rail Office, evaluating the potential closure of the Holgate Street Railway Crossing in Seattle. Oversaw data collection, analysis, and forecasts of vehicular/truck traffic and pedestrian/bicycle traffic level of service and travel time analysis, traffic simulation modeling, grade crossing safety analysis, truck access analysis, transit and non-motorized transport, and emergency response. Examined existing and future impacts for crossing closure and non-closure alternatives. Prepared the traffic analysis report summarizing the study process findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

Meridian Avenue East/SR 161 Corridor Analysis; Edgewood, WA: Project Manager for development of a context-sensitive design that met the traffic and transportation needs of the City of Edgewood and related impacted parties. The primary scope of this effort was to explore alternative methods to widening SR 161 to achieve the WSDOT goals of safety and mobility. GSAI worked with the City, WSDOT, neighboring cities, businesses, land owners, public safety providers and other community interests. GSAI developed a corridor traffic model, conducted LOS analysis at nine intersections, developed Transportation Systems Management (TSM) improvement alternatives, and prepared cost estimates

Bel-Red Road Intersection Improvements, Bellevue, WA, Project Manager: Preparation of plans, specifications, and cost estimates documents for reconstruction of the Bel-Red Road/134th Avenue NE intersection. The project included signalization, street lighting, and roadway widening to provide left turn lanes on the north and south legs of the project. Utility conflicts, sight distance, adjacent property access, large trees, and topography were all issues which had to be addressed.

Bear Mountain Ranch Road/SR 97A Intersection Design, Chelan County, WA, Project Manager: Project manager for the intersection design of Bear Mountain Road and State Route 97A. Design of the intersection included a new northbound designated left turn pocket and a new southbound designated right turn pocket per WSDOT standards

Columbia Slough Consolidation Conduit, Portland, OR, Senior Traffic Engineer: Designed traffic control plans involving road closures and detour routes, lane closures, traffic signal modifications, as well as channelization and signing modifications for five segments of the tunneling project. Extensive coordination with design engineers, City of Portland staff, and the Oregon Department of Transportation was required for each segment of the project. Prepared drawings, specifications and cost estimates for traffic control measures for all five segments.