



February 13, 2004

Subject File Code #AD8131

Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
Attention: Ahmer Nizam
1300 S.Evergreen Park Drive S.W.
Olympia, Washington 98504-7250

Subject: Grade Crossing Protective Fund

Dear Mr. Nizam:

Enclosed for your consideration is an application from Sound Transit for WUTC Grade Crossing Protective funds. The grant funding would provide grade crossing improvements along Sound Transit's Sounder Commuter Rail Tacoma-to-Lakewood rail corridor.

Sound Transit recently executed an agreement with Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company that will transfer ownership of railroad right-of-way from Tacoma to Lakewood. Sound Transit plans to improve the right-of-way so it may implement commuter rail service along the corridor. This will include improvements at several grade crossings.

This package includes applications for the following five projects listed below. Sound Transit appreciates the Commission's consideration of these crossings in its 2004 Grade Crossing Protective Fund program.

Table with 4 columns: Project Title, Location, WSDOT No, Railroad. Rows include C Street, D Street, S. 35th Street, S. 56th Street, and S. 58th Street (Closure).

Please contact Melissa Parales Flores, Sounder Project Coordinator, at 206.689.4968 or Monica Overby, Grants Administrator, at 206.689.4979, if you have any questions concerning this grant application package.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Lisa Wolterink
Lisa Wolterink
Grants Manager

Enclosure

cc: Monica Overby, Grants Administrator
Melissa Parales Flores, Project Coordinator, Sounder Railroad Infrastructure
Mike Merrick, Program Manager, Sounder Lakewood/Tacoma Corridor

LW:mf:ps

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Web: [www.wutc.wa.gov](http://www.wutc.wa.gov)

**Grade Crossing Protection Fund**  
**SOUND TRANSIT'S APPLICATION FOR FUNDING**

**Project: South 56<sup>th</sup> Street Improvements (Tacoma)**

Applicant Name: Sound Transit

Organization: Regional Transit Authority

Address: Souder Commuter Rail Department  
401 South Jackson Street  
Seattle, WA 98104

Contacts:  
Melissa Parales Flores, Project Coordinator – Souder Commuter Rail  
Monica Overby, Grants Administrator – Grants Division

Office Phone: 206.689.4968 – Melissa Parales Flores  
206.689.4979 – Monica Overby

E-mail: Floresm@soundtransit.org  
Overbym@soundtransit.org

Cell Phone: N/A

Fax Number: 206.398.5216

Type of Application: Miscellaneous  
South 56<sup>th</sup> Street – 085393V  
Sound Transit Commuter Rail

*Please list all of the other companies (e.g., railroad companies) organizations, or state or local agencies that may be involved in implementing this proposal and the name, address and phone number of each.*

Sound Transit  
401 So. Jackson Street  
Seattle, WA 98104  
Melissa Parales Flores  
206.689.4968

City of Tacoma  
Public Works Department  
747 Market Street  
Tacoma, WA 98402  
253.591.5000

*Note:* Requests for public grade crossing safety projects will be continue to be processed through the Commission's regular petition process.

**Project Information – Please attach additional information if needed.**

- 1) *Provide a detailed summary of the hazard being addressed, including any accident/incident information or other supporting data. If filing this application electronically, photographs, drawings, or other optional materials that are not in electronic format may be sent to the mailing address specified in the “instructions” section and should be clearly identified as an attachment to your application:*

**Please see attached photographs, drawings and other related materials of the crossing.**

Sound Transit will run Sounder commuter rail service between Tacoma and Lakewood operating on the former Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway single mainline track. Sounder will construct a South Tacoma Commuter Rail Station between South 56<sup>th</sup> Street and South 60<sup>th</sup> Street grade crossings. The South 58<sup>th</sup> Street grade crossing will be closed to build the 600-ft station platform.

South 56<sup>th</sup> Street, located at the north end of the station platform, is an east-west arterial that provides access from the City of University Place to I-5 and east to Roosevelt Avenue in South Tacoma. South 56<sup>th</sup> Street has five lanes and crosses the BNSF Lakeview Subdivision Branch Line at grade between Washington Street and Burlington Way.

Located just north of this grade crossing is a mainline and siding track where freight trains currently operate to and from the Excel Feed plant. BNSF will continue to operate freight service to their customers along Sound Transit’s Tacoma-to-Lakewood rail corridor. South 56<sup>th</sup> Street also intersects with South Tacoma Way, a major arterial that serves as a large commercial and retail area generating high traffic volumes and activity in the area. The South 56<sup>th</sup> Street grade crossing currently has 21,000 ADT count.

Currently, the South 56<sup>th</sup> Street grade crossing is only protected by an cantilever signal. Sound Transit plans to upgrade the South 56<sup>th</sup> Street grade crossing with railroad signals, flashers, cantilevers and vehicle gates. With the vehicular traffic from South Tacoma Way and University Place and freight traffic from BNSF, crossing the same railroad tracks that will also carry commuter rail passengers, these upgrades are needed to keep all of these modes moving safely. Additionally, as part of the construction of the South Tacoma Commuter Rail station, Sound Transit will also construct additional pedestrian improvements that may include signals, crosswalks and walkways along South 56<sup>th</sup> Street. The project identified in this application would help fund significant signal improvements and upgrades needed at this crossing.

- 2) *Provide a detailed description of your proposed project and explain how its implementation will eliminate or mitigate the hazard. If available, please attach any drawings or construction plans for your proposed project (see section 1 if filing electronically):*

Sound Transit is programmed to upgrade eight miles of the former Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway’s mainline track between Bridgeport Way in Lakewood and west of “M” Street in Tacoma. In addition, Sound Transit will build a new one-mile track segment, a portion

parallel to the existing Tacoma Railroad mainline track, from D Street to M Street in Tacoma. The new track segment will connect to the former BNSF mainline track.

In addition to track upgrades, Sound Transit will design and install a new central traffic control signal system on the Tacoma-to-Lakewood rail corridor. The signal upgrades will also improve the existing railroad signal protective equipment at each grade crossing including South 56<sup>th</sup> Street. This project will provide necessary improvements to this rail segment for commuter rail passengers, motor vehicle occupants, non-motorized vehicle users and pedestrians. The improvements are designed to reduce and prevent train collisions with freight and passenger rail and motor vehicle traffic and will also increase motorists' ability to see approaching trains.

The traffic and pedestrian activity that would be generated by the commuter rail station is not expected to result in any adverse safety conditions. In fact, the proposed signal improvements [and widening] at the South 56<sup>th</sup> Street/Burlington Way intersection would make turning movements from Burlington Way easier and would likely improve safety conditions.

3) *Provide cost estimates, including those related to long-term maintenance:*

Sound Transit has completed preliminary engineering and design (30%) for the track improvements (designs were actually completed by BNSF prior to the Sound Transit and BNSF Lakeview Sub-division Purchase Agreement, 12/17/2003). The railroad signal design will be incorporated in the final design package for the track and signal improvements. Sound Transit will begin final design later this year.

Based on the design and construction of the rail improvements completed for Sound Transit's Tacoma-to-Seattle commuter rail corridor, Sound Transit anticipates that the cost of the South 56th Street project would cost approximately \$200,000.

4) *Estimated timeline of project, if approved:*

2004–2005	Final Design for track and signal improvements
2006	Construction of track and signal improvements
2007	Final inspection of track and signal construction

5) *If known, provide a description of how the project's success would be measured:*

Sound Transit's objective is to provide a safe and secure transportation system for its customers. Sound Transit works closely with partnering agencies in identifying safety and security issues including coordination with local police departments, Burlington Northern Santa Fe, and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Sound Transit also complies with all applicable railroad laws and regulations, and ensures that our projects continue to provide reliable and safe transportation services for the citizens of this region. The FRA will review and approve the testing of the Tacoma-to-Lakewood rail corridor's track and signals upgrade project after construction is complete.

Additionally, Sound Transit has developed extensive customer service and community outreach programs designed to inform and gather feedback from customers and the general public. Implementing these programs gives Sound Transit the ability to monitor and measure the success of our projects and services.

6) *Other comments:*

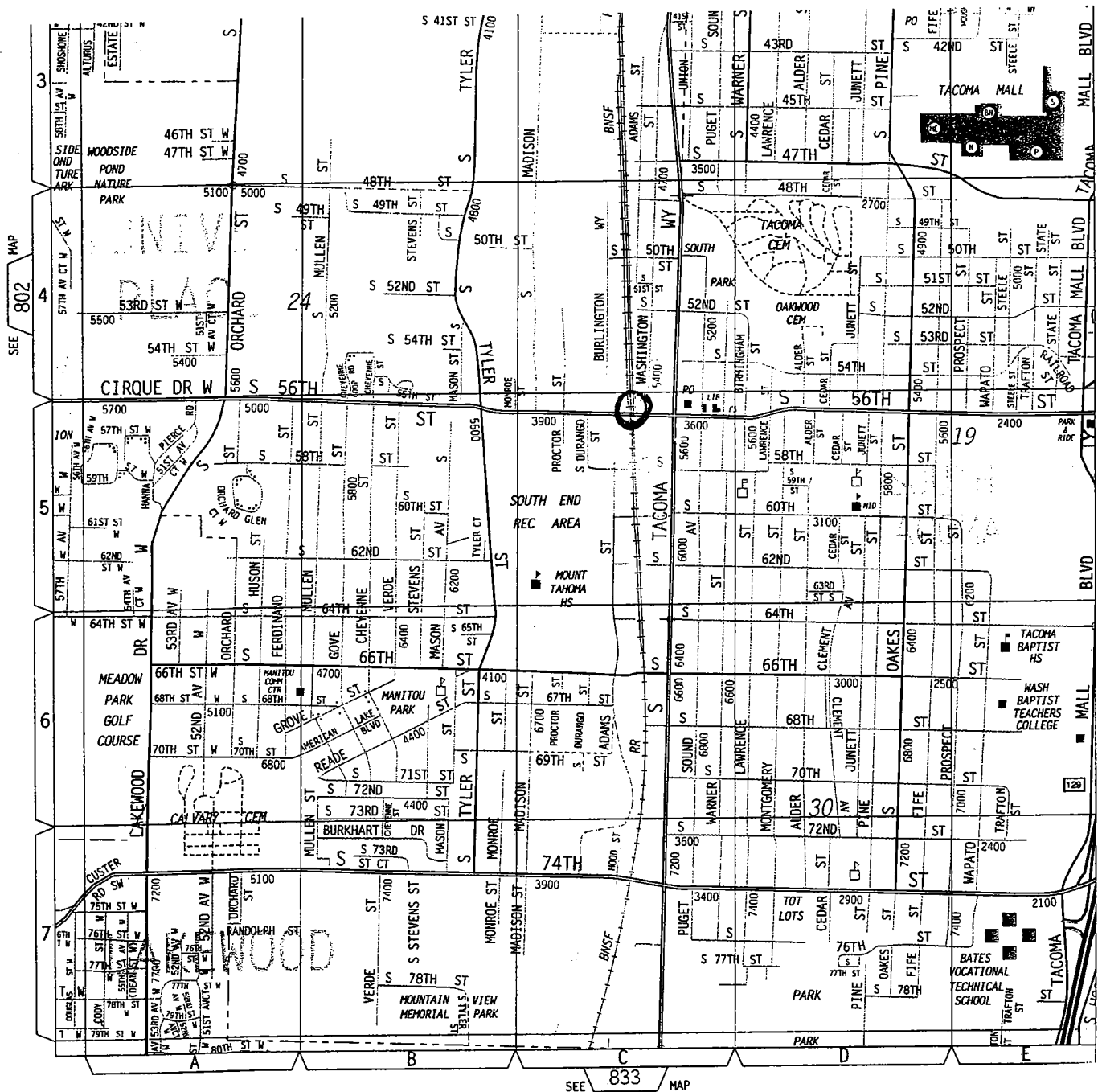
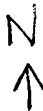
In 1996, voters in Central Puget Sound agreed to increase their taxes to pay for a transportation system plan that would enable people to move easily from one end of the region to another. The plan approved by voters is called *Sound Move* and it is the blueprint for Sound Transit's array of services. Sound Transit is a regional public transit agency delivering a mix of light rail and commuter rail, regional express bus routes and new transit facilities to the citizens of urban King, Pierce and Snohomish counties. Sound Transit's Sounder Commuter Rail provides a fast, dependable and easy-to-use commuter option linking major destinations in the region. Sounder provides two-way, rush-hour passenger train service using existing freight railroad tracks between Everett and Tacoma. Sounder is now currently serving Tacoma, Puyallup, Sumner, Auburn, Kent, Tukwila, Seattle, Edmonds and Everett. Future service is planned for Lakewood and Mukilteo.

The Sounder Tacoma-to-Seattle Commuter Rail segment is a 40-mile long BNSF railroad corridor and includes seven stations – King Street (Seattle), Tukwila, Kent, Auburn, Sumner, Puyallup, and Tacoma Dome. Service operations began in September 2000 with four trains (two each peak period) and served over 50,000 riders in 2001. In September 2002, service increased from four to six trains daily. There are currently over 3,000 passengers each day that use this service. Sound Transit also offers special event service to Sunday Mariners and Seahawks games. This service is extremely popular with ridership at standing room only.

The Sounder Lakewood-to-Tacoma Commuter Rail segment will include a one-mile long new rail segment connecting the Tacoma Rail line at Freighthouse Square with the BNSF Lakeview branch line. This segment will also include nearly 7 miles of improvements to the BNSF Lakeview branch to reach the South Tacoma and Lakewood Stations.

These track and signal improvements are required to operate the commuter rail service and will provide the speed and reliability necessary to offer attractive passenger service and build ridership in the corridor. These improvements will also improve the capacity, reliability and dependability of commuter rail passenger service and freight train traffic.

# South 56<sup>th</sup> Street Improvements (Tacoma)







South 56<sup>th</sup> Street – 085393V  
Sound Transit Commuter Rail  
(former BNSF mainline track)



South 56th Street  
Grade Crossing



