

To: Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission

From: Alerd Johnson, Property owner [REDACTED], Mount Vernon, WA

Subject: Hickox Road Highway Grade Cross - Reference # TE-070696

I wish to go on record as opposed to the closing of the Hickox Road railroad crossing, Skagit County, Washington.

My brother and I own 10 acres of farm land, house and two agricultural storage buildings located at [REDACTED]. We purchased this land in 2005 based on its proximity and access to the Interstate 5 highway. If the BNSF rail crossing is closed, the two alternative roads leading to the property would be the Britt Road (North of property) or the Stackpole Road (south of the property).

Delayed Emergence Response time

My first concern is the additional response time required for the local Cedardale Fire response vehicles to reach the property in advent of emergency. Our Hickox Road rental house was constructed in the early 1900's and a delay of 10 minutes emergency response time of a fire truck or aid car could make the difference in total building destruction and/or loss of life.

Delay Emergency Evacuation Time

Our property is considered to be in a flood zone which if emergency did occur, the Hickox Road crossing closure would block our exit from any flood water moving from the Skagit River west of the property.

Increase travel time to reach property

Since I live near Anacortes, my travel route from the north would require the Britt Road which would take me through residential south Mount Vernon. Since I often move agriculture equipment I would be driving though a residential area with my truck and machinery trailer. This is not a desirable situation for the residential community or me. Use of the Stackpole Road would require an additional ten minutes and add additional mileage to my trip. With rising fuel costs I would choose the closest route taking me through residential Mount Vernon.

Reduced desirability of rental house and property

It is a financial necessity for us to rent the farm land and house. Adding additional travel time and accessibility for renters to reach property will negatively impact ability to rent properties.

I do not know why BNSF requires that this Hickox Road crossing be eliminated but I am certain options can be developed allowing the crossing to remain open for property owners and the BNSF needs met also. Washington State in the 21 century needs to improve highway transportation rather than impede transportation efficiency.