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Grade Crossing Protection Fund APPLICATION FOR FUNDING Cheney Grade Crossing Safety Project

The Commission's objectives in distributing monies from its Grade Crossing Protective Fund (GCPF) are as follows: To reduce accident/incident frequency and severity at both public and private railroad crossings; and to reduce pedestrian trespassing and the frequency of trespass-related deaths and injuries along railroad rights-of-way. Any public, private, or nonprofit entity may submit an application to the Commission for GCPF monies.

The focus of the GCPF program is to fund projects that demonstrate a need for improved public safety related to one of the following four categories:

- **Grade crossing safety projects** (the Commission's original GCPF program).
- **Trespass prevention projects.** Examples of projects in this category include fencing or other physical barriers that prevent trespassing on railroad rights-of-way; pedestrian warning devices; establishing new public grade crossings; installing channeling devices; media/public relations campaigns; and enforcement-related activities.
- **Private crossing safety improvements.** Examples of projects in this category include private crossing closures; installation of private crossing-specific warning devices; installation of nighttime/off-hours locked gates; and improvements to reflectorization/conspicuousness of existing warning devices.
- **Miscellaneous safety projects.** Examples of projects in this category include improvements to motorists' ability to see approaching trains, including the removal of physical obstructions; participation in roadway improvements at or approaching grade crossings; and mitigation of crossing closures.

All projects that fall within any of these four general categories are eligible for funding consideration.

Applicant Name: Cheney Grade Crossing Safety Project

Organization: City of Cheney

Address: 112 Anderson Road, Cheney, WA 99004

Office Phone: (509) 498-9293

Contact Person: Don MacDonald, Director of Public Works

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Type of Application: The Cheney Grade Crossing Safety Project will improve safety at a private crossing and also aid in preventing trespassing onto railroad right-of-way.

Private crossing safety improvement

Trespass prevention

Miscellaneous

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.

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*

The Cheney Grade Crossing Safety Project will improve safety at the only private crossing in the City of Cheney as well as preventing trespassing onto railroad rights-of-way.

In the fall of 2005, the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) petitioned (Docket No. TR-051466) the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) to increase the train speed through the City of Cheney from 35 mph to 60 mph. The Cheney City Council expressed their concern about the potential threat to safety at the private crossing that provides access to the city’s advanced wastewater treatment plant. However, the fact that the city would need to prove that there was an essentially local safety condition at this particular crossing made it all but impossible for the city to formally oppose the UPRR’s request. Thus the city was left with very little opportunity to do anything other than on its own accord to try and address the concerns the city has for the employees and the general public who travel to and from the wastewater treatment plant via the UPRR private crossing. This includes students of all ages who travel to the plant for field trips throughout the calendar year.

In addition to attempting to improve safety at the private crossing, the city is also keenly interested in attempting to prevent trespassing on both UPRR and Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad (BNSFRR) rights-of-way. Intersecting the BNSFRR right-of-way to the west and the UPRR right-of-way to the east is city owned road right-of-way. The city owned road right-of-way is essentially an undeveloped dirt road but the BNSFRR and the UPRR rights-of-way can be directly accessed by this road right-of-way. This road right-of-way has been used to illegally dump garbage and other materials so there is little reason to believe that the adjoining railroads’ rights-of-way would deter persons of this ilk from dumping on the railroads’ rights-of-way.

Figures one and two show the location of the UPRR private crossing that is the only viable means for accessing the city’s advanced wastewater treatment plant. One can also see the limited visibility looking down the tracks at this crossing. Figure three is an aerial photo that shows the location of the UPRR private crossing in relation to the city’s road right-of-way that provides access to the BNSFRR and UPRR rights-of-way.

Figure 1

**Cheney Grade Crossing Safety Project –
Union Pacific Crossing**



Looking south from the access road to the Cheney Wastewater Treatment Plant. The road intersects the Union Pacific crossing. Though this is a private crossing, the road provides access to the publicly owned treatment works. There are roughly 50 ADTs a day at this crossing. In addition to the daily trips by employees there are service and delivery trucks traveling to and from the plant and the occasional school bus transporting students to the plant for a tour.

Figure 2

**Cheney Grade Crossing Safety Project -
Union Pacific Crossing**



Looking east down the Union Pacific tracks. This is the view for traffic traveling south on the access road to the Cheney WWTP.

Figure 3



- 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):*

The optimal solution for addressing the concerns over safety at the UPRR private crossing would be to install crossing gates and signals. However, there are funding restrictions on the installation of gates and signals at private crossings. Moreover, since the average weekday traffic volumes at the private crossing are relatively low (approximately 50 ADT), having this crossing reclassified as a public crossing probably wouldn't meet the minimum ADT requirements to make this a viable project for gates and signals. What the city is proposing instead through the use of the GCPF is to install a cantilever gate on the access road that leads to the plant that can be closed at night or as needed in an effort to try and protect the public from accessing this uncontrolled crossing when the plant offices are closed or when visibility at the crossing is severely limited as occurs from time-to-time during the winter months due to heavy fog or blowing snow.

The solution for preventing access to the BNSFRR and UPRR right's-of-way via the city's road right-of-way would be to install double swing gates on each side of the city's road right-of-way.

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

The total estimated cost for the cantilever gate and the two double swing gates is \$8,500. A 34 foot to 36 foot wide and 6 foot high double cantilever gate is estimated to cost \$4,500. A 16 foot to 20 foot wide double swing gate ranging between 4 feet to 6 feet in height is estimated at \$2,000 each. The city is requesting \$8,500 from the GCPF and the city would assume responsibility for maintaining the gates.

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

The city would plan to retain a contractor to provide and install the gates within 30 days of receiving formal approval to proceed with the project from the UTC. The gate installation work shouldn't take more than five to ten working days to complete.

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

The success of the project will be measured by the potential to prevent any accidents from occurring at the UPRR private crossing. Fortunately, while there have been no accidents at the private crossing, there is always the potential for an accident, so by minimizing access to the crossing to only when the city's wastewater treatment plant is staffed during the day will help prevent accidents from happening in the future. Moreover, with respect to the gates on the city's road right-of-way that would prevent access to the BNSFRR and UPRR rights-of-way, perhaps the best way to measure the success of the gates will be on the basis of what will hopefully be an end to illegal dumping.

6) *Other comments:*

The City of Cheney appreciates the UTC's responsiveness in providing the Grade Crossing Protection Fund to address some of the train safety issues that might not otherwise qualify for more traditional train safety funding.

For questions or assistance, please contact Mark Halliday at 360-664-1232 (e-mail mhallida@wutc.wa.gov) or Vicki Elliott at 360-664-1100 (e-mail velliott@wutc.wa.gov)

Instructions

After completing the Grade Crossing Protective Fund application, please send the original and two copies to:

**Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
Attention: Grade Crossing Protective Fund
1300 S. Evergreen Park Drive SW
Olympia, WA 98504-7250**

Applications are available at www.wutc.wa.gov/GCPFgrants, and may be filed electronically at railinfo@wutc.wa.gov. When filing electronically, please specify “Grade Crossing Protective Fund” in the subject line.

Please ensure that the names and addresses of representatives from the relevant railroad company and local jurisdiction are correct and listed in the application.

Funding

RCW 81.53.271 allows the Commission to grant up to twenty thousand dollars for selected projects without requiring a monetary match. The Commission, however, may limit the amount of funding per project to a lesser amount so that an optimal number of projects may be funded with regard to relative safety benefits and project costs. The Commission may also consider funding for larger safety projects for which the GCPF grant would constitute some portion of the total cost.

Selection of Projects

The Commission will initiate a “call for projects,” soliciting applications within a specific timeframe. After the specified submittal deadline, all applications will be reviewed simultaneously. Further information about the Grade Crossing Protective Fund may be obtained on the Commission’s website at www.wutc.wa.gov/GCPFgrants, or by contacting Mark Halliday at (360) 664-1232 or Vicki Elliott at (360) 664-1100.

The Commission will review and select projects for funding based on the relative severity of the hazard being addressed, the safety benefits resulting from a project, the costs of implementing a project, and geographic diversity. For projects that require physical installations and are selected after an initial prioritization of applications,* Commission Staff will organize an on-site meeting with representatives of the railroad, local agency, the applicant (if different from the railroad or local agency), and other entities if appropriate. The purpose of the meeting is to verify information included in the application, gain first-hand knowledge of the hazard and proposal, and give all relevant parties an opportunity to recommend alternatives or additional safety needs. The Commission will approve at an open meeting all projects that receive GCPF funds, as well as the amount of any GCPF funding, if any, to be awarded to each project. Final award of GCPF grants will be contingent upon the recipient signing an agreement specifying the terms of the grant.

* Since funding is limited, an initial prioritization will reduce the number of eligible applicants to a number consistent with the amount of funding available.