

Ex. 139

City of **Mount Vernon**

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Jeffrey T. Schultz
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Washington State Department of Transportation
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P.O. Box 47300
Olympia, WA 98504-7300

RECEIVED

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WSDOT RAIL OFFICE

RE: Draft Hickox Road Report

Dear Mr. Schultz:

Thank you for meeting with Jana Hanson and me last month to discuss the proposed closure of the rail crossing at Hickox Road in South Mount Vernon. I have reviewed the draft report that you provided to me at the meeting, and this letter provides a brief summary of my comments.

The technical methods used in the report appear to be thorough in analyzing traffic impacts based upon current usage and planning documents. Even so, the report does not adequately assess the importance of the rail crossing to the City.

For example, the City and WSDOT want to eventually improve the Hickox Road interchange on I-5 from its current "north bound off" and "south bound on" limitations to a full access interchange. This improvement will increase the importance of the Hickox Road rail crossing.

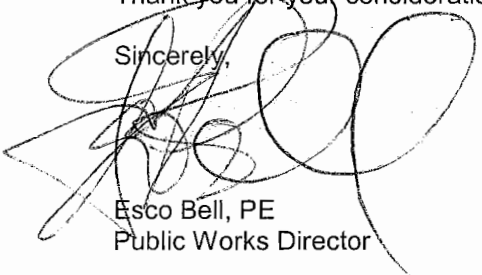
Secondly, the City has analyzed the buildable lands in its urban growth area (UGA) and identified an important need for an additional 800 acres of commercial land during the next twenty years. There are only two feasible regions to locate this added commercial land—in the river bend area and/or in South Mount Vernon. Additional commercial land in South Mount Vernon would greatly increase the need for the rail crossing to remain open at Hickox Road.

Lastly, the importance of the Hickox rail crossing to the City is made greater by the fact that there are no other public rail crossings in the City's UGA south of Blackburn Road—a distance of approximately one and a half miles.

For the above reasons, the proposed closure would (1) reduce the ease with which Mount Vernon can attract needed commercial development, (2) limit traffic options for the existing transportation grid in the City's UGA, and (3) reduce access across the railroad for traffic and emergency vehicles in South Mount Vernon. We believe that these impacts are significant to the City, and we are opposed to the proposed rail crossing closure at Hickox Road.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Esco Bell, PE
Public Works Director