

January 7, 2008

My name is Yvonne Boon. I grew up at the west end of the Blackburn Road. As a child, I placed pennies on the railroad tracks to flatten them, as we crossed the tracks at Blackburn Road on our walk up the hill to Hillcrest Park. As kids, we often counted the number of riders in the cargo cars of the trains and on one occasion my Dad had my Mom made a sandwich for a man who was passing through, as he rode the boxcars.

The Railroad line, the Skagit River and Interstate 5 all are parallel to each other and all 3 determine the direction and flow of people, business and commerce from Conway to the south and completely through Mt. Vernon on the north. We have always lived with finding our way around our town and rural areas by Railroad Crossings, Skagit River Bridges, I-5 Interchanges, and a route to Schools and Health Care facilities up the hill on the east side of Mt. Vernon. The growth of population, commerce and business in our area does not warrant closure of railroad crossings, or road accesses now nor in the coming years.

The means of transportation through our area can not be separated to look at one piece individually. The railroad is one piece. Life with the Skagit River is another piece and affects us more. Throughout the year in Skagit County, the power of the wind, rain, and snow determine the course of the river. Road closures are not a new term for Mt. Vernon or our County. The Dike Road, which runs alongside the Skagit River dike at the west end of the Hickox Road, and parallel to the Railroad line at Hickox Road can be closed or impassable due to flood control vehicles, sandbagging, or water. Without the Hickox Road Railroad crossing, as an escape for our family, neighbors and dairy animals, we are not safe.

No longer is it safe or legal for people to ride the railroad cargo cars, nor feed a stranger a sandwich, or take pennies and place them on the railroad tracks to flatten. Those are memories of a better day. Conversely, I cannot fathom why now would my pennies (taxpayer dollars) be used to take away any road or railroad crossing access, to create a less safe area for people to live, and work?

Respectfully Submitted,
Yvonne Boon
Western Valley Farms