



STATE OF WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

1300 S. Evergreen Park Dr. S.W., P.O. Box 47250 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7250
(360) 664-1160 • TTY (360) 586-8203

April 21, 2008

David Poucher, Mayor
City of White Salmon
1100 North Main Street
P.O. Box 2139
White Salmon, WA 98672

Re: TR-080397, Proposed Quiet Zone, South Dock Grade Road

Dear Mayor Poucher:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the South Dock Grade Road proposed quiet zone, as described in Docket TR-080397.

On February 19, 2008, the City of White Salmon (city) notified the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) of its intent to establish a railroad quiet zone at the South Dock Grade Road highway rail grade crossing, DOT #090164L.

On August 30, 2007, UTC staff participated in an on-site diagnostic review with the city, BNSF Railway Company (BNSF) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). The city is proposing a one-quarter mile east and west, 24-hour, seven day per week quiet zone at this crossing.

The consultant for the city entered information about this crossing into the Quiet Zone Calculator and received a risk index of 14,092.13 with no supplementary safety measures proposed. The current Nationwide Significant Risk Threshold (NSRT) is 19,047.00, which places the South Dock Grade Road crossing well below the current threshold and eligible to be designated as a quiet zone.

As you know, the UTC may comment on the quiet zone proposal, but does not approve or disapprove it because states have been preempted in this area by federal rule. Based on our participation and observations at the diagnostic review, UTC staff is very concerned about the limited sight distance at the crossing, which is located between two curves. From the southbound approach, sight distance to both the east and the west is approximately 300 feet. From the north, sight distance is about 1500 feet in each direction. UTC staff therefore recommends that if the train horn is removed from the

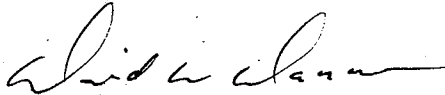


crossing, the city should install another safety device. UTC staff is available to assist the city in developing alternative safety measures.

The UTC acknowledges that the South Dock Grade Road railroad crossing qualifies for designation as a quiet zone under its NSRT rating. However, staff has concerns about the limited sight distance at the crossing and the lack of installation of a new safety device to offset the risk of removing the train horn. If train horns are silenced at this crossing, motorists would likely have limited time to visually detect and react to an on-coming train in the event of a signal failure.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Please feel free to contact Kathy Hunter at (360) 664-1257 or by e-mail at khunter@utc.wa.gov if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,



David W. Danner
Executive Director

Cc: John Li, BNSF Railway
Chris Adams, FRA
Alvin Richardson, AMTRAK
Mike Miller, MGH Associates