



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

July 31, 2012

Brian Carlson, PE, Director of Public Works
City of Vancouver
P.O. Box 1995
Vancouver, Washington 98668-1995

Re: TR-120841 – East Vancouver Proposed Quiet Zone

Dear Mr. Carlson:

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) received notice on June 4, 2012, from the City of Vancouver (City) of its intent to establish a railroad quiet zone at the following crossings:

<u>USDOT No.</u>	<u>Street Name</u>	<u>Crossing Classification</u>
090093S	SE 164 th Avenue	Public
090092K	SE 147 th Avenue	Public
090090W	SE 139 th Avenue	Public
090091D	SE 144 th Avenue	Private

The City is proposing a quiet zone along this corridor of crossings which will be in effect 24 hours, seven day per week.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the East Vancouver proposed quiet zone, as described in Docket TR-120841.

UTC staff entered data about these crossings into the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Quiet Zone Calculator and received similar results as outlined by the City in this notice. The Quiet Zone Risk Index (QZRI) is 25,175.56, which qualifies the corridor for a quiet zone because the Risk Index with Horns (RIWH) of 27,695.67 is higher. The calculated QZRI assumes installation of a combination of supplemental and alternative safety measures which the city will need to implement prior to implementation of the quiet zone.

UTC staff recommends that the City review FRA's publication, "Guidance on the Use of Traffic Channelization Devices at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings," prior to installing the median barriers. The devices selected should meet all FRA requirements in order to



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receive the full effectiveness rating as a supplemental safety device.

When using the FRA Quiet Zone Calculator UTC staff noted that several data points in the FRA inventories for these crossings is inaccurate. The inventories needed to be updated per CFR 49 §222.39(b)(1)(i) which requires that the quiet zone application to the FRA, "Contains an accurate, complete and current Grade Crossing Inventory Form for each public, private and pedestrian grade crossing within the quiet zone." UTC staff manually updated the data to get an accurate risk assessment but strongly recommends the City follow-up with BNSF to get Parts II and Part III (3) of the inventory data up-to-date. UTC staff will initiate updates to the other appropriate fields.

Based on staff's on-site evaluation of the crossings, UTC staff is concerned about the level of protection at the private crossing located at Southeast 144th Avenue. UTC staff participated in several on site meetings at this crossing and recommended that shoulder mounted lights and gates be installed, the roadway expanded to two vehicle travel lanes, the "hump" or steep grade be reduced, and the sight obstruction removed from the south side of the tracks. The City is proposing to replace the standard stop signs with LED flashing stop signs. UTC staff acknowledges that this is an improvement from the current warning devices but given the frequency of up to 64 trains per day, traveling up to 79 miles per hour over the crossing and the two accidents since 2009, UTC staff recommends a higher level of protection. Currently, users of the Southeast 144th Avenue crossing have the benefit of hearing residual train horn warnings from the two nearby public crossings located at Southeast 139th Avenue and Southeast 147th Avenue. Once the quiet zone is enacted along this corridor, the blowing of train horns will be discontinued. Users of the crossing will no longer have an audible warning of approaching trains. Installing signals at this crossing would replace the train horn warning with audible and physical warnings (flashing lights/bell and a downed gate).

Both Southeast 147th Avenue and Southeast 139th Avenue are intersecting roadways to Southeast Evergreen Highway. The approaches to the crossings are limited in length and thus the standard 100 feet of median barriers cannot be installed. The City proposes to install significantly shorter medians which will qualify as alternative safety measures. UTC staff acknowledges that the FRA has provided the City with favorable feedback on the calculating the effectiveness of the shorter medians. However, parallel roadways to railroad tracks do present unique challenges to drivers when there is reduced reaction time to the crossing when turning off of a parallel roadway.

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. The UTC acknowledges that the East Vancouver corridor qualifies for designation as a quiet zone under the RIWH and QZRI calculations and offers these comments.

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

Sincerely,



David W. Danner
Executive Director and Secretary

cc: John Shurson and Richard Wagner, BNSF Railway
FRA Associate Administrator for Safety
Kurt Laird, AMTRAK
Ahmer Nizam, WSDOT
Christine Adams, FRA