



STATE OF WASHINGTON

UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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September 12, 2017

Tom Trulove, Mayor  
Mark Schuller, City Administrator  
City of Cheney  
609 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Cheney, WA 99004

**Re: TR-170837 - Notice of Intent to Create a New Quiet Zone – City of Cheney**

Dear Mayor Trulove and Mr. Schuller:

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (commission) received notice on July 24, 2017, from the City of Cheney (City) of its intent to establish a quiet zone, which includes the following public at-grade railroad-highway crossings:

1. Pine Street – USDOT 066315M
2. F Street/Cheney-Spangle Road – USDOT 065970L
3. Cheney-Plaza Road - USDOT 065971T
4. Mullinix Road – USDOT 089624P

The proposed quiet zone would be in effect 24 hours per day, seven days per week. The notice provided to the commission did not specify the length of the proposed quiet zone. Commission staff assumes that the City is proposing a quiet zone extending one-quarter mile on each side of the crossings, which is the minimum length required by Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 222.35.

The City utilized information in the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) database for each railroad-highway crossing to calculate the Quiet Zone Risk Index (QZRI). As the four crossings now stand, the QZRI for the intended quiet zone without horns is 18,219, which exceeds the current Nationwide Significant Risk Threshold of 14,723. The City has committed to installing constant warning train detection at Pine Street and installing Supplemental Safety Measure (SSM) upgrades at the Pine Street and Cheney-Spangle Road

crossings consisting of non-mountable medians with reflective traffic channelization devices. These upgrades reduce the possibility of motorists driving around downed gates when a train is approaching. The City also proposes to utilize the existing SSMs at the Cheney-Plaza Road and Mullinix Road crossings. Implementation of these supplemental safety measures have a positive effect on the overall QZRI, lowering it to 6,078.

Commission staff participated in onsite assessments of the crossings within the intended quiet zone on June 14, 2017. Representatives from the Federal Railroad Administration and BNSF Railway also participated in the assessments.

Staff supports the SSM upgrades at the Pine Street (USDOT 066315M) and Cheney-Spangle Road (USDOT 065970L) crossings and recommends that the City review the FRA's publication, "Guidance on the Use of Traffic Channelization Devices at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings," prior to installing the channelization devices. The devices selected should meet all FRA requirements. When the quiet zone is implemented, "NO TRAIN HORN" signs will be added to the advance warning signs on each approach to the crossing.

In addition to the SSMs, participants in the on-site assessments, including commission staff, discussed the following item of concern:

- Cheney-Spangle Road (USDOT 065970L) – The City previously made significant improvements for pedestrians at this crossing; however, during the on-site assessment, the group observed several pedestrians proceeding over the crossing while the crossing gates were in the down position and a train was approaching. Though not a requirement for the quiet zone, the City should consider installing a pedestrian signal and gates at this crossing, due to the heavy volume of pedestrian traffic. The crossing is located between Eastern Washington University and popular off-campus apartment complexes which results in a high number of college students walking over the crossing.

Under current federal rules, the commission may comment on quiet zones but it does not have the authority to approve or disprove them. Commission staff acknowledges that these crossings qualify for designation as a quiet zone with the SSMs proposed by the City.

Prior to installing the SSMs at Pine Street and Cheney-Spangle Road, the City must submit a petition for each crossing to the commission and get approval for these upgrades.

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Please feel free to contact Betty Young, Transportation Planning Specialist, at (360) 664-1202 or by email at [byoung@utc.wa.gov](mailto:byoung@utc.wa.gov), if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,



Steven V. King  
Executive Director and Secretary

cc: Christine Adams, Federal Railroad Administration  
Federal Railroad Administration, Office of Safety, Washington DC  
Megan McIntyre, BNSF Railway Co.  
Stephen Semenick, BNSF Railway Co.  
Cheney Police Department  
Kurt Laird, AMTRAK  
Connie Raezer, Washington State Department of Transportation