



STATE OF 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

May 2, 2018

The Honorable Kelli Linville, Mayor
City of Bellingham
210 Lottie Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

**Re: TR-180244 - Notice of Intent to Establish a Railroad Quiet Zone
City of Bellingham - Waterfront**

Dear Mayor Linville:

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) received notice on Mar. 22, 2018, of the City of Bellingham's (City) intent to establish a railroad quiet zone in the waterfront area. The proposed quiet zone includes the following public railroad-highway crossings:

- Pine Street - USDOT 396920W
- Cornwall Avenue - USDOT 084806J
- Laurel Street - USDOT 084809E
- Bay Street – USDOT 084812M
- Chestnut Street – USDOT 084811F
- Central Avenue – USDOT 084814B
- C Street – USDOT 084815H
- F Street – USDOT 077846P

The City proposes a quiet zone that will be in effect 24 hours per day, seven days per week. The notice provided to the UTC did not specify the length of the proposed quiet zone. UTC staff (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 Code of Federal Regulations Title 49, Part 222.35.

Staff reviewed information for each crossing in the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) database and used this information to calculate the Quiet Zone Risk Index (QZRI).¹ The QZRI for the intended quiet zone is 22,970.33, which exceeds the current Nationwide Significant Risk Threshold of 14,723. In its notice, the City committed to installing Supplemental Safety Measure (SSM) upgrades at many of the crossings, including installation of four-quadrant gates at all at-grade crossings except Laurel Street. In addition, the city intends to install median barriers to channel traffic and reduce the possibility of motorists driving around downed gates when a train is approaching at all at-grade crossings. In total, these proposed SSMs lower the overall QZRI to 2,362.19 for the corridor.

Because the City did not convene official safety diagnostic review meetings, UTC staff conducted independent onsite assessments of the crossings within the intended quiet zone on Apr. 17, 2018, with FRA staff and made the following observations and recommendations:

- The FRA inventory for each crossing should be updated to show existing conditions, including signage, crossing surface, updated AADT, etc. UTC staff can assist the City in updating specific parts of the FRA inventory.
- Cornwall Ave. (USDOT 084806J), Central Ave. (USDOT 084814B), and F St. (USDOT 077846P) – The City should consider closure of driveways in vicinity of these crossings or restrict turning movements once median barriers are added.
- Laurel St. (USDOT 084809E) – Two-quadrant gates are already in place. The City should clarify if its referenced median barrier installation will consist of 100' median barriers with channelization on each approach to the crossing.
- C St. (USDOT 084815H) – The City indicated that it upgraded the crossing in 2015 to include four-quadrant gates, pedestrian improvements, and channelization. Staff observed that the crossing has four-quadrant gates; however, there are no median barriers (channelization) installed and limited pedestrian facilities.

Staff supports the addition of the proposed SSMs described by the City in its notice. Under current federal rules, the UTC may comment on quiet zones but it does not have the authority to approve or deny them.

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

¹ The FRA inventory information for several of the proposed quiet zone crossings is out of date, so staff used the existing levels of active protection at each crossing.

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Sincerely,



Mark L. Johnson
Executive Director and Secretary

cc: FRA Office of Safety, Washington DC
Jeffrey Stewart, Federal Railroad Administration, Region 8
Stephen Semenick, BNSF Railway Co.
Alvin Richardson, Amtrak
Ahmer Nizam, Washington State Department of Transportation
Chad Schulhauser, City of Bellingham