

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

CITY OF WENATCHEE,)
)
 Petitioner,)
)
 vs.)
)
 BURLINGTON NORTHERN SANTE FE)
 RAILWAY,)
)
 Respondent.)

DOCKET TR-220540
 PREFILED TESTIMONY OF RYAN
 HARMON

Please state you name and job title.

My name is Ryan Harmon. I am a Project Engineer for the City of Wenatchee
 Department of Public Works.

Are you familiar with the 9th Street Crossing Project?

Yes, I am familiar with the project. In my role as Project Engineer, I am the project
 manager for and oversaw the design of the 9th Street Crossing project.

Is the 9th Street Crossing Project funded by federal funds?

Yes, the City is utilizing federal funds for this project. The City was awarded funding
 through the Railway-Highway Crossings (Section 130) Program from the Federal Highway
 Administration (FHWA). The city, in partnership with BNSF Railway, was awarded
 \$1,321,165 from this program (**Exhibit A**).

1 **Can you explain the current roadway conditions at the rail crossing?**

2 The roadway section varies in width from 34-ft to 47-ft wide. Lane widths are not
3 delineated beyond a double yellow centerline (DYCL) on the western leg and the intersection
4 of 9th Street and Piere Street is located parallel to the railroad tracks approximately 100-feet to
5 the East from center of the nearest tracks to the DYCL of Piere Street. Currently there are no
6 pedestrian facilities for pedestrians to cross the railroad and they are forced to enter into the
7 travel lanes or navigate over the rock ballast on the side of the road. There are two main tracks
8 servicing 14 trains per day (including 2 passenger trains per day) based on the most current
9 U.S. DOT Crossing Inventory Form (**Exhibit B**) for this crossing. Additionally, this Inventory
10 Form specifies that there are 4,358 daily vehicle trips containing 10% trucks and 8 daily
11 school buses. Photos of the existing configuration are attached as **Exhibit C**.

12 **Can you explain the current warning devices at the rail crossing?**

13 Currently, there is one cantilever mounted signal system and one automatic entrance
14 gate for each direction of travel. There is one driving lane eastbound and one driving lane
15 westbound with a total of 10 flasher sets of lights. There are two stop bars, two RR Xing
16 pavement markings, two W10-1 approach signs with two W10-9 signs, two R15-1 regulatory
17 signs with two R15-2 signs, and a double yellow centerline (DYCL) on the eastern approach.

18 **Can you explain the proposed modifications at the rail crossing?**

19 The 9th Street Crossing Project will construct important improvements to this corridor
20 that sees large volumes of passenger vehicles, buses, freight, bicycles and pedestrians.
21 The active warning devices proposed for this location includes one cantilever, one automatic
22 entry gate and one automatic exit gate for each direction of travel as well as one automatic
23 entry gate and one automatic exit gate for each sidewalk. This work, along with new concrete

1 crossing panels, and an updated instrument house will be constructed by BNSF, who will be
2 reimbursed by the City.

3 The other improvements at the crossing include a 6-inch high concrete median on the
4 western leg of 9th Street to block traffic from trying to go around the railroad crossing arms
5 while they are down. The City will also increase the roadway width of the crossing and
6 construct curb, gutter, sidewalk and associated drainage improvements. This project will
7 complete sidewalk gaps currently existing in the corridor. At the railroad crossing the sidewalk
8 will be separated from the concrete curb and run behind the mast arms of the cantilever signals
9 as requested by BNSF. Additionally, the City will be overlaying the existing pavement up to
10 the concrete crossing panels improving pavement condition and providing a smoother
11 transition to the crossing.

12 The City will also install two stop bars, two RR Xing pavement markings, two W10-1
13 approach signs with two W10-9 signs, two R15-1 regulatory signs with two R15-2 signs,
14 DYCL on both approaches and white edge lines in accordance with the Manual on Uniform
15 Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The proposed layout is attached as **Exhibit D**.

16 **Why did the City design those specific improvements?**

17 The City originally completed a grant application in 2017 (**Exhibit E**) with the plan to
18 fill in the existing sidewalk gap, improve pavement markings and signage, install Z gates for
19 pedestrians and install new illumination. The next stage in the grant application included a
20 Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Diagnostic Evaluation Report held on November 6, 2017
21 (**Exhibit F**). This meeting was attended by representatives from WSDOT, UTC, BNSF, and
22 the City of Wenatchee. The report stated that accommodations for pedestrians and bicycles
23

1 are needed and it was also stated that the crossing signals need to be updated to current
2 standards.

3 Following this meeting, the non-traversable median was added to project scope on the western
4 leg of the crossing. Due to turning movement restrictions from nearby Piere Street a median
5 was not feasible on the eastern leg. The recommended improvement in lieu of the median was
6 a quad gate system. The City was awarded grant funding on January 12, 2018 for
7 "Pedestrian/Bicycle ADA improvements, installation of four-quadrant gate signal system with
8 pedestrian gates. Update signs and markings per MUTCD." These elements were added to the
9 original scope as a result of the Diagnostic Evaluation meeting.

10 In design of this project these proposed improvements have been further reviewed. At
11 the 30% design level the City proposed installing the sidewalk adjacent to the roadway section
12 and thus utilizing the vehicle automatic gates to prevent pedestrian movement across the
13 railroad tracks. This proposal would match the improvements at our Orondo Street crossing.
14 The City was directed at this time that it was BNSF's preference that the sidewalk be placed
15 behind the signal mast and roadway gate arm and that separate pedestrian gates be installed for
16 the sidewalk.

17 Further discussions were held with BNSF about the requirements for the cantilever
18 signals and the exit gate on the westbound lane. The City prefers to incorporate the use of
19 cantilever signals for this project in order to maintain uniformity with the other mainline grade
20 crossings within the City's Quiet Zone. The City also maintains that the exit gate on the
21 westbound lane will provide safety benefit, specifically due to the location of a large
22 commercial driveway adjacent to the center median.

1 **Will the 9th Street Crossing Project improve public safety?**

2 Yes. The 9th Street Crossing Project will improve public safety.

3 **How will the 9th Street Crossing Project improve public safety?**

4 9th Street is an urban minor arterial in the City of Wenatchee with a 2-track railroad
5 crossing. It is listed as a "supporting freight system" roadway in the Wenatchee Valley
6 Urbanized Area Freight Study (**Exhibit G**). The roadway connects the North Wenatchee
7 Business District (NWBD) to the rapidly growing Waterfront Mixed Use area east of the
8 BNSF Railway Tracks. The railroad crossing is located directly adjacent to the Waterfront
9 Pedestrian Overlay. The City of Wenatchee Zoning Map is attached as **Exhibit H**. Located in
10 the NWBD in the vicinity of 9th street are grocery stores, a local hospital, banks and
11 restaurants that are destinations for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists in the Waterfront area.
12 Directly east of the railroad tracks are two large apartment complexes, a new extended stay
13 hotel, several businesses, and a riverfront park. These facilities lead to a multitude of users
14 crossing the railroad tracks.

15 With this crossing project already funded, the 9th Street corridor from the extents of this
16 project to Miller Street is identified as Priority Project No. 1 based on the City of Wenatchee
17 Local Road Safety Plan. The Local Road Safety Plan was established in 2018, and provides a
18 systemic approach to addressing safety issues in the City of Wenatchee. This corridor was first
19 identified due to the high presence of pedestrian and shoulder related accidents. Following a
20 corridor study completed in 2020, the City's preferred alternative for the corridor reduces the 4
21 existing lanes to 3 lanes with bike lanes, update signing and pavement markings, and also
22 modify the traffic signals in order to improve safety for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. The
23 current version of the City's Local Road Safety Plan is attached as **Exhibit I**. Additionally,

1 next year the City will be overlaying 9th street from Walla Walla Ave to the east to the extents
2 of our project at 9th Street. With that project, the City will be updating non-ADA compliant
3 curb ramps at the intersection of Walla Walla Ave and 9th Street.

4 The City is committed to improving this corridor and the improvements included in the
5 9th Street Crossing project will improve public safety for vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians and
6 trains. The active warning devices and median being installed in this project will protect
7 vehicles and trains from potential collisions by preventing vehicles from maneuvering around
8 an entry gate. The widened roadway, channelized shoulder, along with the curb and gutter will
9 reduce the risk of shoulder type accidents and will also create separation to a pedestrian
10 sidewalk. The sidewalk, even if just installed behind the curb and gutter, will greatly increase
11 safety for pedestrians. Pedestrians will no longer be required to enter into the traveled way to
12 cross the railroad. By providing this surface for pedestrians to cross, the project will also
13 greatly reduce tripping hazards that could lead to injury on the railroad tracks.

14 **What will happen if the City cannot complete the proposed project?**

15 This road is a major connector to the Waterfront from the NWBD and Residential zones
16 to the west of the railroad crossing. Improvements to this full corridor will continue to draw
17 more traffic, and the need for these improvements will be even more glaring.

18 If the City cannot complete the improvements included in this project, the railroad
19 crossing will continue to function as a narrow vehicle crossing with no facilities for bicycles or
20 pedestrians. Pedestrians will continue to utilize the paved travel lanes or rock ballast shoulder
21 to cross the tracks. There will be no median or automatic gates available to prevent vehicles
22 from bypassing the entry warning devices. This will prevent the City from improving safety at
23 this location to vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians as well as for trains and their cargo.

1 As uses of the corridor increase, the risk increases if it is not mitigated with projects
2 such as this. We suspect the project was funded as it represents a high level of benefit for the
3 cost. The benefit is safety enhancement to the road users and risk reduction for the City and
4 BNSF.

5 **Attached exhibits**

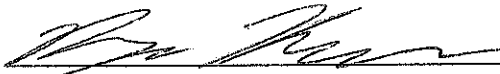
6 Attached hereto and incorporated herein are the following exhibits:

7 Exhibit	Description	# of Pages
8 A	Federal Funding Notification	2
9 B	U.S. DOT Crossing Inventory Form	2
10 C	Photos of Existing Configuration	2
11 D	Proposed Crossing Layout	3
12 E	Section 130 Grant Application	4
13 F	Highway – Rail Grade Crossing Diagnostic	10
14	Evaluation Report	
15 G	Wenatchee Valley Urbanized Area Freight	54
16	Study	
17 H	City of Wenatchee Zoning Map	1
18 I	2022 Local Road Safety Plan	73

DECLARATION

I, Ryan Harmon, declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the state of Washington that the foregoing Pre-filed Testimony of Ryan Harmon is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

DATED this 17TH day of JANUARY, 2023, at Wenatchee, Washington.

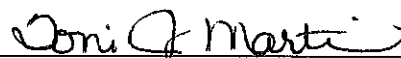


RYAN HARMON

Docket TR-220540
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have this day served the attached Declaration of Ryan Harmon upon the persons and entities by electronic service as listed below.

DATED at Wenatchee, Washington, this 19th day of January, 2023.



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