

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON STATE  
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Petition of	)	DOCKET NO. TR-040675
	)	
THE CENTRAL PUGET SOUND	)	ORDER NO. 01
REGIONAL TRANSIT	)	
AUTHORITY	)	
	)	
Petitioner,	)	
	)	ORDER GRANTING EXEMPTION
Requesting Exemption From WAC	)	FROM OVERHEAD CLEARANCE
480-60-040(3)	)	RULE IN WAC 480-60-040(3)
.....	)	

**BACKGROUND**

- 1     On April 9, 2004, the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) filed a petition with the Commission, requesting exemption from the overhead clearance rule in WAC 480-60-040(3). The rule relates to overhead clearances for trains, and states: "Minimum overhead clearance in tunnels, under over-crossings, or on bridges may be decreased to the extent defined by the half-circumference of a circle having a radius of eight feet and tangent to a horizontal line twenty-two feet six inches above top of rail at a point directly above centerline of track."
- 2     The petition is related to a proposal by Sound Transit to construct a portion of the Central Link Light Rail System in Seattle, Washington. The system will run along an exclusive corridor in which light rail vehicles will be powered by overhead contact wires running parallel to the rail line. The light rail system will include construction of the Beacon Hill tunnel, located in Seattle between Beacon Avenue (at its intersection with 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue South) and Lander Street (at its intersection with 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue South). The planned length of the tunnel is approximately 5,000 feet. The project also involves construction of the Beacon Hill Station, located within the tunnel itself. Petitioner plans to construct the tunnel so that the distance between the top of the rails and the crown of the

tunnel will be 15'9". This proposed clearance is 6'9" below the overhead clearance required by WAC 480-60-040(3), relative to the crown of the tunnel.

- 3 Because light rail lines powered by overhead wires are not explicitly exempted from WAC 480-60, the Central Link Light Rail System is generally subject to the clearance requirements set forth in the rule. The petitioner is seeking an exemption from the overhead clearance requirement in WAC 480-60-040(3) due to the fact that the subject rail line is powered by fixed overhead wires that necessarily must be located between light rail vehicles on the track and the top half of the tunnel's interior. A clearance of 15 feet will generally be provided between the top of the rails and the overhead contact wires throughout the tunnel. In addition, the tunnel has been designed to allow sufficient space between the light rail vehicle dynamic envelope (i.e. space required for the train plus buffer space) and the tunnel's interior walls and fixtures. Accordingly, there is no possibility of conflict between the light rail vehicles and the interior of the Beacon Hill tunnel structure.

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4 (1) The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission is an agency of the State of Washington having jurisdiction over railroad clearance requirements. Chapter 81.28.010 RCW and WAC 480-60-020.
- 5 (2) Commission Staff investigated the petition and recommended that it be granted, subject to specified conditions.
- 6 (3) This matter was brought before the Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting on April 28, 2004.
- 7 (4) After examination of the petition filed by Sound Transit on April 9, 2004, and giving consideration to all relevant matters and for good cause shown, the Commission grants the petition.

## ORDER

### THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

8 The petition of Sound Transit, requesting exemption from WAC 48-60-040(3), related to overhead clearances in tunnels, is granted. Approval of the petition is subject to the following conditions:

- (1) Construction of the Sound Transit Beacon Hill Tunnel in Seattle, Washington must conform to the specifications filed in this proceeding.
- (2) Upon completion of the Beacon Hill Tunnel portion of the Central Link Light Rail System, petitioner must notify the Commission.

The Commissioners, having determined that this filing complies with the requirements of Chapter 81.28.010 RCW and WAC 480-60-020, directed the Secretary to enter this Order.

DATED at Olympia, Washington, and effective this 28<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2004.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

CAROLE J. WASHBURN, Secretary