

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

In the Matter of the Application of	)	DOCKET TR-100544
	)	
THURSTON COUNTY PUBLIC	)	ORDER 01
WORKS,	)	
	)	
Applicant,	)	ORDER GRANTING REQUEST FOR
	)	DISBURSEMENT FROM THE GRADE
	)	CROSSING PROTECTIVE FUND
Requesting Disbursement from the	)	
Grade Crossing Protective Fund	)	USDOT #085780M
.....	)	

**BACKGROUND**

- 1     On July 29, 2009, the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) sent to various interested parties a “Notice of Opportunity to Apply for Grant Monies from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund” in Docket TR-091450.
  
- 2     On April 2, 2010, Thurston County Public Works (Thurston County) filed with the Commission an application requesting a disbursement of \$19,800 from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund (GCPF) to pay for a project related to improving crossing safety at 143<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Southeast in Thurston County. Total project costs are estimated at \$41,900, with Thurston County paying for all costs that exceed \$19,800.
  
- 3     Thurston County seeks to replace the existing median barrier and install enhanced signage (chevrons) and rumble bars at the 143<sup>rd</sup> Avenue crossing. Thurston County is also seeking funds for the crossing improvement design. Thurston County proposes to contribute the cost of \$22,100 to pave both shoulders through the crossing.
  
- 4     The crossing is located at the bottom of a hill and the beginning of a curve on a two-lane, rural county road. Driver awareness is a major issue at this crossing, especially for westbound traffic because there is an intersection just south of the crossing at which vegetation and an earth berm limit sight distance around the horizontal curve.
  
- 5     There have been two reported crashes at the crossing in the last three years. One of the accidents involved a vehicle that lost control in the curve going westbound. BNSF Railway Co. (BNSF) has expressed concern about the crossing and the sight distance for

westbound traffic. BNSF also stated that additional unreported crashes have caused damage to the crossing gates, causing BNSF to install ecology blocks in front of each gate.

- 6 The proposed addition of rumble bars at the approach to the horizontal curve and at the railroad crossing signs will advise drivers that they are approaching a railroad crossing. The proposed installation of the chevron signs will add delineation to the horizontal curve, improving driver awareness. The existing median barrier, while still functional, has deteriorated due to damage by vehicles. The proposed replacement of the median barrier will reduce occurrences of drivers driving around activated railroad gates. Also as part of the crossing safety upgrades, Thurston County is proposing to pave both shoulders through the crossing. Shoulder widening will reduce roadway departure crashes, therefore reducing the long-term maintenance of the median barriers. Cost of the shoulder widening is \$22,100.
- 7 Installation of the proposed safety improvements will significantly improve public safety at the crossing. Thurston County will be responsible for all labor, installation and long-term maintenance costs.
- 8 Thurston County seeks \$19,800 to pay for a portion of the cost of the crossing safety improvements. There currently are funds available to pay for the project.
- 9 Thurston County must also meet the following conditions for administering the GCPF grant.
  - Expenditure from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund must not exceed \$19,800.
  - The work for which the Grade Crossing Protective Fund disbursement was approved must conform to the project description specified in the application.
  - Thurston County must sign and return the attached project agreement.

- Payment will be made upon presentation of claim for reimbursement and verification by Commission Staff that the work has been satisfactorily completed.
- The project must be completed and the associated request for reimbursement from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund must be filed with the Commission no later than January 31, 2011.
- Traffic control devices must comply with all applicable standards specified in the U.S. Department of Transportation Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 10 (1) The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission is an agency of the State of Washington having authority to approve and administer disbursements from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund. *RCW 81.53.271; RCW 81.53.281.*
- 11 (2) The project for which Thurston County seeks disbursement from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund is eligible for funding consideration under Commission rules and complies with the requirements of *RCW 81.53.271, RCW 81.53.281,* and *WAC 480-62.*
- 12 (3) Commission Staff investigated the request based on the review criteria specified in the Commission's rules and recommended that it be granted, subject to specified conditions for administering the grant.
- Expenditure from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund must not exceed \$19,800.
  - The work for which the Grade Crossing Protective Fund disbursement was approved must conform to the project description specified in the application.
  - Thurston County must sign and return the attached project agreement.

- Payment will be made upon presentation of claim for reimbursement and verification by Commission Staff that the work has been satisfactorily completed.
- The project must be completed and the associated request for reimbursement from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund must be filed with the Commission no later than January 31, 2011.
- Traffic control devices must comply with all applicable standards specified in the U.S. Department of Transportation Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

13 (4) This matter came before the Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting on May 13, 2010.

14 (5) After reviewing Thurston County's application filed on April 2, 2010, and giving due consideration to all relevant matters and for good cause shown, the Commission grants the request for disbursement of funds.

## **O R D E R**

### **THE COMMISSION ORDERS:**

15 Thurston County Public Works' application for disbursement from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund for crossing safety improvements on 143<sup>rd</sup> Avenue SW, is granted, subject to the following conditions:

- (1) Expenditure from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund must not exceed \$19,800.
- (2) The work for which the Grade Crossing Protective Fund disbursement was approved must conform to the project description specified in the application.

- (3) Thurston County Public Works must sign and return the attached project agreement.
- (4) Payment will be made upon presentation of claim for reimbursement and verification by Commission Staff that the work has been satisfactorily completed.
- (5) The project must be completed and the associated request for reimbursement from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund must be filed with the Commission no later than January 31, 2011.
- (6) Traffic control devices must comply with all applicable standards specified in the U.S. Department of Transportation Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

The Commissioners, having determined this Order to be consistent with the public interest, directed the Secretary to enter this Order.

DATED at Olympia, Washington, and effective May 13, 2010.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

DAVID W. DANNER, Executive Director and Secretary