



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
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May 16, 2014

Brian Carlson, PE, Director of Public Works
City of Vancouver
P.O. Box 1995
Vancouver, Washington 98668-1995

**Re: TR-140455 – Southeast Chelsea Drive
Notice of Intent to Establish a Railroad Quiet Zone**

Dear Mr. Carlson:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Southeast Chelsea Drive proposed quiet zone, as described in Docket TR-140455.

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (commission) received notice on March 19, 2014, from the City of Vancouver (City) of its intent to establish a railroad quiet zone at the Southeast Chelsea Drive crossing, USDOT #090074M. The City is proposing a quiet zone at this crossing which will be in effect 24 hours, seven day per week. The notice provided to the commission does not specify the length of the proposed quiet zone, so commission staff assumes that the City is proposing a quiet zone extending one-quarter mile on each side of the crossing, which is the minimum length required per Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 49, §2.36(a)(1)22.

Commission staff entered data about the Southeast Chelsea Drive crossing into the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Quiet Zone Calculator and was unable to obtain a Quiet Zone Risk Index (QZRI) because of a technical glitch. The recent change in status from private to public designation has impacted the characteristics of the crossing and ability of the calculator to compute the risk. Because of the inability to obtain the QZRI, commission staff contacted the FRA for guidance. FRA staff recently provided informal guidance to the City which includes

acceptance of the proposed alternative safety measures (ASM) as described in the notice. Based on this information, the Southeast Chelsea Drive crossing qualifies as a quiet zone because of installation of the ASMs, which reduces the risk factor by 40 percent. The acceptance of the reduced risk is subject to the City filing an application and obtaining approval from the FRA on use of the ASM.

Commission staff accepts the informal guidance provided by the FRA on the risk reduction and offers the following comments.

Commission staff recommends that the City review FRA's publication, "Guidance on the Use of Traffic Channelization Devices at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings," prior to installing the median barriers. The median barriers selected should meet all FRA requirements.

In addition, commission staff recommends that the City consider adding pedestrian upgrades to the crossing due to the high use by pedestrians and bicyclists. Enhancements to consider include installing pedestrian bells, a sidewalk on the west side of the crossing and extending the fence that is currently located south of the bungalow. Currently, there are no pedestrian bells on either signal mast at the crossing. If the quiet zone is approved, there will be no audible warning of an approaching train at the crossing. Pedestrian bells are standard on signal masts. By extending the length of the fence to the proposed sidewalk/roadway, reduces the occurrences of pedestrians accessing the trailhead by walking toward BNSF's bungalow located on the railroad's right-of-way.

The stop lines on the roadway on both approaches to the crossing are faded and worn; staff recommends that they be reapplied so motorists know precisely where to stop when the gates are activated.

Finally, there is a significant amount of vegetation growing on the southwest and southeast quadrants of the crossing which is obstructing the sight distance and should be removed. The sight distance of these quadrants is limited to approximately 100 feet. A vegetation management plan should be prepared to ensure that the vegetation is removed and trimmed on a regular basis.

In conclusion, commission staff acknowledges that the Southeast Chelsea Drive crossing very likely qualifies for designation as a quiet zone based on the informal guidance provided by FRA staff; however staff recommends that the city consider these recommendations prior to implementing a quiet zone at this location.

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Please feel free to contact Kathy Hunter at khunter@utc.wa.gov or Bob Boston at bboston@utc.wa.gov if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,



Steven W. King
Executive Director and Secretary

cc: John Shurson and Richard Wagner, BNSF Railway
FRA Associate Administrator for Safety
Kurt Laird, AMTRAK
Ahmer Nizam, WSDOT
Associate Administrator for Safety and Christine Adams, FRA

