

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON  
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Petition of  
  
COLUMBIA COUNTY,  
  
Petitioner,  
  
To Construct a Public Railroad-Highway  
Grade Crossing

DOCKET TR-180332  
  
ORDER 01  
  
ORDER GRANTING PETITION TO  
CONSTRUCT A PUBLIC  
RAILROAD-HIGHWAY GRADE  
CROSSING AT ROSE GULCH  
ROAD  
  
USDOT: 971851B

**BACKGROUND**

1 On April 20, 2018, Columbia County (County or Petitioner), filed a petition with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) seeking approval to construct a public railroad-highway grade crossing at Rose Gulch Road near Dayton, Washington. The new crossing will be identified as USDOT 971851B.

2 The Port of Columbia (Port) is the owner of the railroad tracks and the Columbia-Walla Walla Railway (CWW) is the railroad operator. Both parties consented to entry of an Order in this matter without further notice or hearing.

3 The County received federal funding to replace the aging Vernon Smith Bridge over the Touchet River on Rose Gulch Road. As part of that project, the County will realign the road, remove a horizontal curve between the new bridge and U.S. Highway 12, and create a new intersection with the highway. Rose Gulch Road currently crosses the Port of Columbia’s tracks. With this project, the existing highway-rail grade crossing, identified as USDOT 097009F, will be closed and the new crossing will be constructed at the road’s new alignment, which is approximately 400 feet to the east.

4 Rose Gulch Road is a two-lane, rural minor collector roadway with a speed limit of 50 miles per hour. Average annual daily traffic is estimated at 175 vehicles, including 40 percent commercial vehicle traffic. Rose Gulch Road is not part of an established school bus route.

5 One freight train will travel over the crossing each week. The maximum train speed is ten miles per hour. No passenger trains will use this crossing.

6 As part of the bridge replacement project, Rose Gulch Road will be upgraded from gravel to asphalt. The new crossing surface will also be asphalt, and the County will install crossbuck assemblies with yield signs, emergency notification system signs, and retroreflective strips on the sign supports on both approaches to the crossing. Advance warning signs will be placed on Rose Gulch Road and U.S. Highway 12. Pavement markings will be added on both approaches to the crossing. Once the new crossing is installed, the existing crossing will be closed and the roadway removed. The County estimates that construction will start in May 2019 and be completed by November 2019.

7 The County, as State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) lead agency for the proposal, has issued a Determination of Non-significance, thereby completing the SEPA procedures for the opening of a grade crossing.

8 RCW 81.53.020 requires that all new highway-railroad grade crossings be grade separated where practicable. Highway-railroad grade crossings may be authorized at-grade by the Commission, but only upon finding that grade separation is impracticable. Staff investigated the County's petition to relocate and reconstruct the Rose Gulch Road crossing and recommends that the Commission find grade separation impracticable at this location because it cannot be economically justified. Based on the Federal Highway Administration's *Grade Crossing Handbook – Chapter 5, Selection of Alternatives*, the Rose Gulch Road crossing does not meet the minimum threshold for construction of a grade-separated crossing.

9 Examination of the petition and consideration of relevant facts support granting the petition subject to the following conditions:

- (a) The County will construct the new crossing and close the existing crossing by January 2020.
- (b) Traffic control devices, advance warning signs, and pavement markings must comply with applicable standards specified in the U.S. Department of Transportation's *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD).

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

10 (1) The Commission is an agency of the State of Washington having jurisdiction over public railroad-highway grade crossings within the state of Washington. RCW 81.53.

11 (2) The proposed construction of a crossing involves a public railroad-highway grade crossing, as defined in RCW 81.53.010.

- 12 (3) RCW 81.53.030 and WAC 480-62-150(1)(a) require the Commission grant approval prior to constructing a public railroad-highway grade crossing within the state of Washington.
- 13 (4) RCW 81.53.020 requires all new railroad-highway grade crossings to be grade separated where practicable. The Commission finds that it is not practicable to build the tracks over or under Rose Gulch Road.
- 14 (5) Staff conducted an investigation and recommended that the petition be granted. Granting the petition is subject to the following conditions:
- (a) The County will construct the new crossing and close the existing crossing by January 2020.
  - (b) Traffic control devices, advance warning signs, and pavement markings must comply with applicable standards specified in the MUTCD.
- 15 (6) After examination of the petition filed by the County on April 20, 2018, and giving consideration to all relevant matters, the Commission has determined that construction of a public railroad-highway grade crossing at Rose Gulch Road is reasonable and the petition of County should be granted.

**ORDER**

**THE COMMISSION ORDERS:**

- 16 (1) Columbia County's petition to construct a public railroad-highway grade crossing at Rose Gulch Road near Dayton, Washington, is granted, subject to the following conditions:
- (a) All construction and installation must conform to the petition and engineering design plans filed in this Docket.
  - (b) The County will construct the new crossing and close the existing crossing by January 2020.
  - (c) Traffic control devices, advance warning signs, and pavement markings must comply with applicable standards specified in the MUTCD.

- (d) Upon completion of the authorized construction, the County must notify the Commission within 30 days. Acceptance is subject to inspection by Staff, verifying that the crossing is in full compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and the conditions set forth in this order.

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 10, 2018.

**WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

**MARK L. JOHNSON, Executive Director and Secretary**