

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Application of

SOUTH KING FIRE & RESCUE,

Applicant,

Requesting Disbursement from the
Grade Crossing Protective Fund

DOCKET TR-220748

ORDER 01

GRANTING REQUEST FOR
DISBURSEMENT FROM THE GRADE
CROSSING PROTECTIVE FUND

BACKGROUND

- 1 On August 2, 2021, the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) sent to various interested parties a “Notice of Available Funds for Rail Safety Projects” from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund (GCPF).
- 2 On October 6, 2022, South King Fire & Rescue (South King Fire or Applicant) filed with the Commission an application (Application) requesting \$7,377.10 from the GCPF to purchase a weather station for use by its hazardous materials unit (Hazmat 361) in response to railroad incidents in the Auburn valley area. The Hazmat 361 team consists of 12 firefighters, certified as hazardous materials technicians, that are able to respond to, assess, and mitigate hazardous materials incidents within a specific area of King County. Hazmat 361 is the first responding hazardous material unit for any railroad or crossing incident involving hazardous materials spills. According to the Application, BNSF and Union Pacific Railroad annually handle 75,000 carloads of hazardous materials through the populous Auburn valley area.
- 3 A portable weather station will allow the South King Fire to use real-time weather data to create plume models, as well as document and predict the impacts of a hazardous materials spill. This information will assist in developing evacuation plans and will increase public safety.¹ GCPF funds are currently available for this project.

¹ 2020 *Washington Rail Transportation Safety Study*, page 392, states that plume modeling capability in Washington would be valuable to incorporate into training and tabletop exercises to simulate hypothetical catastrophic events, and modeling with accurate input data would help determine more precisely the geographic areas for evacuation for simulated scenarios, and if conducted in advance, inform decision-making in an actual emergency.

4 Commission Staff (Staff) recommends the Commission approve the request for funding with the following conditions: (1) expenditure from the GCPF must not exceed \$7,377.10, (2) the purchase for which the GCPF disbursement is approved must conform to the description specified in the Application, (3) the Applicant must sign and return the attached project agreement, (4) payment will be made upon presentation of claim for reimbursement and verification by Staff that the purchase has been completed, and (5) the purchase must be completed and the associated request for reimbursement from the GCPF must be filed with the Commission no later than June 15, 2023.

DISCUSSION

5 RCW 81.53.281 authorizes the Commission to disburse funds from the GCPF to pay for rail safety projects. We find that the proposed weather station will assist first responders in mitigating rail incidents and will increase public safety. Accordingly, the Commission grants the Application subject to the conditions that Staff recommends.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6 (1) The Commission is an agency of the State of Washington having authority to approve and administer disbursements from the GCPF. RCW 81.53.271; RCW 81.53.281.
- 7 (2) The purchase for which the Applicant seeks disbursement from the GCPF 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.
- 8 (3) Staff investigated the request based on the review criteria specified in the Commission's rules and recommended that it be granted with the conditions set out in paragraph 4, above.
- 9 (4) This matter came before the Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting on January 26, 2023.
- 10 (5) After reviewing South King Fire's Application filed on October 6, 2022, and giving due consideration to all relevant matters and for good cause shown, the Commission grants the request for disbursement of funds.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 11* South King Fire & Rescue's Application for disbursement from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund to purchase a weather station for its hazardous materials team, is granted, subject to the following conditions:
- (1) Expenditure from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund must not exceed \$7,377.10.
 - (2) The purchase for which the Grade Crossing Protective Fund disbursement was approved must conform to the description specified in the Application.
 - (3) South King Fire & Rescue must sign and return the attached project agreement.
 - (4) Payment will be made upon presentation of claim for reimbursement and verification by Staff that the purchase has been completed.
 - (5) The purchase must be completed and the associated request for reimbursement from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund must be filed with the Commission no later than June 15, 2023.

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

DATED at Lacey, Washington, and effective January 26, 2023.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

AMANDA MAXWELL
Executive Director and Secretary