

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

In the Matter of the Petition of)	DOCKET TR-081325
)	
CITY OF RICHLAND,)	ORDER 01
)	
Petitioner,)	ORDER GRANTING PETITION, WITH
)	CONDITIONS, TO MODIFY ACTIVE
v.)	WARNING DEVICES AT BATTELLE
)	BOULEVARD
TRI-CITY AND OLYMPIA)	
RAILROAD,)	
)	USDOT: 922975L
Respondent.)	UTC: 19A 36.30
.....)	

BACKGROUND

1. On July 17, 2008, the City of Richland (City or Petitioner) filed with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission), a petition seeking approval to modify warning devices at a railroad-highway grade crossing. The City of Richland is a first-class city and modifications to railroad-highway grade crossings are generally not subject to Commission review or approval (RCW 81.53.240). However, the City, under the provisions of RCW 81.53.291, has elected Commission review of the proposed modifications to the Battelle Boulevard railroad-highway grade crossing and requested an on-site safety diagnostic meeting and order be issued in response to the petition. The crossing is identified as USDOT 922975L and is located at the intersection of Battelle Boulevard and the Respondent’s tracks in the City of Richland in Benton County.

2. On July 17, 2008, the Tri-City and Olympia Railroad consented to entry of an Order by the Commission without further notice or hearing.

3. Battelle Boulevard is a four lane road with one westbound and three eastbound lanes. The City estimates average daily vehicle traffic over the crossing at 976, which includes a few commercial motor vehicles and no school busses. The posted vehicle speed is 35 miles per hour. The tracks at this location are classified as main line by the Tri-City and Olympia Railroad. There is currently little train traffic; however the possibility of one weekly round trip exists in the near future.

4. Railroad warning devices at the intersection of Battelle Boulevard and the Respondent’s tracks consist of advance warning signs, pavement markings on the eastbound approach,

cross-bucks, shoulder mounted 12” flashing lights, and two 40’ gates on the north and south side approaches to the crossing. The active railroad warning devices are interconnected to the traffic lights on nearby Stevens Avenue which is located approximately 70 feet east of the crossing. The interconnection is simultaneous pre-emption and the train detection circuitry consists of motion sensors. Commission Staff noted, and the diagnostic team agreed, that even though active warning devices at this crossing are interconnected with nearby traffic signals, there is still a strong possibility of traffic queuing over the tracks. Staff recommends installation of R8-8 (Do Not Stop on Tracks) signs on the south side of the eastbound lanes and on the traffic island north of the eastbound lanes.

- 5 The active warning devices at Battelle Boulevard were installed in 2005 and operated normally for approximately two years but were taken out-of-service because of a recurring problem attributed to strong winds damaging the gate arm on the south side. When the crossing is used currently, train crews “stop and protect” as the train proceeds across the crossing. The Petitioner proposes to install shorter gates on the south side of the crossing which will resolve the issue of damaged gate arms but still provide adequate protection on all travel lanes.
- 6 On the south approach, a new mast with flashing lights and a gate approximately 20’ in length will be added to an existing raised traffic island and the 40’ gate will be replaced with a gate approximately 24’ in length. Instead of one 40’ gate on the south side approach to the crossing, two shorter gates will be used. Commission Staff noted and the diagnostic team agreed that the north side gate is unnecessarily long. Staff recommends that this gate also be replaced with a new gate arm approximately 24’ in length which will still provide adequate protection for the westbound travel lane. The new gates will continue to provide a physical barrier to the crossing for motorists when the active warning devices are engaged. No other changes are proposed for the Battelle Boulevard crossing.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7 (1) The Washington Utilities and Transportation 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*.

- 8 (2) The railroad-highway grade crossing at the intersection of Battelle Boulevard and the respondent's tracks in Richland, Washington, identified as USDOT 922975L, is a public railroad-highway grade crossing within the state of Washington.
- 9 (3) RCW 81.53.261 requires the Commission grant approval prior to any changes to public railroad-highway grade crossings within the state of Washington in non-first class cities. *See also WAC 480-62-150.*
- 10 (4) The City of Richland is a first-class city and modifications to railroad-highway grade crossings are generally not subject to Commission review or approval (RCW 81.53.240). However, the City, under the provisions of RCW 81.53.291, has elected Commission review of the proposed modifications to the Battelle Boulevard railroad-highway grade crossing.
- 11 (5) Commission Staff investigated the petition and recommended that it be granted, subject to specified conditions.
- 12 (6) After reviewing the City of Richland's petition filed on July 17, 2008, and giving due consideration to all relevant matters and for good cause shown, the Commission grants the petition.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 13 The City of Richland's petition to modify warning devices at a railroad-highway grade crossing, located at the intersection of Battelle Boulevard and the respondent's tracks in Richland, Washington, is granted. Approval of the petition is subject to the following conditions:
- (1) Traffic control devices must comply with all applicable standards specified in the U.S. Department of Transportation *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*.
 - (2) The City must install R8-8 (Do Not Stop on Tracks) signs on the south side shoulder of the eastbound lanes and on the raised traffic island north of the eastbound lanes.

- (3) The north side gate must be replaced with a gate approximately 24 feet in length.
- (4) The modifications must conform to those described in the petition and amended at the on-site safety diagnostic meeting held on July 22, 2008.
- (5) The City of Richland must notify the Commission upon completion of the upgrades authorized in this Order. Acceptance of the upgrades is subject to inspection by Commission Staff, and verification that the crossing is in full compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and the conditions specified in this Order.

The Commissioners have delegated authority to the Secretary to enter this Order pursuant to RCW 80.01.030 and WAC 480-07-904((1)(a)).

DATED at Olympia, Washington, and effective July 30, 2008.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

DAVID W. DANNER
Executive Director and Secretary