

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

WASHINGTON STATE)	DOCKET TR-150309
DEPARTMENT OF)	
TRANSPORTATION,)	ORDER 01
)	
Petitioner,)	ORDER AUTHORIZING THE
)	INSTALLATION OF R15-3 "EXEMPT"
)	CROSSING SIGNS AT A HIGHWAY-
BNSF RAILWAY COMPANY AND)	RAIL GRADE CROSSING AT STATE
LONGVIEW SWITCHING)	ROUTE 432 AT TENNANT WAY
COMPANY,)	
)	USDOT: 101842C
Respondents.)	

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BACKGROUND

- 1 On February 24, 2015, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) filed a petition with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) seeking approval to install R15-3 "Exempt" signs at a railroad-highway grade crossing. The crossing is located at the intersection of State Route 432 (SR-432) at Tennant Way and BNSF Railway Company's (BNSF) tracks in Longview in Cowlitz County, Washington. Longview Switching Company (Longview Switching) operates over this crossing.
- 2 BNSF and Longview Switching consented to entry of an Order by the Commission without further notice or hearing.
- 3 The crossing is composed of one siding track. Longview Switching moves six trains over the crossing per week at 10 miles per hour.
- 4 WSDOT estimates annual average daily vehicle traffic over the crossing at 32,000, which includes 15 percent commercial motor vehicles. The posted vehicle speed is 55 miles per hour.
- 5 By law, all commercial motor vehicles transporting passengers or hazardous materials must stop at all highway-railroad grade crossings, even when crossing signals are not activated, with few exceptions (RCW 46.61.350). The purpose of the stop is for the driver to look in both directions and listen for trains. The stopping requirement does not apply at

a crossing where the commission has approved the installation of an “exempt” sign in accordance with the procedures and standards under RCW 81.53.060.

- 6 At the SR-432 crossing, there are currently no stop refuges or areas to safely move out of the way of traffic, so these designated vehicles must come to a complete stop at the crossing on the 55-mile-per-hour highway. It is dangerous for these vehicles to stop at this crossing because of the risk of rear-end collisions, improper passing, and similar motorist behavior. There have been no vehicle-train collisions reported at this crossing in the last five years; however, WSDOT has records of two rear-end collisions involving a truck or van stopped at this crossing and being hit by a second vehicle. Commission staff has also received a complaint from a concerned hazardous materials transporter about the requirement to stop at this crossing.
- 7 No school buses currently travel over the crossing. The Longview School District currently directs its drivers not to use this crossing due to the hazards created by the requirement to stop at the crossing. Bus drivers are driving miles out of the way to Kelso to avoid the crossing. If “exempt” signs are installed, the school district plans to route 25 or more buses over the crossing regularly, as well as other buses from outside the district as needed.
- 8 Current warning devices at the crossing include cantilever and shoulder-mounted flashing lights, gates, advance warning signs and pavement markings.
- 9 WSDOT proposes to install R15-3 “Exempt” signs that are in compliance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).
- 10 Current railroad operating practices require trains to stop and wait for the crossing signals to activate prior to the trains entering the crossing. If “exempt” signs are installed, this operating practice will continue.
- 11 The proposed installation of R15-3 “Exempt” signs at SR-432 is in the interest of improving traffic efficiency and reducing the potential for rear-end collisions related to vehicle stops. WSDOT is considering adding stop refuges to this crossing in the future. If stop refuges are constructed, the parties will re-evaluate the exempt status at that time.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 12 (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. *Chapter 81.53 RCW.*
- 13 (2) The State Route 432 highway-rail grade crossing is a public crossing within the state of Washington.
- 14 (4) RCW 81.53.060 requires that the Commission grant approval prior to the modification of warning devices at public railroad-highway grade crossings within the state of Washington.
- 15 (5) Commission staff investigated the petition and recommended that it be granted with the conditions identified below.
- 16 (6) After review of the petition filed in Docket TR-150309 by the Washington State Department of Transportation on February 24, 2015, and giving due consideration, the Commission grants the petition authorizing the installation of “exempt” signs at the SR-432 grade crossing, subject to the following conditions:
- (1) The modifications must conform to those described in the petition.
 - (2) The installation of the R15-3 “Exempt” signs must comply with all applicable standards specified in the U.S. Department of Transportation *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*.
 - (3) Upon completion of the installation authorized herein, Petitioner must notify the Commission.
 - (4) If stop refuges are constructed at the crossing, WSDOT will notify Commission staff and a re-evaluation of the exempt status will be initiated.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

17 The petition of the Washington State Department of Transportation to install R15-3 “Exempt” signs at a railroad-highway grade crossing at SR-432 at Tennant Way and the Respondents’ tracks in Longview, is granted, as follows:

- (1) The modifications must conform to those described in the petition.
- (2) The installation of the R15-3 “Exempt” signs must comply with all applicable standards specified in the U.S. Department of Transportation *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*.
- (3) Upon completion of the installation authorized herein, Petitioner must notify the Commission.
- (4) If stop refuges are constructed at the crossing, WSDOT will notify Commission staff and a re-evaluation of the exempt status will be initiated.

The Secretary of the Commission has delegated authority over this matter pursuant to Order 04 in Docket A-090485. The Secretary finds this Order to be consistent with the public interest.

DATED at Olympia, Washington, and effective August 25, 2015.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION



STEVEN V. KING, Executive Director and Secretary

NOTICE: This is an order delegated to the Secretary for decision. In addition to serving you a copy of the decision, the Commission will post on its Internet Web site for at least fourteen (14) days a listing of all matters delegated to the Secretary for decision. You may seek Commission review of this decision. You must file a request for Commission review of

this order no later than fourteen (14) days after the date the decision is posted on the Commission's Web site. The Commission will schedule your request for review for consideration at a regularly scheduled open meeting. The Commission will notify you of the time and place of the open meeting at which the Commission will review the order.

The Commission will grant a late-filed request for review only on a showing of good cause, including a satisfactory explanation of why the person did not timely file the request. A form for late-filed requests is available on the Commission's Web site. This notice and review process is pursuant to the provisions of RCW 80.01.030 and WAC 480-07-904(2) and (3).