

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Petition of

GRANT COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS,

Petitioner,

Seeking Approval to Upgrade Signals
at a Railroad-Highway Grade Crossing

DOCKET TR-161055

ORDER 01

ORDER GRANTING PETITION TO
MODIFY HIGHWAY-RAIL GRADE
CROSSING ACTIVE WARNING
DEVICES AT STRATFORD ROAD
AND AUTHORIZING EXPENDITURE
FROM THE GRADE CROSSING
PROTECTIVE FUND

USDOT: 065770C

BACKGROUND

- 1 On September 8, 2016, the Grant County Public Works department (County or Petitioner) filed with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission), a petition seeking approval to modify active warning devices at a railroad-highway grade crossing. The crossing is identified as USDOT 065770C, located at Stratford Road in Grant county. The Petitioner further requested the Commission authorize an expenditure of \$20,000 from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund (GCPF) to pay for a portion of the cost of the upgrades.
- 2 BNSF Railway Co. (BNSF) consented to entry of an Order by the Commission without further notice or hearing.
- 3 Stratford Road is a two-lane roadway with a posted speed limit of 55 miles per hour. Average annual daily vehicle traffic through the crossing is estimated at 570 vehicles. Stratford Road is part of an established truck route, with commercial vehicles making up 22 percent of total traffic. The crossing is also part of an established school bus route with two buses traveling over the crossing daily. Twenty-three freight trains per day operate at up to 60 miles per hour over this single mainline track crossing. This crossing is on the BNSF return route for empty oil tank cars. No passenger trains operate over the crossing.
- 4 Railroad warning devices at the Stratford Road crossing consist of cantilever-mounted flashing lights, gates, crossbucks, a pedestrian warning bell, advance warning signs, and motion sensor train detection.

- 5 The County plans to upgrade the crossing as part of a \$1.5 million United States Bureau of Reclamation-funded road realignment project. The existing warning devices will be upgraded to the current standard and moved out several feet from the roadway to comply with U.S. Department of Transportation *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* standards. The County proposes to upgrade the existing flashing lights to LEDs and to replace the gates, batteries, battery chargers and warning bell. The existing train detection will be upgraded to constant warning. The bungalow will be replaced, the concrete crossing surface will be extended to accommodate the wider roadway, and the approach aprons will be paved.
- 6 Commission Staff reviewed the proposed upgrades and recommends approval of the project. The proposed upgrades are in the interest of improving the safety and convenience for roadway users. The upgrades to LED flashing lights will improve the overall safety at the crossing by providing greater visibility for the motoring public and pedestrians. The upgraded train detection will provide constant warning of an approaching train. The new batteries and chargers will improve reliability if there is a power failure at the crossing.
- 7 GCPF funds would be used to fund the portion of the project related to the crossing upgrades. The Petitioner is contributing \$400,000 toward the cost of the overall road improvement project and is responsible for any additional project costs. The total approximate cost of this portion of the project is \$376,191. An expenditure of \$20,000 from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund is available to help fund the improvements.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8 (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, and authority to approve and administer disbursements from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund. RCW 81.53; RCW 81.53.271; RCW 81.53.281.
- 9 (2) The grade crossing at Stratford Road, identified as USDOT 065770C, is a public railroad-highway grade crossing within the state of Washington.
- 10 (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. *See also* WAC 480-62-150.

- 11 (4) RCW 81.53.271 allows the Commission to disburse funds from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund to pay for the installation of a grade crossing protective devices.
- 12 (5) Commission Staff investigated the petition and recommended that it be granted, subject to specified conditions.
- 13 (6) After reviewing the County's petition filed on September 8, 2016, and giving due consideration to all relevant matters and for good cause shown, the Commission grants the petition and request for disbursement of funds.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 14 Grant County Public Works' petition to upgrade warning devices at a railroad-highway grade crossing, located at Stratford Road, is granted. A portion of the cost of this upgrade shall be paid from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund. Approval of the petition is subject to the following conditions:
- (1) Expenditure from the Grade Crossing Protective Fund must not exceed \$20,000.
 - (2) Payment will be made upon presentation of claim for reimbursement for materials and labor, and verification by Commission Staff that the work has been satisfactorily completed.
 - (3) The County must sign and return the attached project agreement.
 - (4) The project must be completed no later than June 15, 2017.
 - (5) Traffic control devices must comply with all applicable standards specified in the U.S. Department of Transportation *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*.
 - (6) The County must notify the Commission on 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 Secretary of the Commission has delegated authority over this matter pursuant to Order 01 in Docket A-151775. The Secretary finds this Order to be consistent with the public interest.

DATED at Olympia, Washington, and effective September 20, 2016.

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 website 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 website.

This notice and review process is pursuant to the provisions of RCW 80.01.030 and WAC 480-07-904(2) and (3).