

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Petition of

CITY OF KENT,

Petitioner,

BNSF RAILWAY CO.,

Respondent.

DOCKET TR-230270
..
ORDER 01

GRANTING PETITION TO MODIFY
ACTIVE WARNING DEVICES AT A
PUBLIC HIGHWAY-RAIL GRADE
CROSSING AT SOUTH 259TH
STREET, KENT, KING COUNTY

USDOT: 085642Y

BACKGROUND

- 1 On April 20, 2023, the City of Kent (City or Petitioner) filed with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) a petition (Petition) seeking approval to modify warning devices at a railroad-highway grade crossing located at South 259th Street in Kent, King County, identified as USDOT 085642Y.
- 2 Respondent BNSF Railway Co. (BNSF or Respondent) owns and operates the rail line through the crossing and consented to entry of a Commission order without hearing.
- 3 South 259th Street is a two-lane city street with a posted vehicle speed limit of 25 miles per hour. South 259th Street crosses two BNSF mainline tracks at this location. Average annual daily traffic through the crossing is estimated at 2,794 vehicles. South 259th Street is part of an established truck route with approximately 14 percent commercial vehicle traffic and is part of an established school bus route with six school buses using the crossing on school days.
- 4 Warning devices at the South 259th Street crossing consist of advance warning signs, pavement markings, reflectorized crossbucks, Emergency Notification System signs, bells, gates, and mast and cantilever-mounted flashing warning lights. BNSF operates up to 23 freight trains over this crossing daily at up to 60 miles per hour. Amtrak and Sound Transit operate up to 34 passenger trains over this crossing daily at up to 79 miles per hour.

- 5 The Petitioner proposes to install a two-foot wide, seven-inch tall, non-traversable median curb on the east side of the crossing, relocate pavement and stop line markings, install LED-edge flashing R8-8 “Do Not Stop On Tracks” signs in the northeast and southwest quadrants, install double-sided R15-8 “Look” signs in all four quadrants of the crossing, install ADA-compliant detectable warning surfaces in the northwest and northeast quadrants, and upgrade all flashing lights to LEDs.
- 6 In describing the public safety need for these modifications in its Petition, the City states that the proposed changes, including adding and improving warning signs, relocating pavement markings, making pedestrian improvements, and installing a non-traversable median on the east side of the crossing, will improve safety for pedestrians and drivers using the crossing. Upgrading the flashing lights to LEDs will also improve visibility of the active warning devices for crossing users.
- 7 According to the Petition, the City and BNSF confirmed that the parties have reached an agreement related to the apportionment of costs for the proposed upgrades.
- 8 Commission staff (Staff) has investigated the Petition and recommends that it be granted subject to the following conditions: (1) the modifications must conform to those described in and attached to the Petition, (2) traffic control devices must comply with all applicable standards specified in the U.S. Department of Transportation Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, (3) the City must complete the proposed modifications within three years, and (4) the City must notify the Commission within 60 days upon completion of the modifications authorized herein. Acceptance of the changes is subject to inspection by Staff, who will verify that the crossing is in full compliance with the conditions specified herein.

DISCUSSION

- 9 RCW 81.53.261 requires that the Commission grant approval prior to modifying a public railroad-highway grade crossing within the state of Washington. We find that the proposed modifications will improve overall safety for roadway users and pedestrians. When the Commission directs the installation of the active warning devices, it will apportion installation and maintenance costs in accordance with the applicable statutes.¹ RCW 81.53.261 provides that the parties may enter into an agreement providing for the installation of signals or other warning devices or for the apportionment of the cost of installation and maintenance. The parties to this Petition confirmed that they have

¹ See RCW 81.53.261-.295.

reached an agreement related to cost apportionment. Accordingly, the Commission grants the Petition subject to the conditions that Staff recommends.

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.
- 11 (2) The South 259th Street grade crossing, identified as USDOT 085642Y, is a public railroad-highway grade crossing within the state of Washington.
- 12 (3) RCW 81.53.261 requires that the Commission grant approval prior to modifying a public railroad-highway grade crossing within the state of Washington. See also WAC 480-62-150.
- 13 (4) Staff investigated the Petition and recommends that it be granted with the conditions set out in paragraph 8, above.
- 14 (5) After examining the Petition filed by the City on April 20, 2023, and considering all relevant matters and for good cause shown, the Commission grants the Petition.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 15 The City of Kent's Petition to modify warning devices at a railroad-highway grade crossing located at South 259th Street is granted and the parties are directed to proceed with the modifications described in the Petition, subject to the following conditions:
- (1) The modifications must conform to those described in and attached to the Petition.
 - (2) Traffic control devices must comply with all applicable standards specified in the U.S. Department of Transportation Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.
 - (3) The City of Kent must complete the modifications within three years of the effective date of this Order.
 - (4) The City of Kent must notify the Commission within 60 days upon completion of the modifications authorized herein. Acceptance of the

changes is subject to inspection by Staff, who will verify that the crossing is in full compliance with the conditions specified herein.

- 16 The Secretary of the Commission has delegated authority over this matter pursuant to Order 01 in Docket A-180762. The Secretary finds this Order to be consistent with the public interest.

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

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

AMANDA MAXWELL,
Executive Director and Secretary

NOTICE TO PARTIES: This is an order delegated to the Executive Secretary for decision. As authorized in WAC 480-07-904(3), you must file any request for Commission review of this order no later than 14 days after the date the decision is posted on the Commission's website.