

Aug. 10, 2007

Washington State Dept. of Transportation
Attn: Ms. Elizabeth Phinney
Olympia, WA

Re: Proposed Abandonment of Current Rail Service to Moses Lake
Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project

Dear Ms. Phinney,

I'm writing to represent three established businesses in Moses Lake which will be adversely affected by the loss of rail service to our companies.

Brotherton Seed Co., Moses Lake Iron & Metal, and Ferrell Gas have strong ties to our community established over several decades at our present locations. With an annual turnover in excess of \$8,000,000, we ship our products by rail in about 100 cars every year.

The proposed rail line abandonment would severely cripple or perhaps destroy our businesses. As the price of diesel increases, the alternative of truck transport becomes a growing economic hardship with environmental, safety and regulatory issues. Abandonment of this line would force Ferrell Gas to receive their product by trucks. This would add at least 110 more trucks per year, carrying hazardous material over the road and through Moses Lake. Brotherton Seed and Moses Lake Iron & Metal could not survive without rail service and would be forced to shut down or relocate.

The Columbia Basin Railroad, in conjunction with the Port of Moses Lake, Grant Co. Economic Development, The City of Moses Lake, Washington Trails Committee and others support the proposal to abandon the current rail line. Planned construction of a new line to provide heavy traffic rail service to the Port of Moses Lake, at the former Larson Air Force Base, would cross three busy four-lane arterials, cross numerous two-lane roads, cut through the Blacks Addition residential area and run alongside the Longview Elementary School.

This route would have an unfavorable impact on school children, emergency services, pedestrians and vehicle traffic.

Currently, the Port ships fewer than ten rail cars a year. We do not oppose service expansion to the port, but not at the expense of our businesses and the subsequent loss of tax revenue to the community. The Port's philosophy seems to be, "if you build it, they will come." Since outgoing cargo transport loads would show no appreciable increase until some time in the speculative future and to invest in industrial infrastructure when Columbia River water supplies may be uncertain with environmental change occurring, this philosophy is too expensive and not good planning.

The Columbia Basin Rail Road, holding ownership of the land and tracks, would incur a \$15 million cost to rehabilitate the present railroad spur serving our businesses and the Port. However, a new rail line to be built at taxpayers' expense would cost the public more than \$21 million, and the net cost to the railroad would be zero.

The proposed Northern Columbia Basin Rail Road engineering project would ultimately cost taxpayers \$69 million in state and federal funds if all phases were approved. Surface Transportation Board licensing fees and the cost of preparing state and federal environmental impact studies will cost even more. No one has addressed the issue of how these additional RR crossings of Crab Creek and Rocky Ford Creek would impact the fishery.

The Washington State Department of Transportation is the lead agency providing information on this project.

We urge your office to consider the option of rehabilitating the current line instead of building a new one. Rail service will be maintained to the Port, existing businesses will continue to prosper, and no additional disruption of traffic or safety to our children will incur.

Thank you for taking the time to evaluate this important issue.

Kind regards,

Jerome Brotherton, Brotherton Seed Co., Inc.
Glen Dart, Moses Lake Iron and Metal, Inc.
Aaron Gimmeson, Ferrell Gas, Inc.