

# GRANT COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 5

*Serving the Community Since 1949*

August 10, 2007

Elizabeth Phinney  
Rail Environmental Manager  
WSDOT State Rail Office

Olympia, WA 98507

RE: Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project

Dear Ms. Phinney,

Grant County Fire District No. 5 would like to take this opportunity make comments concerning the impact on public safety and emergency response within our community as it relates to the Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project. We were unable to attend the public meeting to comment on the matter.

We have taken a great deal of consideration in this matter and reviewed the Moses Lake Railroad Taskforce Study, July 2003, and the Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project Study, February 2006. We have also reviewed the Segment 1 and 2 maps that you provided us with on August 9, 2007. We have the following comments/recommendations based on the current project map:

1. Recommend that WSDOT review the impact of creating multiple crossings on a single route of travel – Wheeler Road NE. This impact would be reduced by keeping the rail north of Wheeler Road. If the rail is moved south of Wheeler Road it will cause a crossing of Road L and second crossing on Wheeler Road. This will cause significant delays and route response issues for emergency vehicles trying to travel into a significant portion of our Fire District.
2. If the section of the rail is moved south of Wheeler Road, congestion will be caused at the existing access point at Wheeler and Road O NE by the movement of rail cars to a from different spurs. We already have four different crossing points within a 1 square mile area.
3. Recommend the WSDOT reconsider the recommendations made in the July 2003 Taskforce study. Recommendations in this report indicated that in Scenarios 3-5 that the main portion of the Railroad be kept north and away from traveling through the more

**11058 Nelson Road NE, Moses Lake, Washington 98837-8812**

Business (509) 765-3175 ☐ Fax (509) 765-3550 ☐ e-mail: [fire5@grantcounty5.net](mailto:fire5@grantcounty5.net) ☐ web: [www.grantcounty5.net](http://www.grantcounty5.net)

suburban and urban areas surrounding Moses Lake as is suggested in the current plan. There are already spur lines that service the areas addressed in the Wheeler Road industrial area. These lines could be expanded without significant impact to road systems or emergency response routes.

4. Based on the July 2003 Taskforce study, movement of the route further to north on previously established rail beds would create less crossings in already congested areas of Wheeler Road, Broadway, Road K NE and Stratford Road. By moving the main route into the Port of Moses Lake further north, it will decrease the potential for delays in access to critical infrastructure and residential communities that will be significantly impacted by traveling through the proposed areas.

Along the proposed route of Segment 1 and Segment 1 Alternate there is no rail usage for shipping or receiving that we are aware of. Most of that area is zoned for residential and commercial, not industrial. There is significant potential throughout the proposed routes for crossing heavily traveled commuter roads, both city and county. Also, it creates the potential for incidents with hazardous materials on rail cars in residential areas that could be avoided.

The study conducted by the Moses Lake Railroad Taskforce Feasibility/Cost Study suggests that moving the rail north will improve potential for connection to other systems, without direct impact on more populated areas. We support this report, especially the proposed routes in Scenarios 3 through 5. These still provide improved access to the Port of Moses Lake, while minimizing the impact of rail crossings on areas requiring greater emergency response.

We urge the WSDOT to consider the impact of such a significant number of crossings on a heavily traveled area. The movement of the existing railroad to southern area of Wheeler Road NE will significantly impact the ability of the Fire District to provide effective and efficient services to the taxpaying citizens and industries that we serve in those areas. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Sent without signature to avoid delay.*

Roger Hansen  
Fire Chief

cc: Board of Commissioners, GCFD#5