



**U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration**

Point Defiance Bypass Project

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

February 2013

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is implementing a program of infrastructure improvement projects along the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor (PNWRC) also known as the PNWRC Improvement Program. The PNWRC Improvement Program is made up of approximately 17 component projects. To fund these projects, WSDOT applied and was selected for grant funding through the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) Program.

One such component project is the Point Defiance Bypass Project (the Project or Build Alternative), WSDOT has proposed to respond to deficiencies in the existing rail operations around Point Defiance between Tacoma and Nisqually in Washington State. As part of the PNWRC Improvement Program, when combined with the other component projects, this Project would allow for two additional round trips of the Amtrak Cascades service between Seattle, Washington, and Portland, Oregon with improved reliability and reduced travel time. This Project would also support Amtrak's longer-distance Pacific Northwest passenger rail service, the Coast Starlight.

FRA and WSDOT prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze and document whether the Project would have significant effects on the environment. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is made based on the information in the EA and has been prepared by FRA and WSDOT to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C § 4321) (NEPA), FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (64 Fed. Reg. 28545, May 6, 1999), and other related laws. WSDOT will use FRA's decision documentation and other supporting documentation to satisfy the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) (WAC 197-11). The final version of the EA is available to the public on FRA's website at <http://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0212> and WSDOT's Project website at:

http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/Rail/PNWRC_PtDefiance/environmental_assessment.htm

2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

As described above, the Project is part of the larger PNWRC. Within Washington State, the vision for the PNWRC is to "...improve intercity passenger rail service by reducing travel times and achieving greater schedule reliability in order to accommodate growing intercity travel demand..."

The purpose of the Project is to provide more frequent and reliable intercity passenger rail service along the PNWRC between Tacoma and Nisqually.

The Project is needed to address the deficiencies in the existing rail alignment around Point Defiance. The existing alignment (Puget Sound route), shared by freight and passenger rail traffic, is near capacity and therefore unable to accommodate additional intercity passenger rail service without substantial improvements. In addition, the Puget Sound route has physical and operational constraints that adversely affect both passenger train scheduling and reliability.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

As part of an alternatives analysis process, FRA and WSDOT evaluated three build alternatives: the Point Defiance Bypass route, the Shoreline Alternative, and the Greenfield Alternative to identify the range of reasonable alternatives to carry forward for detailed analysis. A brief description of each build alternative follows:

- ◆ The Point Defiance Bypass route includes railroad track and support facility improvements, and the relocation of Amtrak's Tacoma Station.
- ◆ The Shoreline Alternative would make improvements along the 26-mile-long Puget Sound route between Nisqually and Tacoma. This alternative consists of adding 8 miles of new track and re-aligning 15 miles of existing track.

- ◆ The Greenfield Alternative includes six routes (Lakewood South Route, Spanaway Route, Lakewood to Tacoma Tunnel Route, Fredrickson Route, Rainer Route, and I-5 Median Route). Although each route has minor differences each would construct a new alignment and reconstruct an existing route.

Two of the alternatives (Shoreline Alternative and Greenfield Alternative) were eliminated from further study as each was determined to be impracticable and unfeasible due to technical constraints, high construction costs, and significant environmental effects.

Modifications to the proposed Project were suggested during the two-year public involvement process, including adding a Cascades station within the Lakewood or DuPont city limits, and constructing one or several grade-separated crossings. Consistent with the trip time element of the Project's purposes and need and in order to meet performance standards set by WSDOT, no additional stops are proposed. The evaluation of grade separations, as described in the EA, revealed that current and projected future traffic volumes do not warrant the construction of new grade-separated crossings.

Two alternatives are considered in the EA, the No Build Alternative and the Build Alternative.

3.1 No Build Alternative

Under the No Build Alternative, Amtrak's Cascades and Coast Starlight passenger train service would continue to use the existing Puget Sound route. The No Build Alternative includes only the minor maintenance and repair activities necessary to keep the existing Puget Sound route operational but with no extensive infrastructure improvements.

Along the Point Defiance Bypass route, the Tacoma Rail and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) freight services would continue. The at-grade crossings at Clover Creek Drive Southwest, North Thorne Lane Southwest, Berkeley Street Southwest, 41st Division Drive, and Barksdale Avenue Southwest would not be upgraded.

Sound Transit's *Sounder* commuter passenger trains became operational in October 2012 between the Tacoma Dome Station at Freighthouse Square in Tacoma and Sound Transit's Lakewood Station (on the Point Defiance Bypass route) with up to 18 *Sounder* trains per day.

3.2 Build Alternative

The Project consists of railroad track and support facility improvements to facilitate the rerouting of Amtrak's intercity passenger rail to the Point Defiance Bypass route, and the relocation of Amtrak's Tacoma Station. The following details specific components of the Build Alternative (Figure 1).

Construct New Track Adjacent to the Existing Main Line – A new 3.5-mile track adjacent to the existing main line would be constructed from South 66th Street (Rail milepost [MP] 6.9) in Tacoma to between Bridgeport Way Southwest (Rail MP 10.4) and Clover Creek Drive Southwest (Rail MP 10.9) in Lakewood.

Reconstruct and Rehabilitate the Existing Main Line – Starting just southwest of Bridgeport Way Southwest (Rail MP 10.4) in Lakewood, the existing track would be reconstructed to a location southeast of the I-5/Mounts Road Southwest interchange (Rail MP 19.8) at Nisqually Junction.

Improvements at the At-grade Crossings – Five highway-rail grade crossings would be improved with wayside horns, gates, traffic signals and signage, sidewalks, median separators, and warning devices. These crossings include Clover Creek Drive Southwest, North Thorne Lane Southwest, Berkeley Street Southwest, 41st Division Drive and Barksdale Avenue.

Tacoma Amtrak Station Relocation – The existing Tacoma Amtrak Station would be relocated from its Puyallup Avenue location to the Tacoma Dome Station at Freighthouse Square, at 430 E. 25th Street in Tacoma. This work includes platform modifications to accommodate longer Coast Starlight trains. The proposed Freighthouse Square station would provide the same or more

parking spaces than are currently available at the Tacoma Amtrak Station. Parking would be located on a parcel near Freighthouse Square that either has parking available for lease or which can be purchased and developed into a parking lot for exclusive use by Amtrak passengers. In addition to this proposed parking, there would be some available on-street parking near the station.

Operational Changes – Amtrak’s existing Cascades and Coast Starlight passenger train service would be rerouted from the Puget Sound route along the Puget Sound shoreline to the Point Defiance Bypass route. The Project would also provide for additional Amtrak Cascades service by increasing the number of roundtrips provided per day from 4 to 6, or a total of 12 Cascades service train trips. Two (roundtrip) Amtrak Coast Starlight train trips per day would travel on the Point Defiance Bypass route. Train speed would increase from the current 30 miles per hour (mph) for *Sounder* trains to a maximum operating speed of 79 mph for all passenger trains.

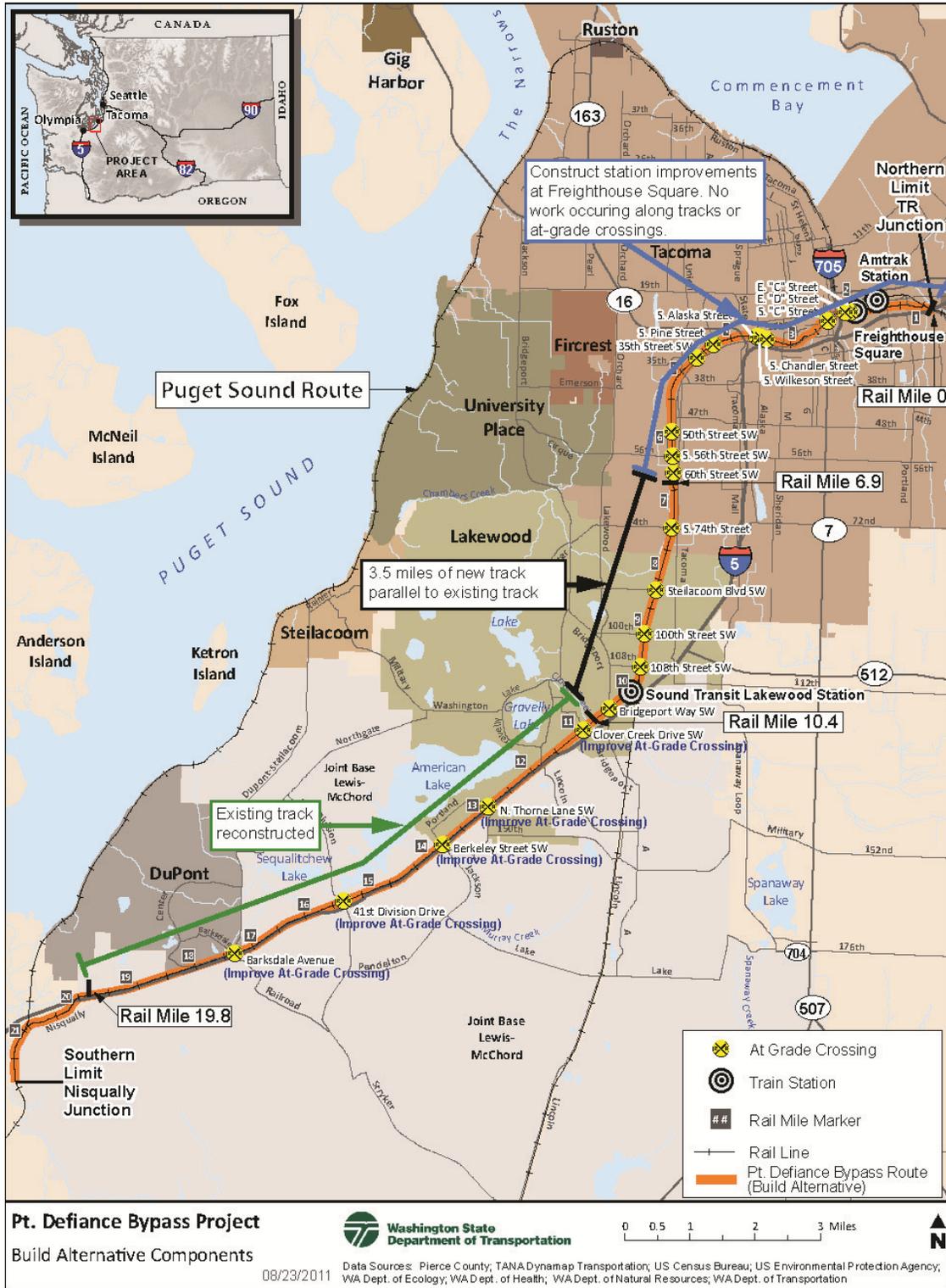


Figure 1. Build Alternative Components

4.0 SUMMARY OF EFFECTS

Environmental effects of the Build Alternative are summarized in this section.

4.1 Air Quality

The Project would not result in significant air quality impacts. Construction would result in a temporary increase in Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSAT) emissions in the study area, and temporary odors may be detected by people near asphalt paving operations. Measures will be implemented to control particulate matter emissions during construction.

Implementation of the Project would be in conformity with Clean Air Act requirements and would not cause exceedance of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The Project is not predicted to increase regional highway vehicle miles traveled and thus not affect regional air pollutant levels. Increased locomotive emissions resulting from increased Amtrak Cascades service frequency would be offset to a degree by the reduction in track miles traveled with the Build Alternative.

4.2 Noise

During construction, there would be localized increases in noise levels (ranging from a maximum of 71 to 98 decibels [dBA] at 50 feet). The increases in noise would be typical of those emitted from construction equipment, which range from 71 to 98 dBA at 50 feet. However, because various pieces of equipment would be turned off, idling, or operating at less than full power at any given time, average daytime noise levels would be less than the maximum noise levels indicated above. Therefore, construction noise effects on sensitive receptors are not anticipated to be significant.

Operation of the Project would not result in significant noise effects on noise sensitive receptors. Noise exposure would be generated by several sources, including passing trains, trains going over special track work (such as joints or frogs), and warning equipment (either wayside horns or on-train horns). Moderate noise impacts are predicted at two groups of sensitive receptors for the Project: Site 6M and Site 16N. Increased noise levels at noise-sensitive receptors would be caused by new warning devices (wayside horns) at signalized at-grade crossings. The use of wayside horns by both Amtrak and freight trains will replace train mounted horns with quieter wayside mounted horns that would reduce this particular source of noise. Wayside train horn volumes would be lower than the maximum noise level allowed by FRA for train-mounted horns, which is 92 dBA at 100 feet. Noise effects from wayside horns would be localized and only occur during passenger rail operations anticipated to be scheduled between the hours of 7:00am and 10:00pm.

4.3 Vibration

During construction, typical vibration-producing equipment would produce vibration levels in the range of 66 to 112 vibration decibels (VdB) at a distance of 25 feet. Construction-related vibration effects are predicted at up to 16 residences. At these residences, vibration occurrences at the higher end of the range would be above the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) vibration impact criteria of 80 VdB. However, because of the linear nature of rail construction, activities and any resulting vibration effects would be temporary and occur infrequently. As a result, vibration effects during construction would not be significant.

During operations, vibration effects above the FTA vibration impact criteria of 80 VdB for infrequent events are predicted to occur at some locations. Additional impacts resulting from a 3 VdB or higher increase over the existing vibration levels in the corridor shared with Sound Transit *Sounder* service (Lakewood Station to TR Junction) are predicted at other locations, but these would be below the FTA impact criteria of 80 VdB for infrequent events. However, because the Project would be designed and built consistent with the commitments described Section 8.0, the vibration impacts would be below the FTA vibration impact thresholds.

4.4 Transportation

During construction, some Tacoma Rail freight service would be rerouted to available Tacoma Rail tracks when portions of the Point Defiance Bypass route (south of Lakewood) are out of service. WSDOT would coordinate with Tacoma Rail to maintain continued freight access during construction. *Sounder* train service would not be affected by construction because the trains operate on adjacent tracks.

Construction vehicles would increase traffic delay during construction. Temporary lane closures and occasional weekend road closures would be required to rebuild the track and install safety improvements at the at-grade crossings. Traffic control plans for these closures would include signage and prior notice to alert local and I-5 drivers of the work. Construction activities would similarly disrupt and delay transit, pedestrians and bicyclists, and parking temporarily.

Relocating passenger rail service to the Point Defiance Bypass route would have a beneficial transportation effect by improving travel time of the Amtrak Cascades service by 10 minutes due to the shorter distance (approximately 6 miles) and because the trains will operate at higher speeds (up to 79 mph) on less congested tracks. Further benefits include improved reliability of the Cascades service by avoiding potential delays from freight trains on the Puget Sound route. Freight trains on the Puget Sound route would not be affected by relocating passenger trains to the Point Defiance Bypass route but could experience a slight benefit by removing passenger rail operations from the Puget Sound route.

No new at-grade highway or rail crossings are planned and no existing at-grade road crossings would be closed with the Build Alternative. The addition of Amtrak passenger service to the Point Defiance Bypass route would increase the number of short-term roadway blockages from train crossings throughout the day. The additional blockages would cause an increase in the overall time roadways are blocked for the Build Alternative by approximately 1 minute during the morning and afternoon peak hour. Roadway blockage by additional train crossings would also increase queue length by 2 to 4 vehicles. At some locations, the queue length would be reduced because of signal improvements.

The Build Alternative would reduce the number of intersections exceeding the Level of Service (LOS) D standards set by local jurisdictions and WSDOT from nine to eight. With the Build Alternative, several intersections experience minor impacts resulting in decreased LOS but would range between LOS A through D. The remaining intersections would experience some change in delay (seconds per vehicle) but no LOS changes.

While stopped at Freighthouse Square, the Coast Starlight train would extend beyond the existing station platform and across East C Street and East D Street. During an event at the Tacoma Dome, the dwell time of the Coast Starlight train at Freighthouse Square would result in a decline of LOS to below LOS D. The temporary blockage of these two streets would result in a decline of LOS to below LOS D during an event at the Tacoma Dome. Minimization of operational effects on traffic as a result of the Coast Starlight dwell time at Freighthouse Square, and during a Tacoma Dome event, would include implementation of a detour plan that could include static signs identifying the detour routes, dynamic message signs that identify the detour routes during a train blockage, lane striping and controller modification.

The Tacoma Amtrak Station relocation to Freighthouse Square would improve pedestrian connections between Amtrak passenger rail and transit services provided at the Tacoma Dome Station (*Sounder*, Tacoma Link light rail, and bus transit). The Build Alternative would also improve sidewalks thus improving pedestrian access and safety. Pedestrians and bicyclists would experience similar intersection delays as vehicles with the Build Alternative. Freight trains on the Puget Sound route could experience a slight benefit with the shift of passenger rail service from the Puget Sound route.

4.5 Geology and Soils

The Build Alternative would not have a significant effect on geology or soils. Use of construction best management practices (BMPs) would minimize soil disturbance and erosion during construction. Operation of the Build Alternative would not affect existing geologic hazard areas.

4.6 Water Resources

The Build Alternative would not have a significant effect on water resources. During construction, use of BMPs would minimize or avoid erosion, sedimentation, and pollutant spill effects to surface water and groundwater resources. The Build Alternative would not affect surface waters through changes in volume or water quality, because the new impervious surface area is below the thresholds outlined in the WSDOT Highway Runoff Manual (HRM). No changes would be made within the boundaries of regulated shorelines or floodplains. The operation of the Build Alternative would not affect surface waters, critical aquifer recharge, or well protection areas.

4.7 Wetlands

While construction activities associated with the Build Alternative could result in temporary effects to adjacent wetlands, the effects on the wetlands would not be significant. Construction could result in a short-term loss of wetland functions associated with habitat and water quality and ground disturbance could result in minor erosion of disturbed soils into wetlands and buffer areas, impairing vegetation and habitat. Clearing and grading activities in the vicinity of wetlands would have the potential to affect surface water quality during seasonal events when surface water is present. However, through implementation of required BMPs, effects during construction would be minimized or avoided. The operation of the Build Alternative would not affect wetlands.

4.8 Fish, Vegetation, and Wildlife

The Build Alternative would not have a significant effect on fish, vegetation, or wildlife. No in-water work is proposed and no effects to water quality are anticipated during construction or operation, thus no effects to fish would occur. Approximately 24 acres of maintained vegetation, 2.5 acres of disturbed mixed forest, and 1 acre of scattered trees would be removed as a result of the Build Alternative. These vegetation types do not support habitat for species protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), thus no effects to ESA-protected species would occur during construction or operation of the Project (see Appendix A for the no effect concurrence letter from the National Marine Fisheries Service). Removal of vegetation from the Project corridor during construction and maintenance during operations would have no effect on wildlife, as the quality of habitat in the Project area is poor and what little wildlife that might be present could relocate to other similarly vegetated areas in the vicinity. Visual disturbance and elevated noise are expected to be marginally higher than baseline levels during construction, thus the effects on wildlife during construction would be minimal.

4.9 Hazardous Materials

During construction there is the potential to encounter previously contaminated soil or groundwater, which could result in public health or environmental effects. Minimization measures would avoid, control, and manage effects associated with earthwork in areas where potential contamination concerns have been identified, including near the ASARCO smelter plant in Tacoma, the Lakewood Superfund Site near I-5 in Lakewood, and the Freighthouse Square area in downtown Tacoma. The Project is intended to improve passenger train operations and there would be no foreseeable increase in the freight rail transport of hazardous material as a result of the Build Alternative.

4.10 Visual Quality

Construction of the Build Alternative would have a minor effect on visual quality as construction would be relatively short in duration and not affect any single location along the tracks for a long period of time. Operational changes would increase the time trains are present and visible along the Point Defiance Bypass route. Visual impacts resulting from changes to the Freighthouse Square building and platform to accommodate use by Amtrak would be minor. The changes to the Freighthouse Square building and parking would be compatible with surrounding land uses and existing visual conditions.

4.11 Cultural and Historic Resources

The Build Alternative would have no adverse effect on cultural or historic resources present in the area of potential effect (APE), including Native American traditional cultural or ceremonial places or resources. Several historic properties have been identified in the APE, but the Build Alternative would not affect any attributes that make the properties eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. Federally-recognized tribes and the Washington State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) were consulted, as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The SHPO concurred with the determination of no adverse effect on cultural and historic resources (see Appendix A).

4.12 Section 4(f) Resources

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 protects certain park and recreational lands, refuges, and historic sites from being “used” in transportation projects carried out or funded by modal administrations of the U.S. Department of Transportation, including FRA. Section 4(f) resources include any publicly-owned public park, recreation area, wildlife or waterfowl refuge, or any publicly- or privately-owned historic site. No properties eligible for protection under Section 4(f) are present within the study area and therefore no Section 4(f) uses would result from the Project.

4.13 Socioeconomics

The Build Alternative would have minor temporary effects on neighborhoods and businesses adjacent to the railroad corridor during construction, including localized increases in noise and air emissions from construction activities. In general, during construction localized traffic circulation and accessibility to neighborhoods and businesses would be disrupted by construction of improvements at the at-grade crossings. However, the operation of local businesses would not be disrupted, since most construction would occur within the railroad right-of-way, away from intersections and business access locations. Construction of the Build Alternative would affect access to some public services during construction. Construction employment for the Build Alternative would be small and specialized, so there would be a minor benefit for employment and gross income.

Project Operation would have the following effects on the socioeconomic elements presented below:

Community Characteristics. The Build Alternative would not cause a direct change in the demographics, land use patterns, neighborhoods, or other related community characteristics.

Community Connectivity and Cohesion. The increased number of trains (up to 14 per day in addition to up to 18 *Sounder* trains) would reduce connectivity during train crossings of local roads. However upgrades (intersection and signal improvements) to 5 at-grade crossings would improve connectivity and safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles as well as improve traffic flow for some intersections. The Tillicum, Woodbrook, and Nyanza neighborhoods would continue to experience some isolation because of existing geophysical separations and limitations to authorized non-vehicular access across or along the railroad tracks. Operation of the Project may increase residents’ feelings of isolation in a few neighborhoods during train pass-bys, which would be very short in duration. However, overall the Project would result in more intersections with delay decreases than delay increases. Therefore, with the Project, and the proposed traffic improvements, community connectivity would experience a minor benefit.

Although there would be an increase in noise levels, the noise analysis demonstrates that the noise level effects on sensitive noise receptors would be moderate. There would be a corollary benefit from the use of wayside horns by both Amtrak and freight trains from Lakewood to Tacoma. Replacing train-mounted horns with quieter wayside-mounted horns would reduce this particular source of noise in the communities. There would be no effect in community cohesion due to noise.

Economics. The Project is not anticipated to affect property values. The rail corridor is an existing feature with portions currently used for freight and commuter service. Measures to minimize or eliminate noise and vibration would be implemented by the Project. Operation of the Project would result in a minor benefit to the limited freight operations due to safety improvements at crossings, and the replaced rail

infrastructure at the southern end. Tacoma Rail may gain improved access to Tacoma suppliers. Freight movements are independent of the Sound Transit and Amtrak operations along the Point Defiance Bypass route. There would be no change to the operation of freight trains on the Point Defiance Bypass route under the Build Alternative. Tacoma Rail and BNSF would continue to operate as many as two trains per day or as few as two trains per week. BNSF would continue to operate intermittent freight trains on the Point Defiance Bypass route to serve military transportation needs at Joint Base Lewis McCord (JBLM).

4.14 Environmental Justice

FRA and WSDOT evaluated the construction and operational environmental effects of the Project to determine whether Environmental Justice (EJ) communities would experience disproportionately high or adverse impacts. Minority/ethnic and low-income populations were identified at locations where noise and vibration effects are predicted. While the potential noise and vibration effects would affect low-income and minority/ethnic populations, the effects would not be appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude than the effect on non-minority or non-low-income populations in the vicinity of the Project. Therefore, FRA and WSDOT determined no disproportionately high or adverse effect on EJ populations would result from the Project and the Project meets the provisions of Executive Order 12898, and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

4.15 Land Use

Construction activities associated with the Build Alternative would not displace any existing land uses or acquire additional property aside from potential acquisitions adjacent to Freighthouse Square for parking. Such acquisitions would occur consistent with State and Federal law. Operationally, the Build Alternative is consistent with adopted land use policies. Operational effects on existing and planned land uses would result from the Tacoma Amtrak Station relocation by enhancing the accessibility to and between the modes of transportation in the downtown Tacoma area. The rail corridor would continue to be compatible with surrounding land uses. Relocation of the Cascades and Coast Starlight service to the Tacoma Dome Station at Freighthouse Square is consistent with adopted plans specific to the revitalization and redevelopment of the Tacoma Dome neighborhood and enhancing the pedestrian connection between rail services, with the goal to create economic opportunities at local, statewide, and multi-state levels by the increased reliability and frequency of alternative modes of transportation.

4.16 Public Services, Utilities, and Safety

Temporary traffic delays for emergency vehicles and school and public buses would occur during construction. Access for emergency response services would be maintained during construction. During Project operation, the addition of Amtrak services would result in minor intersection traffic delays that would result in similar effects on all public service sectors. No public services would be displaced by the Project and all services would continue to be available to individuals in the study area.

No effects are anticipated for utilities as the Project would relocate, deepen or harden utilities within railroad right-of-ways, and access for utility maintenance and upgrades would be provided to utility owners.

With the Build Alternative, 3.2 accidents for every million train crossings are anticipated. This accident rate would be a decrease in accidents from current operations along the Puget Sound route (3.6 accidents per million train crossings). The Build Alternative would also improve safety at 5 existing at-grade crossings by adding signage, wayside horns, median barriers, sidewalks, pre-signals, and more advanced signal controllers.

4.17 Energy

Energy is required for construction of the Build Alternative. The majority of construction emissions are from fuel combustion from equipment used on-site. Construction energy requirements are estimated to be 539,000 million British Thermal Units (Mbtu) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are estimated to be 41,000 CO₂e equivalents (CO₂e).

Operation of the Build Alternative would produce 3.3 CO₂e daily. This would result in a small annual reduction in energy consumption (321 CO₂e) compared to the current alignment because the Build Alternative alignment would be shorter and allow for more energy efficient travel.

5.0 INDIRECT EFFECTS

FRA and WSDOT considered the potential indirect effects on resource areas and found that the only potential indirect effect from the Project is related to the relocation of the Tacoma Amtrak Station from Puyallup Avenue to Freighthouse Square. The relocation of Amtrak services to Freighthouse Square may indirectly influence minor redevelopment near Freighthouse Square. The redevelopment would be consistent with local zoning and approved by state and local agencies, therefore it is unlikely to result in indirect effects on the following resources: air quality, noise and vibration, public services and utilities, or energy. The redevelopment at Freighthouse Square would not result in indirect effects on fish, wildlife and vegetation, geologic and soils, wetlands, or water resources because these resources are not present. The following resources may experience a beneficial indirect effect from the redevelopment at Freighthouse Square: hazardous materials, visual quality, land use, transportation and socioeconomic and EJ.

6.0 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Since the Build Alternative would have no effect on air quality, geology and soils, water resources, wetlands, fish and wildlife, and cultural resources, it would not contribute to a cumulative effect on these resources.

FRA and WSDOT considered the potential for cumulative effects resulting from the Project for resources where minor effects may occur. A discussion of the potential cumulative effects for each resource area is included in Table 1. The analysis indicated that the Project would not result in significant cumulative effects.

| Resource | Cumulative Effect |
|--|--|
| Noise | At sensitive locations north of Lakewood Station, moderate increases in noise would likely result from a combination of future Sound Transit operations and Project-related Amtrak operations. FRA and WSDOT found that the Project's contribution to noise in the area would not lead to a significant cumulative effect. |
| Vibration | Vibration effects from the Project were also considered in combination with other reasonably foreseeable actions, and WSDOT found that the Project's vibration minimization measures are adequate to prevent an adverse cumulative effect. |
| Hazardous Materials | In general, development projects improve conditions where hazardous materials are present. Therefore, this Project is not likely to contribute to a cumulative environmental effect from hazardous materials releases. |
| Visual Quality | In the context of the existing urban environment, the visual elements of the Project would not contribute to a cumulative visual effect because it would not change the visual quality of the area. |
| Vegetation | Given the urban and disturbed condition of vegetation, the Project would not contribute to an adverse cumulative effect on vegetation. |
| Land Use | The Project would not contribute to a cumulative effect on land use because its direct and indirect effects are negligible relative to the overall development in the region. |
| Energy | The long-term energy use associated with the Project would be reduced from current conditions. Thus, there would be a beneficial cumulative effect on energy from the Project. |
| Public Services, Utilities, and Safety | A slight beneficial cumulative effect would result since the improvements made to the intersection signals would not occur without the Project. |

| Resource | Cumulative Effect |
|---|---|
| Transportation | The reasonably foreseeable future projects would improve traffic conditions in the study area. Therefore, the Build Alternative, when considered with the reasonably foreseeable future actions, would not result in significant cumulative effects on transportation. |
| Socioeconomic and Environmental Justice | In conjunction with the Project's intersection and signaling improvements and other reasonably foreseeable future projects, there would be a slight beneficial cumulative effect on community connectivity near the Berkeley Street Southwest intersection. Connectivity north of Bridgeport Way Southwest would be unchanged. The lack of connecting streets and non-motorized access across the railroad tracks, combined with increased train activity with the Project, would result in a minor contribution to the isolation associated with the cumulative effects of past and present land use and transportation patterns in the Tillicum, Woodbrook, and Nyanza neighborhoods. |
| Climate Change | The results of WSDOT's recent vulnerability assessment show the section of I-5 along the Project to have low vulnerability to climate-related threats. WSDOT is coordinating with Sound Transit on a vulnerability assessment of all Sound Transit facilities, and the project corridor appears resilient to future climate-related effects. |

7.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Opportunities for public involvement on the Project begin with the scoping process and other outreach efforts that took place between spring 2010 and summer 2012. Materials provided at these events and briefings included electronic PowerPoint presentations, Project maps, photos and videos, fact sheets, and illustrated Project timelines. FRA and WSDOT's efforts for the EA included outreach to a wide variety of stakeholders along the Project corridor, including meetings with state and local agencies, neighborhood associations, farmers markets, city councils, and elected officials.

The EA was issued by FRA and WSDOT for public review on October 9, 2012 for a period of 30 calendar days (comment period closed on November 9, 2012). A total of 62 comments on the EA were received from individuals or agencies, including comments from 1 federal agency, 2 state agencies, 1 regional agency, and 5 local agencies. Copies and responses to the comments are included in Appendix B.

8.0 ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS

The environmental commitments described below have been identified as the practicable means to avoid and minimize effects from the Project.

| Resource | Commitments |
|-------------|--|
| Air Quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Spraying water and operating water trucks on haul roads to reduce dust and particulate matter (PM₁₀) emissions. ◆ Covering and/or wetting materials on-site and during transport, or providing adequate freeboard (space from the top of the material to the top of the vehicle) to reduce PM₁₀ emissions. ◆ Providing wheel washers to remove PM that vehicles would otherwise carry off-site. ◆ Removing PM (mud and windblown dust) deposited on paved roadways. ◆ Properly maintaining construction equipment with required pollution-control devices. |

Table 2. Environmental Commitments

| Resource | Commitments |
|-------------------|--|
| Noise | <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Ensure all construction activities comply with local noise regulations, including no nighttime work unless a variance is obtained.◆ Use artificial barriers (e.g. baffles, or stockpiles of construction materials) to shield against construction noise.◆ Strategically place stationary equipment, such as compressors and generators, to reduce effects on noise-sensitive receivers during construction.◆ During construction, equip each internal combustion engine with a manufacturer-recommended muffler.◆ Use vibratory or hydraulic insertions for pile driving, or use drilled shafts in place of pile driving at locations determined during final design.◆ During operations, use wayside horns at the at-grade crossings to limit the sounding of on-train horns and reduce the area exposed to train warning sounds. |
| Vibration | <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Use of track treatments (such as resiliently supported ties, or ballast mats) to reduce the vibration transmitted to the ground and reduce vibration effects on below FTA vibration impact criteria. |
| Transportation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Development of a traffic control plan with local jurisdictions to minimize traffic delays and periodic lane or access revisions during construction of at-grade crossing improvements.◆ Development of framework with Tacoma Rail and BNSF to ensure rail freight deliveries meet customer needs during construction.◆ WSDOT will coordinate with local jurisdictions regarding the construction schedule, construction areas, and detour routes during Project development to minimize community disruption including for events such as the US Open.◆ Implementation of a detour plan that may include static signs identifying detour routes and/or dynamic message signs that identify the detour routes during a train blockage at Freighthouse Square.◆ FRA and WSDOT would provide additional modeling detail and design at the C and D Street intersections as part of the Final Design process. |
| Geology and Soils | <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Preparing and following a Temporary Erosion and Sediment Control (TESC) Plan to implement proper erosion control and surface water runoff BMPs.◆ Paving or permanently restoring disturbed areas as soon as possible.◆ Designing temporary excavation slopes to prevent surface sloughing and shallow landsliding.◆ Designing all fill and pavement areas to drain away from construction areas and prevent ponding of water and softening of subgrade soils.◆ Limiting cut slopes to 2 horizontal feet to 1 vertical foot (2H:1V) or using retaining walls, and including permanent drainage facilities designed for anticipated water flows. |
| Water Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Prepare and implement a Construction Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (CSWPPP) to serve as the overall construction stormwater minimization plan. The CSWPPP would include provisions for prevention and management of spills in both construction and staging areas, and control sediment from ground disturbing activities. |

Table 2. Environmental Commitments

| Resource | Commitments |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Wetlands | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Clearing limits would be clearly marked and protected with construction fencing. ◆ Various sediment control BMPs would be used to remove sediment prior to any stormwater runoff leaving the site. ◆ Exposed soils would be stabilized to prevent erosion (i.e., hydroseeding, straw wattles). ◆ A temporary erosion control blanket would be placed immediately after seeding, fertilizing, and mulching. ◆ All on-site pollutants, including waste materials and demolition debris, would be handled and disposed in a manner that does not cause contamination of stormwater. ◆ On-track vehicle/machinery maintenance and fueling locations would be established away from aquatic resources. ◆ Any on-site fuel storage would have secondary containment equal to 150 percent of storage capacity. ◆ All waste oils and machinery fluids would be removed by a maintenance vehicle when they are generated. No waste oils or fluids would be stored on-site. ◆ Application of chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides would be conducted in a manner and at application rates that would not result in loss of chemicals to stormwater runoff. ◆ Highly turbid or contaminated dewatering water would be handled separately from stormwater and not allowed to enter local drainage systems. |
| Fish, Wildlife, and Vegetation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Confine construction activities to the minimum area necessary. ◆ Develop and implement a TESC Plan and CSWPPP for clearing, vegetation removal, grading, ditching, filling, embankment compaction, or excavation. The BMPs in the plans would be used to control sediments from ground-disturbing activities. ◆ For construction activities that occur within 200 feet of surface water or wetland habitat as identified by the Project biologist, use BMPs to ensure that no foreign material, such as railroad ballast or other material, is side cast, and to control and prevent sediments from entering aquatic systems. ◆ Native species would be used for reseeding where possible. ◆ Minimize removal of native vegetation to the greatest extent possible. |
| Hazardous Materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Performing site-specific hazardous material investigations where and when necessary. ◆ Preparing and implementing a project-specific hazardous material management plan. ◆ Preparing and implementing a CSWPPP. ◆ Preparing and implementing a TESC Plan, including dust control measures as described for Air Quality. ◆ Preparing and implementing a Spill Prevention, Containment, and Countermeasures Plan (SPCCP). ◆ Coordinating with Ecology during acquisition and construction for work completed within the environmental restrictive covenant at Freighthouse Square. |
| Visual Quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Maintain existing vegetation at the edge of the railroad right-of-way to screen the rail line at locations determined during final design and in coordination with the rail line owners (Tacoma Rail, BNSF, and Sound Transit). ◆ Enhance vegetative buffers and screening where the rail line is adjacent to residential and institutional properties at locations determined during final design and in coordination with the rail line owners. ◆ WSDOT will coordinate with Pierce County and other local jurisdictions regarding the construction schedule, construction areas, and detour routes during Project development to minimize community disruption including for events such as the US Open attendees. |

Table 2. Environmental Commitments

| Resource | Commitments |
|--|--|
| Cultural Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Prepare an inadvertent discovery plan and obtain approval from the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) prior to construction. If during construction, unanticipated cultural deposits, artifacts, or human remains are encountered, work in the vicinity would be halted and local law enforcement officials and DAHP staff would be contacted immediately. |
| Public Services, Utilities, and Safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ WSDOT will coordinate and communicate with public service providers, including school districts, emergency service organizations, and agencies such as Sound Transit to ensure they are fully informed of construction progress and identify ways to minimize delays.◆ Coordination with utility owners to determine conflicts and a suitable resolution to avoid or minimize disruption. This would include coordination with the local fire department if there would be effects on fire suppression water and/or pressure.◆ Post construction schedules near affected crossings and provide the information to local newspapers for publication or to the local jurisdictions for distribution by mail to residents and businesses in the area. Project construction updates could also be posted on WSDOT's project website.◆ Continue the Operation Lifesaver program training on track safety for community members and continue to work with communities to ensure there are safe routes that avoid the illegal use of the railroad right-of-way for pedestrians and non-vehicular travel. |
| Energy | <p>Measures to reduce energy use would be employed during construction, which would also reduce GHG emissions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Limited equipment idling.◆ Encouraging construction workers to carpool.◆ Locating staging areas near work sites.◆ Scheduling the delivery of materials during off-peak hours to allow trucks to travel to the site with less congestion and at fuel-efficient speeds. <p>Operationally, additional fuel efficiency would be realized with the use of the new models of locomotives that are 10 to 12 percent more energy efficient than currently used locomotives.</p> |

9.0 CONCLUSION

As described in the EA and further in this FONSI, the Project would improve travel time of the Amtrak Cascades service by 10 minutes and decrease train delays, allowing for more frequent and reliable intercity passenger rail, which would be a benefit for Amtrak operations and passenger rail riders along the PNWRC. The Project would also result in a slight benefit to freight trains on the Puget Sound route from removing passenger rail from the Puget Sound route.

The improvement of several at-grade crossings would improve safety by adding signage, wayside horns, median barriers, sidewalks, pre-signals, and more advanced signal controllers. Upgrades to intersections and signaling would maintain or improve overall traffic flow at substandard intersections. Replacing train-mounted horns with quieter wayside-mounted horns would reduce this particular source of noise in the communities.

Relocating the Tacoma Amtrak Station to Freighthouse Square would improve pedestrian connections between Amtrak passenger rail and transit services provided at the Tacoma Dome Station (*Sounder*, Tacoma Link light rail, and bus transit).

The FRA finds that the Point Defiance Bypass Route Project EA satisfies the requirements of FRA's NEPA "Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts" (64 FR 28545, May 26, 1999) and NEPA (42 USC § 4321) and the Project would have no foreseeable significant impact on the quality of the human or natural environment provided it is implemented in accordance with the commitments identified in this FONSI. As the Project sponsor, WSDOT is responsible for ensuring all environmental commitments identified in Section 8.0 above are fully implemented. The EA provides sufficient evidence and analysis for FRA to determine that an environmental impact statement is not required for the Project as presented.



Joseph C. Szabo, Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration

3/1/13
Date

FRA Contact:

Colleen Vaughn
Environmental Protection Specialist
Federal Railroad Administration
Office of Railroad Policy and Development
West Building, Mailstop 20
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

List of Preparers:

Larry Mattson, WSDOT
Carol Lee Roalkvam, WSDOT
Leandra Cleveland, HDR Engineering, Inc.
Meagan Ostrem, HDR Engineering, Inc.

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Appendix A
Agency Correspondence



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORIC PRESERVATION

1063 S. Capitol Way, Suite 106 • Olympia, Washington 98501
Mailing address: PO Box 48343 • Olympia, Washington 98504-8343
(360) 586-3065 • Fax Number (360) 586-3067 • Website: www.dahp.wa.gov

September 26, 2012

Mr. David Valenstein
Chief, Environment and Systems Planning
U.S. Dept. of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

In future correspondence please refer to:

Log: 011907-09-WSDOT
Property: Point Defiance Bypass Rail Project
Re: Determined Eligible, No Adverse Effect

Dear Mr. Valenstein:

Thank you for contacting the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and addressing our concerns with the previous report submittal. The project has been reviewed on behalf of the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) under provisions of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended) and 36 CFR Part 800. My review is based upon documentation contained in your communication.

First, DAHP concurs with all of the historic structure eligibility determinations as proposed in the consultant's report with one exception. We do not concur with your determination that the S-Turn Bridge on 26th Street is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). While elements of the structure have been periodically replaced for maintenance and safety reasons, the replacements have, in essence, represented in-kind replacements and the structure remains the only structure of its kind in the State of Washington. We feel that the structure is eligible for listing in the NRHP.

However, regardless of this eligibility determination, since there are no planned construction activities in the vicinity of this structure or other NRHP eligible resources, DAHP concurs with your determination that the current project, as proposed, will have **no adverse effect** on NRHP resources. If additional information on the project becomes available, or if any archaeological resources are uncovered during construction, please halt work in the area of discovery and contact the appropriate Native American Tribes and DAHP for further consultation.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Matthew Sterner, M.A.
Transportation Archaeologist
(360) 586-3082
matthew.sterner@dahp.wa.gov



DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Protect the Past, Shape the Future

From: colleen.vaughn@dot.gov
To: MattsoL@wsdot.wa.gov; [Ostrem, Meagan K.](#); [Cleveland, Leandra L.](#)
Cc: MOLLY.MACQUEEN@stvinc.com; RoalkvC@wsdot.wa.gov
Subject: FW: Pt. Defiance Consultation
Date: Thursday, August 23, 2012 8:33:47 AM

Morning,

Please include this email within the Agency Coordination Appendix.

Thanks,

Colleen

Colleen Vaughn
Federal Preservation Officer
Environmental Protection Specialist
Office of Passenger and Freight Programs
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
(202) 493-6096-office
(202) 570-2964-cell

colleen.vaughn@dot.gov

From: Michael Grady [<mailto:michael.grady@noaa.gov>]
Sent: Thursday, August 23, 2012 11:19 AM
To: Vaughn, Colleen (FRA)
Subject: Re: Pt. Defiance Consultation

Thanks so much Colleen. The NMFS has analyzed the potential effects and concurs with your NO-effect determination. Please keep me updated on the project status and let me know if you need any help from the NMFS.

Thanks again!

mike grady
chief, transportation branch
noaa fisheries (nmfs)-nwr
206-526-4645

On Wed, Aug 22, 2012 at 8:38 AM, <colleen.vaughn@dot.gov> wrote:
Good Morning,

Per our conversation yesterday afternoon, I am sending this email to respectfully request concurrence with the No-Effect Determination made for work being proposed as part of the Point Defiance Bypass project. An email response concurring with the findings presented

within the July 17, 2012 letter to your office will suffice for our files.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you.

Colleen

Colleen Vaughn
Federal Preservation Officer
Environmental Protection Specialist
Office of Passenger and Freight Programs
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
(202) 493-6096-office
(202) 570-2964-cell

colleen.vaughn@dot.gov

Appendix B
Agency and Public Comments and Responses

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COMMENTS FROM JOHN NILES, OCTOBER 8, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #001

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Friday, November 09, 2012 7:54 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Point Defiance Bypass EA -- follow up question

From: John Niles [<mailto:niles@globaltelematics.com>]
Posted At: Monday, October 08, 2012 3:56 PM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Point Defiance Bypass EA -- follow up question
Subject: Point Defiance Bypass EA -- follow up question

See response to
comment 001-1

Thank you for the information contained in the new Point Defiance Bypass EA.

I am interested in understanding exactly how the claimed accident prediction rates for the various grade crossings were determined, as quoted throughout the EA. There is reference to a 2007 FRA guidebook and FRA accident prediction models, but the data and calculations are not provided in the EA so far as I can tell.

Please let me know where and how I can see the data and calculations that are the basis for all of these stated numerical predictions. As just one example out of the many cases in the EA, in Exhibit 2 on Page 2 of Appendix B is the assertion for South 56th Street in Tacoma, "1 accident every 20 years" as "predicted accident experience in 2030." What are the numbers and calculations that stand behind this assertion, and all similar assertions elsewhere in the EA?

Electronic transmission of a document or website to me in response would be best.

Thank you

John Niles
Coalition for Effective Transportation Alternatives
<http://www.effectivetransportation.org>
206-781-4475

Response to Comments from John Niles, October 8, 2012

Commenter ID #001

Response to Comment 001-1

The Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA) presents details on how the accident prediction rates at at-grade crossings were determined. The Build Alternative, with proposed signal and crossing improvements, is anticipated to reduce the overall crossing accident rate from 3.6 accidents for every million train crossings under the No Build Alternative to 3.2 accidents per million train crossings under the Build Alternative.

The accident prediction methodology uses FRA's accident prediction model to forecast an estimated change in accidents in the future. The future accident predictions are based on three primary inputs to the model: future vehicle volumes, future train volumes, and the type of at-grade crossing protection. The model includes different accident rate factors based on historical national at-grade crossing accidents developed by FRA for three categories of warning devices: passive, flashing lights, and gates.

COMMENTS FROM RAYMOND VAN DER ROEST, OCTOBER 8, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #002

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Friday, November 09, 2012 7:55 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Point Defiance Bypass EA

From: van der Roest, Raymond [<mailto:rvanderroest@ci.tacoma.wa.us>]
Posted At: Monday, October 08, 2012 1:37 PM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Point Defiance Bypass EA
Subject: Point Defiance Bypass EA

See response to
comment 002-1

One of the main reasons I took my family on the train to Portland is the scenic view along the track from Point Defiance to Steilacoom.

Raymond van der Roest, PE.
City of Tacoma Public Works, Engineering - Street Design
747 Market Street, Municipal Building Rm 520
Tacoma, WA. 98402-3701
(253) 591-5945

Response to Comments from Raymond van der Roest, October 8, 2012

Commenter ID #002

Response to Comment 002-1

As discussed in Section 4.9.3.2 of the EA, the Point Defiance Bypass route would have a different character and the view of Puget Sound in the area mentioned in the comments would no longer be available. However, the objective of the proposed project is to provide faster, more frequent, and more reliable passenger rail service in the corridor and therefore many issues including, but not exclusively, aesthetic issues were considered.

COMMENTS FROM CAROL BAUER, OCTOBER 9, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #003

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Wednesday, October 17, 2012 10:16 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Freighthouse Square / Tacoma Dome Infrastructure to Support Increased Rail Service

From: Bauer, Carol L [<mailto:carol.l.bauer@boeing.com>]
Sent: Tue 10/9/2012 8:02 AM
To: Davidson, Frank (Consultant)
Subject: Freighthouse Square / Tacoma Dome Infrastructure to Support Increased Rail Service

See response to
comment 003-1

Significant additional parking and traffic control/routing need to be part of this project. The current parking in the 2 existing parking garages is full. The side street parking is full. If you are to ride the 5th northbound Sounder train, there is no parking available. The parking garages service both the commuters and the downtown Tacoma area (which has limited free parking available). I rode Amtrak on Sunday and that parking lot was nearly full (only 5-10 open spots).

If you are not planning for additional parking, implementation will not be able to support the increased service levels that are being planned and people will not use it. And existing commuters will be complaining BIG TIME!!!!

Please communicate this message to the decision makers!
Carol Bauer
253.224.5509

Response to Comments from Carol Bauer, October 9, 2012

Commenter ID #003

Response to Comment 003-1

As described in Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA and the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA), the proposed Freighthouse Square station would provide the same or more parking spaces than are currently available at the Tacoma Amtrak Station. Parking would be located on a parcel near Freighthouse Square (see Section 3.2.4 of the EA) that either has parking available for lease or purchase by WSDOT and developed into a parking lot for exclusive use by Amtrak passengers. In addition to this proposed parking, there would be some available on-street parking near the station (see Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA).

The Tacoma Dome Area Plan was reviewed as part of the Project. As discussed in Section 4.13.3.2 of the EA, the Project is consistent with adopted plans and would implement policies adopted by the City of Tacoma. No policy was found that would cause the Project to be inconsistent with these adopted plans and regulations (see Section 4.13.1 of the EA). Based on this review, the Project is consistent with the comprehensive plan and zoning regulations adopted by the City of Tacoma and is not inconsistent with the Tacoma Dome Area Plan.

WSDOT will continue to work with the City of Tacoma and Sound Transit during final design of the Project.

COMMENTS FROM KATHY HUNTER, OCTOBER 10, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #004

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Scheuermann, Cody [ScheueC@wsdot.wa.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, October 10, 2012 1:11 PM
To: Mattson, Larry; Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Point Defiance Bypass EA

FYI, follow up to request from Kathy Hunter (WUTC)

From: Hunter, Kathy (UTC) [mailto:khunter@utc.wa.gov]
Posted At: Wednesday, October 10, 2012 10:49 AM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Point Defiance Bypass EA
Subject: RE: Point Defiance Bypass EA

Please cancel this request. I received a CD in the mail today from WSDOT with the study.

Thanks -

Kathy Hunter, Deputy Assistant Director, Transportation Safety
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
1300 S. Evergreen Park Dr. SW
PO Box 47250
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

Office Telephone: (360) 664-1257
Cell: (360) 701-1612
Fax: (360) 586-1150

From: Hunter, Kathy (UTC)
Sent: Wednesday, October 10, 2012 7:44 AM
To: 'rail@wsdot.wa.gov'
Subject: Point Defiance Bypass EA

See response to
comment 004-1

I have tried several times to download the Pt. Defiance Environmental Assessment but get an error message each time.
Could you send a paper copy?

Thank you.

Kathy Hunter, Deputy Assistant Director, Transportation Safety
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
1300 S. Evergreen Park Dr. SW
PO Box 47250
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

Office Telephone: (360) 664-1257
Cell: (360) 701-1612
Fax: (360) 586-1150

Response to Comments from Kathy Hunter, October 10, 2012

Commenter ID #004

Response to Comment 004-1

WSDOT provided responses to individuals regarding the process for submitting written comments on the EA as well as noting times and locations for public meetings. If requested, hard and/or electronic copies of the EA were provided.

COMMENTS FROM JOHN JURGENS, OCTOBER 16, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #005

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Wednesday, October 17, 2012 10:12 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: AMTRAK rail bypass message to Frank Davidson
Importance: Low

-----Original Message-----

From: Jurgens, John C CIV Code 290.1 [<mailto:john.jurgens@navy.mil>]
Sent: Tuesday, October 16, 2012 1:53 PM
To: Davidson, Frank (Consultant)
Subject: RE: AMTRAK rail bypass

Just wondering. I'll bet the transit to the Nalley Valley customers is a lot shorter these days not that the new route is open.
Thanks
John

See response to
comment 005-1

John Jurgens
Combat Systems Code 290.1
360-476-7114 Work
360-476-5992 Fax

-----Original Message-----

From: Davidson, Frank (Consultant)
[<mailto:DauidsF@consultant.wsdot.wa.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, October 16, 2012 13:51
To: Jurgens, John C CIV Code 290.1
Cc: Mattson, Larry; Coon, Melanie; A-SRMD Document Control; WSDOT State Rail and Marine Office
Subject: RE: AMTRAK rail bypass

Mr. Jurgens,

Sounder is currently operating on a portion of the bypass, as is Tacoma Rail and BNSF.

Thanks.

Frank G. Davidson, PE, SE

WSDOT Rail Office
Cascades High Speed Rail Project
310 Maple Park Avenue SE
Olympia, WA 98504-7407

360-705-7122 (office)
253-370-6608 (cell)
davidsf@consultant.wsdot.wa.gov

-----Original Message-----

From: Jurgens, John C CIV Code 290.1 [<mailto:john.jurgens@navy.mil>]

Sent: Tuesday, October 16, 2012 1:45 PM
To: Davidson, Frank (Consultant)
Subject: RE: AMTRAK rail bypass

Is the new track in service now for freight and the Sounder?

See response to
comment 005-2

John Jurgens
Combat Systems Code 290.1
360-476-7114 Work
360-476-5992 Fax

-----Original Message-----

From: Davidson, Frank (Consultant)
[mailto:DavidSF@consultant.wsdot.wa.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, October 16, 2012 13:32
To: Jurgens, John C CIV Code 290.1
Cc: Mattson, Larry; Al.Consoli@jacobs.com; A-SRMD Document Control;
WSDOT State Rail and Marine Office
Subject: RE: AMTRAK rail bypass

Mr. Jurgens,

Thank you for your question regarding the Point Defiance Bypass.

AMTRAK trains are not scheduled to use the Point Defiance Bypass route any sooner than 2017. The proposed project includes a relocated Tacoma station.

Thanks.

Frank G. Davidson, PE, SE

WSDOT Rail Office
Cascades High Speed Rail Project
310 Maple Park Avenue SE
Olympia, WA 98504-7407

360-705-7122 (office)
253-370-6608 (cell)
davidsf@consultant.wsdot.wa.gov

-----Original Message-----

From: Jurgens, John C CIV Code 290.1 [mailto:john.jurgens@navy.mil]
Sent: Tuesday, October 16, 2012 12:10 PM
To: Davidson, Frank (Consultant)
Subject: AMTRAK rail bypass

Hello,

Have you started rerouting the AMTRAK trains across the new route yet? It all looks complete. How would the AMTRAK trains reroute from the station on the tide flats to go across the new link?

Thanks
John

See response to
comment 005-3

John Jurgens
Combat Systems Code 290.1

Response to Comment 005-1

Construction for this proposed project is scheduled to commence in 2015. The proposed Project includes the relocation of the Tacoma station to Freighthouse Square (see Section 3.2.4 in the EA). Once complete, Amtrak would not use the tracks running to Puyallup Avenue since the passenger rail operations would use the Point Defiance Bypass route and Freighthouse Square station.

Response to Comment 005-2

Sounder is currently operating on a portion of the Point Defiance Bypass route, as is Tacoma Rail and BNSF. The D to M Street segment recently completed by Sound Transit is owned and used by Sound Transit. In addition, the 2.85% grade through D to M is prohibitively steep for freight trains. Thus Tacoma Rail would continue serving the Nalley Valley via its existing routes.

Response to Comment 005-3

Build Alternative roadway operations as indicated by level of service (LOS) for intersections in the vicinity of the Nalley Valley Viaduct and SR 16 would not differ from those of the No Build Alternative. Build Alternative roadway operations are documented in detail in EA Section 4.3.3.2 and the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA).

COMMENTS FROM JORI ADKINS, OCTOBER 16, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #006

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Wednesday, October 17, 2012 10:11 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Amtrak Pt Def Bypass

From: rick semple [<mailto:ricksemple@mac.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, October 16, 2012 1:41 PM
To: Davidson, Frank (Consultant)
Cc: Stone Keith; Janice McNeal
Subject: Amtrak Pt Def Bypass

See response to
comment 006-1

Hello, I am very involved in the Dome District's planning efforts as a property owner and resident of the DD. Is WADOT going to have any public presentations on Freighthouse Sq. as the Station for Amtrak when it moves up?

We, as a District, are very excited about the move to Freighthouse Square and want to make sure that it is done well.

Please let me know and add the two names I have cc'd to you reply.

Thank you for your time,

Jori Adkins

301 Puyallup Ave.
Tacoma, WA 98421

See response to
comment 006-2

Response to Comments from Jori Adkins, October 16, 2012

Commenter ID #006

Response to Comment 006-1

WSDOT provided responses to individuals regarding the process for submitting written comments on the EA as well as noting times and locations for public meetings. If requested, hard and/or electronic copies of the EA were provided.

Response to Comment 006-2

Thank you for your comment.

COMMENTS FROM NATHANAEL NERODE, OCTOBER 18, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #007

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Friday, November 09, 2012 7:56 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Point Defiance Bypass EA

-----Original Message-----

From: Nathanael Nerode, political activist [mailto:ncn_politics10@fastmail.fm]
Posted At: Thursday, October 18, 2012 3:52 PM Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Point Defiance Bypass EA
Subject: Point Defiance Bypass EA

Only one comment: build it! Build it now! There are no significant negative effects, and many positive effects.

See response to
comment 007-1

Response to Comments from Nathanael Nerode, October 18, 2012

Commenter ID #007

Response to Comment 007-1

Thank you for your comment.

COMMENTS FROM ANDREW MORDHORST, OCTOBER 19, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #008

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Friday, November 09, 2012 7:57 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: New Station

From: Coon, Melanie
Sent: Friday, October 19, 2012 12:41 PM
To: Andrew Mordhorst
Subject: RE: New Station

Thanks very much for your comment about the location of the new Amtrak station. I'm forwarding your comment to our team for inclusion in the project record. I hope you will join us at either of our public meetings next week in Lakewood and DuPont:

- Wednesday, Oct 24 at the Clover Park Technical College Rotunda building from 4 to 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Oct 25 at the DuPont city Hall from 4 to 6:30 p.m.

Thanks again for taking the time to provide a comment. Have a great weekend.

From: Andrew Mordhorst [<mailto:amartist@harboret.com>]
Sent: Friday, October 19, 2012 12:31 PM
To: Coon, Melanie
Subject: New Station

Ms. Coon,

With the development of the new routes for the Cascades High Speed Rail and the discussion around a new station location. The South Tacoma community would like to see the new station located at the new Sounder Station Site. With South Tacoma providing at least 1/3 of the cities revenues we feel it would be an appropriate location. There is a historical building that would provide a ideal structure to convert it in to the cities High Speed Rail (Rail Station). With close access for the I-5 corridor and close proximity to other communities in the western boundaries of Pierce County with SR-16 and SR 512. There would be more than enough area for long and short term parking. With businesses in the South Tacoma Edison Neighborhood this would create a destination and a convenient Rail Station for much of Pierce County. There is a long history of rail service in South Tacoma that bring about a stronger connection to rail and the rest of the state and the nation.

Some of the other sites do not lend them selves to a community like setting as the South Tacoma Way area business district. With a full range of services that could provide support to and for the Rail Customer.

Please take this suggestion in to consideration for the future of South Tacoma and central Pierce County Rail Road Station.

Thank you for your time.

Andrew Mordhorst

Board member: South Tacoma Neighborhood Council
Community Councils of Tacoma

See response to
comment 008-1

Response to Comments from Andrew Mordhorst, October 19, 2012

Commenter ID #008

Response to Comment 008-1

As stated in Section 3.0 of the EA, proposals submitted during the public involvement process included adding a Cascades station within the Lakewood or DuPont city limits. However, consistent with the purpose of the Project to provide more frequent and reliable intercity passenger rail service along the PNWRC between Tacoma and Nisqually, and in order to meet performance standards, no additional stops are proposed for this Project.

Freighthouse Square was identified because it is already configured for the passenger volumes associated with Sound Transit commuter rail service, and is close to freeways. The site is positioned to act as a regional transportation center serving the surrounding communities including Dupont, Lakewood, and Tacoma, allowing shorter connections between Amtrak passenger rail and other transit services provided at the Tacoma Dome Station.

COMMENTS FROM RICK SEMPLE, OCTOBER 19, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #009

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Mattson, Larry [MattsoL@wsdot.wa.gov]
Sent: Monday, October 22, 2012 11:19 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: how do we submit a written comment to the AE?

-----Original Message-----

From: Coon, Melanie
Sent: Friday, October 19, 2012 10:50 AM
To: rick semple
Cc: Adkins Jori
Subject: RE: how do we submit a written comment to the AE?

Thanks very much for taking the time to provide a comment. Please use our rail@wsdot.wa.gov email address.

-----Original Message-----

From: rick semple [<mailto:ricksemple@mac.com>]
Sent: Friday, October 19, 2012 10:48 AM
To: Coon, Melanie
Cc: Adkins Jori
Subject: how do we submit a written comment to the AE?

See response to
comment 009-1

I would like to comment to the Pt Defiance AE via written comment, but will be unable to attend the community meetings as will be out of the area until after the comment period ends. what electronic address can we use?
thank you,
rick semple

Response to Comments from Rick Semple, October 19, 2012

Commenter ID #009

Response to Comment 009-1

WSDOT provided responses to individuals regarding the process for submitting written comments on the EA as well as noting times and locations for public meetings. If requested, hard and/or electronic copies of the EA were provided.

COMMENTS FROM JASON STYLES, OCTOBER 16, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #010

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Tuesday, October 23, 2012 1:08 PM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Point Defiance Bypass EA

-----Original Message-----

From: jason styles [<mailto:gangkharpuensum@gmail.com>]
Posted At: Sunday, October 21, 2012 3:08 AM Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Point Defiance Bypass EA
Subject: Point Defiance Bypass EA

See response to
comment 010-1

I think the Point Defiance Bypass is a terrible idea for Amtrak, and I strongly support the "no build" option. One of the main reasons people take the train is because of the unique scenery, which often cannot be experienced from a car. The bypass would eliminate one of the most scenic segments on the entire Amtrak network (I've traveled all over the country via Amtrak, on nearly every route, so I know what I'm saying here). On this segment of the route I have seen eagles, seals, porpoises, magnificent sunsets across the water, and stunning views of Puget Sound and the Olympics. The slight improvements in timing and reliability would in no way make up for the loss of this magnificent travel experience. Nobody regards trains as the fastest or most reliable or convenient mode of transportation (and the bypass won't change that); they take the train because of the experience it provides. The bypass will greatly diminish that experience-- and there will still be freight delays and mudslides along other parts of the route. So you will retain the drawbacks of train travel (the possibility of delays and cancellations), while eliminating the tremendous rewards. This project would be a catastrophic mistake.

Jason Styles
Seattle, WA

See response to
comment 010-2

Response to Comments from Jason Styles, October 16, 2012

Commenter ID #010

Response to Comment 010-1

Thank you for your comment. As noted in response to the comment on land use, the EA considered the effects of the project in the context of existing and planned land uses, zoning and other regulations, and development trends. The Tacoma Dome Area Plan was reviewed in this process. As discussed in Land Use, Section 4.13.3 of the EA, the Project is consistent with adopted plans and would implement policies adopted by the City of Tacoma. No policy was found that would deem the Project inconsistent with these adopted plans and regulations. Based on this review, the Project is consistent with the comprehensive plan and zoning regulations adopted by the City of Tacoma.

Response to Comment 010-2

As discussed in Section 4.9.3.2 of the EA, the Point Defiance Bypass route would have a different character and the view of Puget Sound in the area mentioned in the comments would no longer be available. However, the objective of the proposed project is to provide faster, more frequent, and more reliable passenger rail service in the corridor and therefore many issues including, but not exclusively, aesthetic issues were considered.

COMMENTS FROM ANDREW LUND, OCTOBER 22, 2012 - COMMENTER ID #011

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Friday, November 09, 2012 7:58 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Point Defiance Bypass EA

From: Andy Lund [<mailto:andylund@harbournet.com>]
Posted At: Monday, October 22, 2012 1:53 PM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Point Defiance Bypass EA
Subject: Point Defiance Bypass EA

See response to comment 011-1

Dear Sirs:

I write to comment on the WSDOT/FRA Pt Defiance Bypass rail project. I've looked at the proposal and the alternatives in the environmental impact statement. Why wasn't double tracking the Pt Defiance tunnel considered? The tunnel was originally was double track until BN changed it to a single track down the center of the arched tunnel to accommodate high (double stack container) freight trains. That single track portion is the cause of the congestion which delays freight and passenger trains. Seems to me (although I'm not an engineer) that the floor of the tunnel could be lowered to allow a double track configuration for far less money than the \$89 million projected for the Lakewood / Dupont line.

You claim 9 minutes travel time savings. But it strikes me as incredibly dangerous to operate passenger trains through the Lakewood area at 79 miles an hour unless you separate the rail line from the many heavily congested surface streets now crossing the line (which I don't see being in the plan or the budget). You may start off with fast trains, but after the first serious accident with fatalities (which I suspect is inevitable) the public outcry and ensuing lawsuits will force slower train speeds, negating the time advantage.

See response to comment 011-2

From an aesthetic standpoint you replace one of the most scenic passenger rail routes in the nation, along Puget Sound from downtown Tacoma to Nisqually, with a mundane urban and suburban landscape. That's sad.

Yes, the tunnel work would disrupt rail traffic for a while, but if done on a 24 hour seven day construction schedule the disruption would be kept to a minimum. That would be worth the added expense.

I urge you to consider upgrading the Pt Defiance tunnel rather than spend \$89 million to (hopefully) save 9 minutes of travel time while risking the safety of many Lakewood, McChord AFB, Fort Lewis and DuPont residents at congested urban rail crossings.

Please enter my comments in the FRA record.

See response to comment 011-3

Thank you for your consideration,

Andy Lund

S. Andrew Lund
PO Box 549
911 South Head Av

Response to Comment 011-1

The Shoreline Alternative noted in Section 3.0 of the EA and detailed in the Point Defiance Shoreline Alternatives Analysis (Appendix A of the EA) included the addition of one tunnel approximately 1 mile-long with a diameter of 39 feet to the south of the existing Nelson Bennett Tunnel. The evaluation determined that boring a new tunnel of this size underneath a neighborhood would present many structural risks due to the unsuitability of the soil, the condition of the structures, and buildings above the proposed tunnel alignment. The new tunnel also would require the acquisition of additional right-of-way and increase Project cost.

This alternative would also require approximately 6.6 miles of retaining walls, ranging in height from 20-35 feet. The increased cost and potential environmental impacts coupled with the additional right-of-way acquisition, large amounts of excavation (approximately 1.7 million cubic yards), 100 acres of clearing and grubbing required caused FRA and WSDOT to eliminate it from further evaluation in the EA.

As described in EA Section 3.0 and further detailed in Appendix A (Alternatives Analysis), FRA and WSDOT considered geotechnical, environmental, social and other factors into the potential use of the Puget Sound route. The preliminary findings of the Alternative Analysis indicate that needed improvements to the route would be prohibitively expensive and would result in significant environmental impacts. The possibility of lowering the Nelson Bennett Tunnel floor was not evaluated in detail. However, the Nelson Bennett Tunnel represents only one piece of a complex (and high-risk) geotechnical puzzle. In addition, it is likely that lowering the Nelson Bennett Tunnel would not meet the freight and passenger rail needs of the corridor, as it is not likely that the tunnel floor could be lowered without taking both freight and passenger rail out of service during construction. Moreover, the geometric requirements to bring the rail back to grade while meeting the grade requirements for freight and passenger rail would result in an extremely long tunnel likely resulting in significant environmental effects (e.g., property acquisitions, visual impacts from retaining walls, permanent effects to wetlands).

The Point Defiance Shoreline Alternative Technical Memorandum presents geotechnical and environmental challenges south of the tunnel, if it were to be improved to serve both the proposed Amtrak Cascades service and existing freight traffic. As discussed in that Memorandum, the Shoreline Alternative would likely result in significant environmental impacts and greater construction costs would be necessary to reduce or eliminate the route's geotechnical challenges.

Response to Comment 011-2

The accident prediction methodology uses FRA's accident prediction model to forecast an estimated change in accidents in the future. The future accident predictions are based on three primary inputs to the model: future vehicle volumes, future train volumes, and the type of at-grade crossing protection. The model includes different accident rate factors based on historical national at-grade crossing accidents developed by FRA for three categories of warning devices: passive, flashing lights, and gates.

Response to Comment 011-3

As discussed in Section 4.9.3.2 of the EA, the Point Defiance Bypass route would have a different character and the view of Puget Sound in the area mentioned in the comments would no longer be available. However, the objective of the proposed project is to provide faster, more frequent, and more reliable passenger rail service in the corridor and therefore many issues including, but not exclusively, aesthetic issues were considered.

COMMENTS FROM CHRISTINE SHOUP, OCTOBER 24, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #012

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Friday, November 09, 2012 7:59 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Point Defiance Bypass EA

From: Christine [<mailto:christineshoup@msn.com>]
Posted At: Wednesday, October 24, 2012 8:47 PM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Point Defiance Bypass EA
Subject: Point Defiance Bypass EA

See response to
comment 012-1

Hi,

I'm a resident of DuPont.

I'm interested in the impact on my drive times to and from the DuPont Gate of JBLM. To know that, I'd have to know the times the trains would be impacting the area. Do you have a schedule?

If the train picked up and dropped off passengers in DuPont that would be a great benefit to the citizens of DuPont as well as JBLM. DuPont has a set up in place for this now, although it may need some minor adjustments. I'm certain it could easily be done. This would make DuPont a bedroom community for commuters going in either direction. The city would look favorably on this.

See response to comment 012-2

This would also slow the trains down as they pass through the city which I know is a major concern with this project. They are very worried about wait times but they are also worried about accidents.

Exit 119 is a heavily used exit and gate to JBLM. It's how a great number of soldiers get to and from post on a daily basis for PT, lunch and work. A typical day has them leaving DuPont for PT, coming home to change, going back to work, coming back to DuPont for lunch, going back to work and then home for the day. As you can see, that is a lot of back and forth across that section of track to the JBLM DuPont gate. We're fortunate we live so close. If an entire city of people have to alter their lives THAT much due to the train schedules without getting anything out of it they won't go for it.

I'd love to see the train stop here. I know my family would ride it in both directions often. I have family north and south on the train route. We'd use it a lot. I know Lakewood isn't far but leaving our vehicle there isn't an option. Walking to the train depot though...now that's something we could get behind. I know the city would too.

Christine Shoup

See response to
comment 012-3

Response to Comment 012-1

The Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA) presents details on how the accident prediction rates at at-grade crossings were determined. The Build Alternative, with proposed signal and crossing improvements, is anticipated to reduce the overall crossing accident rate from 3.6 accidents for every million train crossings under the No Build Alternative to 3.2 accidents per million train crossings under the Build Alternative.

The accident prediction methodology uses FRA's accident prediction model to forecast an estimated change in accidents in the future. The future accident predictions are based on three primary inputs to the model: future vehicle volumes, future train volumes, and the type of at-grade crossing protection. The model includes different accident rate factors based on historical national at-grade crossing accidents developed by FRA for three categories of warning devices: passive, flashing lights, and gates.

Response to Comment 012-2

As stated in Section 3.0 of the EA, additional alternatives suggested during the public involvement process included adding a Cascades station within the Lakewood or DuPont city limits. However, the additional stops would not be consistent with the purpose and need of the Project to provide more frequent and reliable intercity passenger rail service along the PNWRC between Tacoma and Nisqually and would not meet WSDOT's performance standards. Additional intercity passenger rail stops in Lakewood or DuPont would reduce the speed of the intercity passenger rail and would not decrease travel time along the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor. Therefore, no additional stops were evaluated or proposed for this Project.

The proposed Freighthouse Square site is positioned to act as a regional transportation center serving the surrounding communities including Dupont, Lakewood, and Tacoma, allowing shorter connections between Amtrak passenger rail and other transit services provided at the Tacoma Dome Station. This reduction in connection time would improve passenger connections and convenience for passengers connecting between Amtrak, *Sounder*, Tacoma Link light rail, and bus transit (Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA).

Response to Comment 012-3

The Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA) describes how the additional trains on the Point Defiance Bypass would result in an average overall increase in the time at-grade crossings are blocked as the train passes (approximately one minute during the morning and afternoon peak hour). However, the proposed signal improvements and the relative short blockage time are not anticipated to create significant overall operational changes on the local roadways when compared to the No Build Alternative (see Section 4.4.3 of the EA).

Cascades service would occur throughout the day, and *Sounder* service would be during a.m. and p.m. peak hours. The train schedule will be developed collaboratively with Sound Transit during final design (2013-2015). A schedule will be broadly distributed through multiple media outlets several months prior to the beginning of *Cascades* service.



Washington State Department of Transportation

Point Defiance Bypass Public Comment Form

Please use this form to share any comments or suggestions about the Point Defiance Bypass Environmental Assessment document. Please use the reverse side of this sheet if you need more space. Our mailing address is:

You can email us at rail@wsdot.wa.gov to share your thoughts, or send your comment via US Mail to:

WSDOT Rail and Marine Office
P.O. Box 47407
Olympia, WA 98504-7407

Thank you for your interest.

Comments:

Tacoma station needs a deeper review. The green box at Freighthouse is not a fitting station for our city. It was a poor choice by Sounder and should not dictate the placement of a new Amtrak station. The station should be easily identified as a train station and act as the front door, as an inviting place, to our city.

See response to comment 013-1

Would you like WSDOT to get back to you?

Name Jeff Ryan

Address 2017 N. 13th St.

City/State/Zip Tacoma WA 98406

Email ryanj@hubpages.com

Would you like to receive email updates about this project? Y N

Phone _____

Response to Comment 013-1

WSDOT determined that Freighthouse Square is the best location for the new Amtrak station because it will become a key component of an existing multi-modal transportation hub, is already configured for the passenger volumes associated with Sound Transit commuter rail service, and is close to freeways.



Washington State Department of Transportation

Point Defiance Bypass Public Comment Form

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You can email us at rail@wsdot.wa.gov to share your thoughts, or send your comment via US Mail to:

WSDOT Rail and Marine Office
P.O. Box 47407
Olympia, WA 98504-7407

Thank you for your interest.

Comments: *Noise abatement is needed along Pacific Highway between Brideport St. and Gravelly Road in Lakewood. Amtrak trains will run almost 80 MPH in this area and even with the welded rail tracks, the noise will be high enough that a noise abatement wall is needed.*

See response to comment 014-1

Would you like WSDOT to get back to you?

Name *Bobby L Kutler*
Address *45 Beyerly Dr. S.W.*
City/State/Zip *Lakewood, WA 98499*
Email *BOBBY K SWEETIE @ COMCAST . NET*
Would you like to receive email updates about this project? Y N
Phone *(253) 584-2312*

Public Comment Form
Point Defiance Bypass Project

October 2012

Response to Comment 014-1

As discussed in Section 4.2.3.2 of the EA, noise effects are not significant and therefore noise mitigation is not required. However, Section 4.2.4 of the EA notes two specific noise reduction measures during operations: 1) use wayside horns at at-grade crossings to limit the sounding of on-train horns and reduce the area exposed to train warning sounds, and 2) use of track treatments (such as resiliently supported ties, or ballast mats) to reduce the vibration transmitted to the ground. These measures will be incorporated into the project as described further in Section 8.0 of the FONSI.

Although not warranted, noise barrier placement is not feasible because openings in the walls would be needed for roadway crossings. Noise barriers could also create vehicular sight-distance hazards (see page 55, Noise and Vibration Discipline Report, Appendix E of the EA).

Due Nov. 9, 2012



Washington State Department of Transportation

Point Defiance Bypass Public Comment Form

Please use this form to share any comments or suggestions about the Point Defiance Bypass Environmental Assessment document. Please use the reverse side of this sheet if you need more space. Our mailing address is:

You can email us at rail@wsdot.wa.gov to share your thoughts, or send your comment via US Mail to:

WSDOT Rail and Marine Office
P.O. Box 47407
Olympia, WA 98504-7407

Thank you for your interest.

Comments:

See response to comment 015-1

1. Scenic route through Pt. Defiance is probably the only outstanding area passengers on train see.

2. Hard to believe 7 minutes can make that much difference

See response to comment 015-2

3. The numerous railroad crossings may speed up trains but it is certain to increase the time auto travel takes.

See response to comment 015-3

4. Several crossings may be very dangerous to drivers & walkers.

See response to comment 015-4

5. Noise pollution will definitely increase. I live about .3 mi from railroad tracks on Nyanza Rd and often I can hear train whistles now.

6. I realize the bottom line is money - How sad!

Would you like WSDOT to get back to you?

Name Lila Early

Address 12621 Nyanza Rd SW

City/State/Zip Lakewood, WA 98499

Email lilaearly@hotmail.com

Would you like to receive email updates about this project? Y N

Phone 253-584-0482

Response to Comment 015-1

As discussed in Section 4.9.3.2 of the EA, the Point Defiance Bypass route would have a different character and the view of Puget Sound in the area mentioned in the comments would no longer be available. However, the objective of the proposed project is to provide faster, more frequent, and more reliable passenger rail service in the corridor and therefore many issues including, but not exclusively, aesthetic issues were considered.

Response to Comment 015-2

The Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA) describes how the additional trains on the Point Defiance Bypass would affect vehicular travel times. The EA reports “the average additional blockage time per crossing is approximately one minute during the morning and afternoon peak hour. However, the proposed signal improvements and the relative short blockage time are not anticipated to create significant overall operational changes on the local roadways when compared to the No Build Alternative (see Section 4.3.3 of the EA).

Response to Comment 015-3

Improved signage and signals would minimize safety risks associated with at-grade crossings and increased passenger rail traffic on the Point Defiance Bypass route. Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA) presents details on proposed crossing improvements that would minimize safety risk at at-grade crossings. Measures include:

- Signage: “Do Not Stop On Tracks” signs will be installed at the crossings.
- Wayside horns: A wayside horn system is an automated warning system that is installed at a rail/roadway at-grade crossing to warn people of an approaching train.
- Median barriers: Median barriers will be installed in the middle of the roadway approaching the railroad tracks to discourage vehicles from driving around the railroad crossing gates.
- Sidewalks: Sidewalks provide an ADA-accessible route over the tracks. Additionally, tactile strips provided with the improvements alert the sight-impaired to changes ahead.
- Pre-signals: Pre-signals control vehicle traffic approaching a railroad crossing and minimize queuing across the at-grade railroad crossing.

In addition, as stated in Section 4.14.4 of the EA, WSDOT would continue the *Operation Lifesaver* program training on track safety for community members and continue to work with communities to ensure there are safe routes that avoid the illegal use of the railroad right-of-way for pedestrians and non-vehicular travel.

Response to Comment 015-4

As noted in EA Section 4.2.3.2, the increased noise levels would be caused by new warning devices at signalized at-grade crossings. Warning devices such as wayside horns must be heard to be effective and therefore volumes cannot be reduced; however the noise effects from their use would be short duration and localized.

COMMENTS FROM ANONYMOUS, OCTOBER 24, 2012 - COMMENTER ID #016



Washington State Department of Transportation

Point Defiance Bypass Public Comment Form

Please use this form to share any comments or suggestions about the Point Defiance Bypass Environmental Assessment document. Please use the reverse side of this sheet if you need more space. Our mailing address is:

You can email us at rail@wsdot.wa.gov to share your thoughts, or send your comment via US Mail to:

WSDOT Rail and Marine Office
P.O. Box 47407
Olympia, WA 98504-7407

Thank you for your interest.

Comments:

See response to comment 016-1

STATION AT TACOMA DOME NEEDS TO BE BUILT TO HANDLE FUTURE LOADS WITH LARGE WAITING AND TICKETING/ BAGGAGE SPACE

See response to comment 016-2

NEED A CASCADES STOP AT LAKEWOOD FOR JBLM AND LOCAL AREA

See response to comment 016-3

NEED TO BUILD THIS PROJECT SO WE CAN ADD MORE TRAINS NOW THAT WE HAVE EQUIPMENT FROM OREGON COMING IN.

Would you like WSDOT to get back to you?

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email _____

Would you like to receive email updates about this project? Y N

Phone _____

Public Comment Form
Point Defiance Bypass Project

October 2012

Response to Comment 016-1

The Freighthouse Square site will be reconfigured as described in Section 3.2.4 of the EA. The sizing and configuration of the station is designed to accommodate the Coast Starlight trains.

Response to Comment 016-2

As stated in Section 3.0 of the EA, additional alternatives suggested during the public involvement process included adding a Cascades station within the Lakewood or DuPont city limits. However, the additional stops would not be consistent with the purpose and need of the Project to provide more frequent and reliable intercity passenger rail service along the PNWRC between Tacoma and Nisqually and would not meet WSDOT's performance standards. Additional intercity passenger rail stops in Lakewood or DuPont would reduce the speed of the intercity passenger rail and would not decrease travel time along the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor. Therefore, no additional stops were evaluated or proposed for this Project.

The proposed Freighthouse Square site is positioned to act as a regional transportation center serving the surrounding communities including DuPont, Lakewood, and Tacoma, allowing shorter connections between Amtrak passenger rail and other transit services provided at the Tacoma Dome Station. This reduction in connection time would improve passenger connections and convenience for passengers connecting between Amtrak, *Sounder*, Tacoma Link light rail, and bus transit (Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA).

Response to Comment 016-3

Thank you for your comment.



Point Defiance Bypass Public Comment Form

Please use this form to share any comments or suggestions about the Point Defiance Bypass Environmental Assessment document. Please use the reverse side of this sheet if you need more space. Please note the comment period ending date is November 9, 2012. Our mailing address is:

You can email us at rail@wsdot.wa.gov to share your thoughts, or send your comment via US Mail to:

WSDOT Rail and Marine Office
P.O. Box 47407
Olympia, WA 98504-7407

Thank you for your interest.

Comments:

See response to comment 017-1

Concerned about able to serve Multiple trains around Freightman Square Station during the PM Peak Period

See response to comment 017-2

(When both the Sounder & Amtrak is running)
Any future plans to double track around the station?

See response to comment 017-3

* Preferred to keep the existing line for Scenery purposes.

Would you like WSDOT to get back to you?

Name WARREN YEE

Address 5912 23RD AVE S

City/State/Zip Seattle, WA 98108

Email WYEEPANNA@GMAIL.COM

Would you like to receive email updates about this project? Y N

Phone 206-300-6918

Response to Comment 017-1

The Amtrak Cascades schedule would be coordinated with Sound Transit to preserve the line capacity needed for Sound Transit to operate existing commuter rail service (see Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA).

Response to Comment 017-2

Currently, there are no plans to construct double track around Freighthouse Square station.

Response to Comment 017-3

As discussed in Section 4.9.3.2 of the EA, the Point Defiance Bypass route would have a different character and the view of Puget Sound in the area mentioned in the comments would no longer be available. However, the objective of the proposed project is to provide faster, more frequent, and more reliable passenger rail service in the corridor and therefore many issues including, but not exclusively, aesthetic issues were considered.

COMMENTS FROM JOHN NILES, OCTOBER 25, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #018

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Tuesday, November 06, 2012 7:39 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: public comment in box for Point Defiance project

From: John Niles [<mailto:niles@globaltelematics.com>]
Sent: Thursday, October 25, 2012 04:46 PM
To: Mattson, Larry
Subject: public comment in box for Point Defiance project

See response to
comment 018-1

Larry:

I'm unable to travel to DuPont today for the public hearing on the environmental impacts contemplated as a result of implementing the Point Defiance Bypass Project.

As second best, what are the email inboxes for written public comments during the comment period running now?

I'd like to know of the WSDOT one and the FRA one, since these are the two agencies at the public hearing.

Thanks,

John

John Niles
Coalition for Effective Transportation Alternatives
<http://www.effective transportation.org>
206-781-4475

Response to Comments from John Niles, October 25, 2012

Commenter ID #018

Response to Comment 018-1

WSDOT provided responses to individuals regarding the process for submitting written comments on the EA as well as noting times and locations for public meetings. If requested, hard and/or electronic copies of the EA were provided.

COMMENTS FROM RICK SEMPLE, OCTOBER 29, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #019

Ostrem, Meagan K.

To: Cleveland, Leandra L.

-----Original Message-----

From: rick semple [<mailto:joriadkins@mac.com>]
Posted At: Monday, October 29, 2012 1:45 PM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: forgot Rick's comments
Subject: forgot Rick's comments

See response to
comment 019-1

Sorry forgot to send -

On Oct 27, 2012, at 7:33 AM, rick semple wrote:

- > Dear rail@wsdot,
- > I am a resident, property owner and involved citizens in the Dome District.
- > Having read the Environmental Assessment I find the proposed placement and implimentation of the station (para 3.2.4) to be in direct opposition to years of neighborhood and citywide planning.
- > Using the Freighthouse Square structure to house the Amtrak facilities seems proper and obvious, it is the parking and loading platform that present difficult but surmountable issues.
- > Building an additional platform to the WEST of Freighthouse Sq would not only block those two vital and core streets while the train is in the station, but would preclude any future development from taking place on that site: the VERY site that the city's and neighborhood's plan has targeted as the core of the TOD neighborhood.
- > I suggest the new platform be built onto the EAST side of Freighthouse Sq. and create short term and long term parking in a structure to the North and East of the corner of Freighthouse sq. On a site that is currently for sale and whose development fits well with the years of planning done by the city and the neighborhood.
- > This would not require using eminent domain to take anybody's property and would encourage TOD development to go forward.
- > I encourage wsdot to be respectful and work with the neighborhood they propose to move into.
- > Rick Semple
- > ricksemple@mac.com
- > (253) 627-1315

Response to Comment 019-1

FRA and WSDOT worked with City of Tacoma and Sound Transit and others through the technical advisory groups which included discussions regarding the relocation of the Amtrak station to Freighthouse Square. Section 4.13.3.2 of the EA includes an analysis of the Project's consistency with local plans.

WSDOT identified that the west end of the Freighthouse Square building, beginning immediately west of the Sound Transit atrium, presented the least challenge with respect to the elevation differences between the existing floor and the platform. This configuration would make passenger movements, including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and baggage movements, easier. The west end also allows for upgrades to the station entrance.

WSDOT will work with the local agencies and the community to ensure that the Project remains consistent with local area plans during final design and construction.

As described in Section 4.3.2 of the EA and Appendix F of the EA, the Coast Starlight train would extend beyond the existing station platform and across East C Street and East D Street for approximately 6 minutes. Coast Starlight trains arrive and depart during non-peak periods. These arrivals and departures may coincide with Tacoma Dome events. The temporary blockage of these two streets would result in a decline of LOS to below LOS D during an event at the Tacoma Dome (see page 4-13 of the EA for definition of LOS D). Minimization of operational effects (Section 4.3.4 of the EA) on traffic as a result of the Coast Starlight dwell time at Freighthouse Square, and during a Tacoma Dome event, would include implementation of a detour plan that could include static signs identifying the detour routes, dynamic message signs that identify the detour routes during a train blockage, lane striping and controller modification. With the detour signage in place, LOS would not go below LOS D. During final design, WSDOT will continue modeling and coordination efforts with the City of Tacoma to identify refinements of the suite of minimization measures, as noted above.

COMMENTS FROM DAHP, OCTOBER 29, 2012 - COMMENTER ID #020



October 29, 2012

Received

OCT 30 2012

Environmental Services Office
Mottman

Mr. Scott Williams
Cultural Resources Program Manager
Washington State Department of Transportation
P. O. Box 47332
Olympia, WA 98504

In future correspondence please refer to:
Log: 011907-09-WSDOT
Property: Point Defiance Bypass Rail Project
Re: Receipt of Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Williams:

Thank you for contacting the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and providing a copy of the Environmental Assessment for this project. I have reviewed the document on behalf of the State Historic Preservation Officer under provisions of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended) and 36 CFR Part 800 and have no additional comments.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment.

Sincerely,

Matthew Sterner, M.A.
Transportation Archaeologist
(360) 586-3082
matthew.sterner@dahp.wa.gov

See reponse to
comment 020-1

Response to Comments from DAHP, October 29, 2012

Commenter ID #020

Response to Comment 020-1

Thank you for your comment.

COMMENTS FROM MICHAEL RABSTOFF, NOVEMBER 11, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #021

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Tuesday, November 06, 2012 7:38 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: PDB Environmental Assessment

From: Rabstoff Michael [mailto:m_r@comcast.net]
Posted At: Thursday, November 01, 2012 1:44 PM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: PDB Environmental Assessment
Subject: PDB Environmental Assessment

See response to
comment 021-1

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Pt. Defiance bypass EIS. I fully support the Point Defiance passenger rail upgrade project. Also, I suggest you offer a point in DuPont Station for local area, military, and Thurston County travelers to embark and disembark. I believe there is an existing station pagoda and parking area in DuPont Station near Exit 118 and Wilmington Drive. That center community is adding more residential and could be a transit oriented residential center.

Michael Rabstoff
520.395.1086

See response to
comment 021-2

Response to Comments from Michael Rabstoff, November 11, 2012

Commenter ID #021

Response to Comment 021-1

Thank you for your comment.

Response to Comment 021-2

As stated in Section 3.0 of the EA, additional alternatives suggested during the public involvement process included adding a Cascades station within the Lakewood or DuPont city limits. However, the additional stops would not be consistent with the purpose and need of the Project to provide more frequent and reliable intercity passenger rail service along the PNWRC between Tacoma and Nisqually and would not meet WSDOT's performance standards. Additional intercity passenger rail stops in Lakewood or DuPont would reduce the speed of the intercity passenger rail and would not decrease travel time along the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor. Therefore, no additional stops were evaluated or proposed for this Project.

The proposed Freighthouse Square site is positioned to act as a regional transportation center serving the surrounding communities including Dupont, Lakewood, and Tacoma, allowing shorter connections between Amtrak passenger rail and other transit services provided at the Tacoma Dome Station. This reduction in connection time would improve passenger connections and convenience for passengers connecting between Amtrak, *Sounder*, Tacoma Link light rail, and bus transit (Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA).

COMMENTS FROM JOHN HELDING, NOVEMBER 2, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #022

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Tuesday, November 06, 2012 7:38 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Point Defiance Bypass EA

From: John Holding [<mailto:john@holding.com>]
Posted At: Friday, November 02, 2012 11:59 AM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Point Defiance Bypass EA
Subject: Point Defiance Bypass EA

See response to
comment 022-1

Hello,

How can I submit a comment into the Point Defiance Bypass EA process? I am a train rider who lives outside of that area and could not attend public meetings. Wish to submit comments. Please let me know how I can do that.

Thanks!
John Holding
Lopez Island, WA

Response to Comments from John Holding, November 2, 2012

Commenter ID #022

Response to Comment 022-1

WSDOT provided responses to individuals regarding the process for submitting written comments on the EA as well as noting times and locations for public meetings. If requested, hard and/or electronic copies of the EA were provided.

COMMENTS FROM MARLENE KAM, NOVEMBER 5, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #023

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Tuesday, November 06, 2012 7:38 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: PDB Environmental Assessment

From: Marlene Kam [<mailto:melmarkam@comcast.net>]
Posted At: Monday, November 05, 2012 9:04 PM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: PDB Environmental Assessment
Subject: PDB Environmental Assessment

See response to
comment 023-1

Part of the charm of riding a train is the scenic areas one sees. Amtrak going around Point Defiance and along Steilacoom is one of the prettiest areas between Seattle and Vancouver, WA. I think it is wrong to route it inland to save a very few minutes, not to mention the neighborhoods that would impact.

Marlene Kam
Marlene Kam (253) 589-1490
Creative Memories Consultant
Your Life | Your Story | Your Way
www.mycmsite.com/marlenekam
www.creativememories/digital
I.D. No. 18395569 for Storybook
Creator and www.cmphotocenter.com
prints 12 cents

Response to Comments from Marlene Kam, November 5, 2012

Commenter ID #023

Response to Comment 023-1

As discussed in Section 4.9.3.2 of the EA, the Point Defiance Bypass route would have a different character and the view of Puget Sound in the area mentioned in the comments would no longer be available. However, the objective of the proposed project is to provide faster, more frequent, and more reliable passenger rail service in the corridor and therefore many issues including, but not exclusively, aesthetic issues were considered.

COMMENTS FROM DARRELL REECK, NOVEMBER 6, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #024

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Wednesday, November 07, 2012 7:19 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Revised: Environmental assessment Amtrak Point Defiance bypass

From: darrell REECK [<mailto:dreeck@msn.com>]
Posted At: Tuesday, November 06, 2012 7:06 AM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Revised: Environmental assessment Amtrak Point Defiance bypass
Subject: Revised: Environmental assessment Amtrak Point Defiance bypass

See response to
comment 024-1

Note: Revised version. Discard earlier version time-stamped as 6:59 A.M.

Dear Washington State Rail Office:

I'm writing as an Amtrak user to comment on the Point Defiance ByPass.

In general, it will create a benefit for travelers and I support the proposed plan.

But, is it possible to wring more benefit out of the project and create an environmental benefit compared to the proposed plan?

See response to
comment 024-2

The high speed line through DuPont presents both an inconvenience and hazards to users of Exit 119. Thousands will be affected adversely every day.

Amtrak's high speed trains will create noise problems, particularly for parts of DuPont.

See response to comment 024-3

But there's still a possibility the project could benefit Dupont, thousands in J.B.L.M., Lakewood, Steilacoom and parts of Lacey.

That will happen if Amtrak were to add a station in DuPont.

This will require prompt and vigorous action on the part of the State Department of Transportation and Amtrak to modify the plan.

See response to
comment 024-4

Benefits if Amtrak were to add a station to the plans for the route through DuPont?

- Users of Exit 119 will realize safer train speeds as southbound trains brake and as northbound trains accelerate from a stop. This will benefit thousands of persons daily, entering or leaving the Gate to J.B.L.M. and other commuters using Exit 119
- City of DuPont, by taking a major step toward its goal of a visitor destination city, thus benefitting our businesses, our special tourist-oriented events, and our sales tax revenues.
- J.B.L.M. residents and other South Sound residents (Steilacoom, Lakewood) will have a new station to serve the growing population on base and in the area. Currently have to drive to Lacey station (remote location, traffic impact on highways.)

Response to Comment 024-1

Thank you for your comment.

Response to Comment 024-2

There would be up to twelve additional Cascades and two Coast Starlight trips through the Point Defiance Bypass route, which would increase the number of times trains pass by (at speeds of up-to 79 MPH). The Build Alternative includes signal improvements that would reduce the effect of additional trains on local roadway operations. In addition, all crossings, including Exit 119, would comply with FRA crossing requirements to reduce hazards associated with rail crossings. The analysis in the EA indicates that the overall roadway delay would not be significantly adversely affected, including that of Exit 119. Also, the Proposed Action's proposed signal and crossing signage improvements are anticipated to result in no substantial change to rail crossing safety (see Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report, Appendix F of the EA).

Response to Comment 024-3

As shown on Figure 4 in EA Section 4.2.3.2, three noise receptors are in the City of DuPont. Results of the noise impact evaluation determined that moderate noise effects would occur in areas of the City of Lakewood but not in the City of DuPont. As noted in EA Section 4.2.3.2, the increased noise levels would be caused by new warning devices at signalized at-grade crossings. Warning devices such as wayside horns must be heard to be effective and therefore volumes cannot be reduced; however the noise effects from their use would be short duration, localized, and would be an improvement over train mounted horns. Noise effects would be below the maximum noise level of 92 dBA at 100 feet, as set by FRA *Guidance on Assessing Noise and Vibration Impacts*. Also, operation of the Amtrak trains would not occur during nighttime sleeping hours (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.).

Response to Comment 024-4

As stated in Section 3.0 of the EA, additional alternatives suggested during the public involvement process included adding a Cascades station within the Lakewood or DuPont city limits. However, the additional stops would not be consistent with the purpose and need of the Project to provide more frequent and reliable intercity passenger rail service along the PNWRC between Tacoma and Nisqually and would not meet WSDOT's performance standards. Additional intercity passenger rail stops in Lakewood or DuPont would reduce the speed of the intercity passenger rail and would not decrease travel time along the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor. Therefore, no additional stops were evaluated or proposed for this Project.

The proposed Freighthouse Square site is positioned to act as a regional transportation center serving the surrounding communities including Dupont, Lakewood, and Tacoma, allowing shorter connections between Amtrak passenger rail and other transit services provided at the Tacoma Dome Station. This reduction in connection time would improve passenger connections and convenience for passengers connecting between Amtrak, *Sounder*, Tacoma Link light rail, and bus transit (Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA).

COMMENTS FROM TINA LEE, NOVEMBER 6, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #025



November 6, 2011

Megan White, PE
Director, Environmental Services Office (WSDOT)
Washington State Department of Transportation
WSDOT Rail Office
PO Box 47407
Olympia WA 98504-7407

See
response to
comment
025-1

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Point Defiance Bypass Project. We appreciate the thoughtful work that the Washington State Department of Transportation has put into the EA. Pierce Transit supports efforts to move the Tacoma Amtrak station adjacent to the Tacoma Dome Station to have full multi-modal access in the area and make it easier for bus and rail passengers to transfer between services. We look forward to working closely with WSDOT and Amtrak as these efforts progress to insure minimal negative impacts on the Tacoma Dome District and the service Pierce Transit provides to our riders. To this end, we offer the following thoughts on how the proposed move of the Tacoma Amtrak Station to Freighthouse Square identified in the EA may negatively affect Pierce Transit operations.

See
response to
comment
025-2

1. The current Amtrak site on Portland Avenue has 82 surface parking stalls available for rail passengers. The EA identifies three potential properties for lease / acquisition for the purpose of providing additional surface parking for Amtrak customers at the proposed new location. One such property, Airspares (Site #53 / PP1), is currently owned by Pierce Transit. Pierce Transit has slated this property for other development purposes such as Transit Oriented Development opportunities in our long range plans. Moreover, additional surface parking in the Dome District area is not compatible with existing zoning nor with the Transit Oriented Development principles that are being developed with the South Downtown Sub-Area Plan and Environmental Impact Statement efforts that are underway. Two documents, City of Tacoma, Tacoma Dome Area Plan, A Comprehensive Plan Element (Adopted December 11, 2011 Ordinance No. 26898) and Tacoma Dome District Development Strategy Update 2008, outline those principles and can be accessed through the City of Tacoma's website at <http://www.cityoftacoma.org/Page.aspx?hid=15999>.

See
response to
comment
025-3

2. The EA identifies building an additional platform at the parking lot between East "C" and East "D" Street. This would potentially block core streets such as East "D" Street while the Coast Starlight is in the station. Pierce Transit currently operates a local and an express route along this roadway, this could cause operational concerns with scheduled bus service and should be further explored. Additionally, this site has been identified by the City of

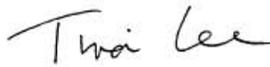
3701 96th St SW Lakewood WA 98499-4431 • PO Box 99070 Lakewood WA 98496-0070 • 253.581.8080 • FAX 253.581.8075 • piercetransit.org

Tacoma and Dome District Business Group as a primary area for transit oriented development (TOD), any future project should be part of such a TOD opportunity.

See
response to
comment
025-4

3. Pierce Transit owns and operates the Tacoma Dome Station parking garages for use by public transportation passengers. The facility provides approximately 2,400 short term (less than 24 hour) stalls. The parking garage operates at capacity with the facility filling up on weekdays by 7 am. The proposed sites identified for additional surface parking in the EA are all located further from the proposed Freighthouse Square Station location than Pierce Transit's Tacoma Dome Station facility. This creates a less convenient option for Amtrak customers who will most likely attempt to use the Tacoma Dome Station for parking, thus displacing commuters utilizing Pierce Transit and Sound Transit public transportation services. The location of the future Freighthouse Square Amtrak Station parking must be carefully sited for utmost convenience to the Amtrak station so as not to encourage rail users to use the Tacoma Dome Station park and ride facility.

Pierce Transit supports the effort to have full multi modal access in the Tacoma Dome area. Such an approach contributes to more effective Pierce Transit service by increasing access to other regional and interstate modes. As this development progresses we look forward to working closely with WSDOT and Amtrak to identify and implement mitigation measures that support the TOD envisioned for the area and enables Pierce Transit to continue to provide reliable and efficient public transit service for our customers in the area.



Tina Lee
Capital Planning Manager

c: Jay Peterson, Acting Senior Manager Development
Janine Robinson, Senior Planner
Peter Stackpole, Principal Planner
Pierce Transit Land Use Review

Response to Comment 025-1

Thank you for your comment.

Response to Comment 025-2

As described in Section 4.3.2 of the EA and Appendix F of the EA, the Coast Starlight train would extend beyond the existing station platform and across East C Street and East D Street for approximately 6 minutes. Coast Starlight trains arrive and depart during non-peak periods. These arrivals and departures may coincide with Tacoma Dome events. The temporary blockage of these two streets would result in a decline of LOS to below LOS D during an event at the Tacoma Dome (see page 4-13 of the EA for definition of LOS D). Minimization of operational effects (Section 4.3.4 of the EA) on traffic as a result of the Coast Starlight dwell time at Freighthouse Square, and during a Tacoma Dome event, would include implementation of a detour plan that could include static signs identifying the detour routes, dynamic message signs that identify the detour routes during a train blockage, lane striping and controller modification. With the detour signage in place, LOS would not go below LOS D. During final design, WSDOT will continue modeling and coordination efforts with the City of Tacoma to identify refinements of the suite of minimization measures, as noted above. WSDOT will continue to coordinate with local agencies through final design and implementation of the project to address any potential operational concerns including those related to local bus service. See Chapter 5 of the EA.

In regards to future projects, WSDOT will work collaboratively with the City and Dome Development Group on any subsequent re-design or relocation of the Tacoma Amtrak station in response to transit oriented development opportunities.

Response to Comment 025-3

WSDOT will continue to coordinate with local agencies through final design and implementation of the project to address any potential operational concerns including those related to local bus service. See Chapter 5 of the EA.

In regards to future projects, WSDOT will work collaboratively with the City and Dome Development Group on any subsequent re-design or relocation of the Tacoma Amtrak station in response to transit oriented development opportunities.

Response to Comment 025-4

As described in Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA and the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA), the proposed Freighthouse Square station would provide the same or more parking spaces than are currently available at the Tacoma Amtrak Station. Parking would be located on a parcel near Freighthouse Square (see Section 3.2.4 of the EA) that either has parking available for lease or purchase by WSDOT and developed into a parking lot for exclusive use by Amtrak passengers. In addition to this proposed parking, there would be some available on-street parking near the station (see Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA).

The proposed sites for additional parking are across the street from Freighthouse Square to the west, similar to the garage to the east. The proposed sites for parking are equidistant, thus would not be located further than the Pierce Transit's Tacoma Dome Station facility. In addition to this proposed parking, there would be some available on-street parking near the proposed station. If the demand increases it may be necessary to consider building a small parking structure but currently parking is considered adequate.

COMMENTS FROM JORI ADKINS, NOVEMBER 7, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #026

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Wednesday, November 07, 2012 1:17 PM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: comment on Amtrak - Pt Def By-Pass thru Dome District and Lakewood

From: Joriadkins@mac.com [<mailto:Joriadkins@mac.com>]

Posted At: Wednesday, November 07, 2012 1:34 PM

Posted To: Rail

Conversation: comment on Amtrak - Pt Def By-Pass thru Dome District and Lakewood

Subject: comment on Amtrak - Pt Def By-Pass thru Dome District and Lakewood

See response to
comment 026-1

Dear WsDot,

I am very involved in the Dome District Development Group's exec Board where The Dome District Development Group has worked hard with the City of Tacoma, for the past year and half developing a plan (South Downtown Subarea Plan) for the District. This plan calls for working toward making a Transportation Oriented District (TOD), which requires priority development being residential & people at the Core of the District around the transportation hub, not parking & cars. 5-7 story parking structures should be outside the residential/commercial Core (UCX-DT zoning) and new surface parking is not allowed.

The WashDOT Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Amtrak By-Pass Project (which moves Amtrak up to Freighthouse Sq.) goes totally against this Plan for our District by crossing E "D" St. to the west of Freighthouse Square for an extension of the Amtrak platform with parking to the north. This area is considered the epicenter of the District and causing any more conflict than we have already at E"D" & "C" Sts and *not* densifying development on these Core streets will make the Dome District be nothing more than a parking lot for commuters, travelers and downtown workers of Tacoma. They would be driving here in the morning and parking for 8 hours to 3 or more days with no people walking around or living here, using the shops and encouraging future businesses, services and retail to locate here.

See response to comment 026-2

Amtrak's required Public Outreach never presented to any Dome District organization or umbrella organization like New Tacoma Neighborhood Council. At Public Outreach events like the Downtown Farmer's Market, the Freighthouse Sq. station component of this Assessment has always been a **Dot** on a map showing the full route with the environmental impact being to Lakewood south. A **Dot** does *not* represent the major impact that Amtrak's station would have on the Dome District!

We ask that you meet with us and the City of Tacoma, to work on a solution that is forward thinking and more fitting to a Transit Oriented District.

Thank you for your time,
Jori Adkins

See response to
comment 026-3

Response to Comment 026-1

As described in Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA and the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA), the proposed Freighthouse Square station would provide the same or more parking spaces than are currently available at the Tacoma Amtrak Station. Parking would be located on a parcel near Freighthouse Square (see Section 3.2.4 of the EA) that either has parking available for lease or purchase by WSDOT and developed into a parking lot for exclusive use by Amtrak passengers. In addition to this proposed parking, there would be some available on-street parking near the station (see Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA).

The Tacoma Dome Area Plan was reviewed as part of the Project. As discussed in Section 4.13.3.2 of the EA, the Project is consistent with adopted plans and would implement policies adopted by the City of Tacoma. No policy was found that would cause the Project to be inconsistent with these adopted plans and regulations (see Section 4.13.1 of the EA). Based on this review, the Project is consistent with the comprehensive plan and zoning regulations adopted by the City of Tacoma and is not inconsistent with the Tacoma Dome Area Plan.

WSDOT will continue to work with the City of Tacoma and Sound Transit during final design of the Project.

Response to Comment 026-2

As noted in Section 4.13.1 of the EA, the land use determination of effects included an examination of potential effects in the context of the Tacoma Dome Subarea Plan. As discussed in the EA, the Project is consistent with adopted plans and would implement policies adopted by the City of Tacoma. WSDOT will continue to work with the City of Tacoma and Sound Transit to ensure that project final design is aligned with the goals and actions of the dome area plan.

Response to Comment 026-3

The public involvement process for the EA has been ongoing since 2010 and consisted of meetings (including meetings with the City of Tacoma and several Tacoma neighborhood councils), newsletter flyers, NEPA public comment period, and other outreach efforts to obtain feedback and input from adjacent property owners, communities, and other stakeholders. As FRA and WSDOT move forward in final design they will conduct targeted outreach to local agencies and interested parties, providing periodic briefings and email updates.

COMMENTS FROM KEITH STONE, NOVEMBER 2, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #027

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Wednesday, November 07, 2012 1:18 PM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: amtrak

From: lkeithstone@comcast.net [<mailto:lkeithstone@comcast.net>]
Posted At: Friday, November 02, 2012 9:55 PM
Posted To:
Conversation: amtrak
Subject: amtrak

See response to
comment 027-1

To whom it may concern,

My name is L. Keith Stone. I am President of the Dome District Development Group in Tacoma, WA. Our development group represents 121 businesses in the Dome District.

As a group, we are pleased that Amtrak is moving into the core of our district; however we question the plans and placements of the station as recently set forth. The planning has evidently been in process for some time. but we were only introduced to the concept three weeks ago. The plan as set forth will have a major impact on our businesses and residences. It seems you have already dictated the future development of our district with no hearings or communication with those who will be affected by your commercial developments

See response to
comment 027-2

We are hereby protesting the idea of surface parking lots in our district where cars may park for days and weeks. Empty cars add no value to our district. They do not walk around, shop, eat or bring any value to our community. There is also the problem of drop-offs and baggage movement from the street. With Sound Transit light rail on 25th street, there is no room for a pleasant departure.

There are other great places in our district near the proposed station that would be of great value to WSDOT and Amtrak. One in fact could house the Amtrak station and have all their needs for parking, baggage handling and waiting area at track level, while not requiring Sound Transit to re-engineer the commuter station.

Our district begs you for a sit down meeting soon; we ask you to listen to our concerns and proposals.

Respectfully, L. Keith Stone, 253-431-7331

President, Dome District Development group. Tacoma, WA.

See response to
comment 027-3

Response to Comment 027-1

The public involvement process for the EA has been ongoing since 2010 and has included meetings, newsletter flyers, NEPA public comment period, and other outreach efforts to obtain feedback and input from adjacent property owners, communities, and other stakeholders.

Response to Comment 027-2

As described in the EA Section 4.3 and Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA), parking needs associated with the relocation to Freighthouse Square would be satisfied with a parcel near Freighthouse Square that either has parking available for lease or purchase or can be developed into a parking lot for exclusive use by Amtrak passengers. The existing Tacoma Amtrak Station has an on-site parking lot with 82 parking spaces. There are 2,283 parking spaces at the Tacoma Dome Station.

Currently, parking is free in the garage, but vehicles cannot remain longer than 24 hours in the parking garages. On-street parking is also provided on Puyallup Avenue, East 25th Street, and East 26th Street. Along these roadways, on-street parking is either restricted to a time limit between one and two hours, or is unrestricted (no time limit specified). The supply of on-street two-hour parking, approximately 69 spaces, is much higher than the supply of one-hour parking, and had a utilization rate of more than half. The majority of on-street parking supply is unrestricted and is close to 100% utilized. Parking is already used in and around the Freighthouse Square Station, and the Build Alternative would utilize the available parking areas.

Response to Comment 027-3

WSDOT determined that Freighthouse Square is the best location for the new Amtrak station because it will become a key component of an existing multi-modal transportation hub, is already configured for the passenger volumes associated with Sound Transit commuter rail service, and is close to freeways.



Washington Department of Transportation
Rail Division

See response
to comment
028-1

The New Tacoma Neighborhood Council (NTNC) *supports the objections* to the Built Alternative section 3.2.4 proposed Freighthouse Square Station Location by the Dome District Development Group. The NTNC has taken an active role in supporting a strong vibrant area in the Dome District.

Both the Dome District and Brewery District have worked with the City to develop a plan that supports transit in *all* its modes, while creating a viable addition to the downtown. This plan will support the principles of Transit Oriented Development and achieve the goals set forth in the Growth Management Plan and the Puget Sound Regional Council.

See response
to comment
028-2

The NTNC believes the Washington Department of Transportation should work with area stakeholders through the Dome District Development Group. This collaboration will insure that the Amtrak platform and parking plans enhance the viability of the Dome District.

The NTNC and the Dome District fully support the Amtrak Freighthouse Square Station, we believe that with proper planning the Amtrak station will enhance, rather than segregate our emerging neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Dalton Gittens, Chair
New Tacoma Neighborhood Council
www.newtacoma.org

New Tacoma Neighborhood Council
PO Box 1784 • Tacoma, WA 98401

Response to Comment 028-1

Thank you for your comment. As noted in response to the comment on land use, the EA considered the effects of the project in the context of existing and planned land uses, zoning and other regulations, and development trends. The Tacoma Dome Area Plan was reviewed in this process. As discussed in Land Use, Section 4.13.3 of the EA, the Project is consistent with adopted plans and would implement policies adopted by the City of Tacoma. No policy was found that would deem the Project inconsistent with these adopted plans and regulations. Based on this review, the Project is consistent with the comprehensive plan and zoning regulations adopted by the City of Tacoma.

Response to Comment 028-2

The public involvement process for the EA has been ongoing since 2010 and consisted of meetings (including meetings with the City of Tacoma and several Tacoma neighborhood councils), newsletter flyers, NEPA public comment period, and other outreach efforts to obtain feedback and input from adjacent property owners, communities, and other stakeholders. As FRA and WSDOT move forward in final design they will conduct targeted outreach to local agencies and interested parties, providing periodic briefings and email updates.

COMMENTS FROM TRACI KELLY, NOVEMBER 7, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #029

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Wednesday, November 07, 2012 1:23 PM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Freighthouse amtrak station

From: traci kelly [<mailto:tkelly1101@hotmail.com>]
Posted At: Wednesday, November 07, 2012 10:47 AM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Freighthouse amtrak station
Subject: Freighthouse amtrak station

To Whom it may concern,

I am a member of the New Tacoma Neighborhood Council who would be strongly impacted by the movement of the Amtrak station. I have some strong reservations about the current EA plan. Please consider the following plan of the stakeholders in this neighborhood:

See response to
comment 029-1

- *Surface parking is not an option that is acceptable for the Dome District*
 - *Structured parking is a viable option for long term parking outside the Core of the District and only if included in a mixed-use building complex that is built to the maximum FAR*
 - *The final design must be compatible with well established Transit Oriented Development and Complete Streets principles*
-

The WashDOT Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Amtrak By-Pass Project (which moves Amtrak up to Freighthouse Sq.) goes totally against this Plan for our District by crossing E "D" St. to the west of Freighthouse Square for an extension of the Amtrak platform with parking to the north. This area is considered the epicenter of the District and causing any more conflict at E"D" & "C" Sts rather than increasing retail and residential development on these Core streets will make the Dome District a parking lot for commuters, travelers and downtown workers of Tacoma.

Our goal with the Dome District is to see people living here, walking around using the shops and encouraging future businesses, services and retail. Please keep this in mind as you make future plans for Amtrak relocation and our district.

See response to
comment 029-2

Best regards,

Traci Kelly

Response to Comment 029-1

As described in Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA and the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA), the proposed Freighthouse Square station would provide the same or more parking spaces than are currently available at the Tacoma Amtrak Station. Parking would be located on a parcel near Freighthouse Square (see Section 3.2.4 of the EA) that either has parking available for lease or purchase by WSDOT and developed into a parking lot for exclusive use by Amtrak passengers. In addition to this proposed parking, there would be some available on-street parking near the station (see Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA).

The Tacoma Dome Area Plan was reviewed as part of the Project. As discussed in Section 4.13.3.2 of the EA, the Project is consistent with adopted plans and would implement policies adopted by the City of Tacoma. No policy was found that would cause the Project to be inconsistent with these adopted plans and regulations (see Section 4.13.1 of the EA). Based on this review, the Project is consistent with the comprehensive plan and zoning regulations adopted by the City of Tacoma and is not inconsistent with the Tacoma Dome Area Plan.

WSDOT will continue to work with the City of Tacoma and Sound Transit during final design of the Project.

Response to Comment 029-2

As noted in Section 4.13.1 of the EA, the land use determination of effects included an examination of potential effects in the context of the Tacoma Dome Subarea Plan. As discussed in the EA, the Project is consistent with adopted plans and would implement policies adopted by the City of Tacoma. WSDOT will continue to work with the City of Tacoma and Sound Transit to ensure that project final design is with the goals and actions of the dome area plan.

COMMENTS FROM ELDON JACOBSON, NOVEMBER 7, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #030

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Thursday, November 08, 2012 7:52 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Point Defiance Bypass EA

From: Jacobson, Eldon
Sent: Wednesday, November 07, 2012 1:47 PM
To: WSDOT State Rail and Marine Office
Subject: Point Defiance Bypass EA

As a life-long rail transportation supporter I submit the following comments and suggestions about this project in the interest of helping improve the project:

See
response to
comment
030-1

1. I have some suggested improvements for *Appendix B: Grade Separation Concept Evaluation*. All the concepts show the roadway going over the railroad tracks. I disagree. In many locations it would be easier and less expensive for the roadway to go under the railroad tracks. When the roadway goes over the railroad tracks, the design clearance of the bottom of the bridge above the top of the railroad track is about 23.5 feet. When the roadway goes under the railroad tracks, the design clearance of the bottom of the bridge above the top of the roadway is about 16 feet.5. This would mean the slope of the roadway would not have to be as steep, or if the same steepness of roadway is chosen, then the purchase of right-of-way and impacts to neighboring properties could be lessened.

See
response to
comment
030-2

Where the railroad line is adjacent to I-5, the concept above makes even more sense to me when connected to the future I-5 widening project. WSDOT has a long-range plan to add one HOV lane to I-5 in each direction of I-5. WSDOT should promise to build a railroad grade separation in conjunction with the future I-5 widening projects. Like the previous paragraph, the cross street should (probably) go under the railroad tracks. This makes sense to me because when I-5 is widened, the depression that I-5 is currently located in that goes under the existing cross-streets can be filled so that I-5 stays at the same level as the adjacent railroad tracks. Then the cross-street could go under both the railroad track and I-5. The existing pump station could remain and be reconfigured to pump water out of the lowered cross-street, rather than the current depressed I-5.

See
response to
comment
030-3

2. Another issue that needs improvement is that the Scots Broom flowering plant needs to be vigorously controlled (ideally removed completely) from the railroad right-of-way. Scots Broom is a non-native plant and is listed on the State Noxious Weed List (though control of it may not be mandatory). The railroad right-of-way needs to be routinely mowed to keep all vegetation very low to the ground for a number of reasons. First is safety, in which the train engineer and people crossing the right-of-way can see each other much easier when there is no vegetation blocking the view. Second is incidental animal deaths: by keeping vegetation very low, there should be less deer browsing in the area, and thus less deer killed by cars and/or fast moving trains.

See
response
to
comment
030-4

3. The City of Lakewood needs to ask businesses that are visible from I-5 across the railroad tracks to improve the view. Many of the businesses would look much better if the property owners were informed that having a clean-looking and neat appearance can attract more customers.

4. The railroad right-of-way lines should be fenced with a brown coated galvanized chain link fence, or something similar. Plain galvanized fencing just looks poorly, in my opinion. The purpose is to improve safety by minimizing trespassing on the railroad right-of-way and to minimize neighboring properties from encroaching.

See response to
comment 030-5

-
5. The City of Lakewood needs to commit to funding a small portion of each project. The railroad and freeway were installed long before most of the growth in the area. This is a classic case of who pays for growth, the newcomers, or everyone?

The City of Lakewood will receive a portion of the sales tax for all roadway construction projects on I-5 within the city limits. All roadway construction projects pay sales tax. The City of Lakewood should compute how much of its sales tax revenue comes from the gas tax. This amount should be reserved for road maintenance and construction in accordance with the intent of the 18th amendment to the State Constitution, which requires all gas tax revenue to be dedicated to roads.

Thanks,
Eldon Jacobson
Seattle, WA

See response to
comment 030-6

Response to Comment 030-1

As described in the Grade Separation Concept Evaluation (Appendix B of the EA), some concepts have rail under the roadway while others have rail over the roadway. As the concept evaluation proceeded, a host of factors were considered when deciding whether to elevate the roadway or trench it, or to elevate or trench the rail bed. These factors include maintaining a reasonable rail grade before and after the grade crossing (approximately 2% or less), clearance at structures, underground utilities, and groundwater, as well as the acquisition of adjacent properties that would be required to accommodate the grade separation, roadway structures and slopes.

The Grade Separation Concept Evaluation Report revealed that current and projected future traffic volumes do not warrant the construction of new (or modified) grade-separated crossings. The report found that the construction and operation of grade-separated crossings would result in significant environmental impacts to the surrounding community (e.g., noise, property acquisitions, visual impacts from retaining walls, and the increased perception of community isolation, particularly in Tillicum). However, the construction of the Build Alternative would not preclude the future construction of grade-separated crossings within the Project Area.

Response to Comment 030-2

The addition of intercity operations and the resulting potential effects to at-grade crossings in the corridor were evaluated for the Project in the Grade Separation Concept Evaluation Report and were discussed in Section 3.0 of the EA (the report is available in Appendix B of the EA). As part of the evaluation, traffic demand modeling was completed, and considered traffic volumes and flow at the existing at-grade crossings based on the traffic projected to 2030. The evaluation revealed that current and projected future traffic volumes do not warrant the construction of new (or modified) grade-separated crossings.

Instead, the analysis found that the construction and operation of grade-separated crossings would result in significant environmental impacts to the surrounding community (e.g., noise, property acquisitions, visual impacts from retaining walls, and the increased perception of community isolation, particularly in Tillicum). However, the construction of the Build Alternative would not preclude the future construction of grade-separated crossings within the Project Area.

Response to Comment 030-3

Vegetation within the railroad right-of-way would be maintained by the operator and owner to facilitate line of sight for rail car operators. For safety purposes it is standard practice to maintain vegetation within the rail corridor. Sound Transit clears invasive species and replants areas not in active use with native species. Disturbed areas are hydroseeded, and significant trees are avoided when possible. Sound Transit has a vegetation management plan for their overall corridor.

Response to Comment 030-4

Comment noted; however, this topic is outside the scope of the EA.

Response to Comment 030-5

Fencing locations and type will be determined during final design in collaboration with Sound Transit. The fencing and barriers currently in place are adequate and sufficient for the currently planned level of service of Sound Transit.

Response to Comment 030-6

The proposed improvements included in the Point Defiance Bypass would be undertaken by WSDOT, as the Project proponent, and grantee receiving FRA funds under the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail program.

COMMENTS FROM DEIDRE WILSON, NOVEMBER 7, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #031

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Thursday, November 08, 2012 7:53 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: PDB Environmental Assessment

From: Deirdre Wilson [<mailto:dwilso4@co.pierce.wa.us>]
Posted At: Wednesday, November 07, 2012 2:38 PM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: PDB Environmental Assessment
Subject: RE: PDB Environmental Assessment

See response to
comment 031-1

Ms. Roalkvam,

Thank you so much for the phone call today in response to my inquiry about the Point Defiance Bypass EA.

I live and work on either side of the Nalley Valley. My family, and my neighborhood, is negatively impacted by horn noise from the extension of Sounder train service to Lakewood. I am very concerned about the additional horn noise that would result from the Point Defiance Bypass. In our situation, wayside horns are not sufficient mitigation for the significantly adverse noise impacts.

I would like to see a Quiet Zone be considered in the vicinity of the Wilkeson and Pine Street crossings in Tacoma. We have been bombarded with noise in recent years, from highway bridge construction, rail line construction, downtown building construction and now train horn noise. The construction noises will go away, eventually, but the train noise will be with us forever. These are gentrifying neighborhoods that deserve due consideration.

The EA reports that “No corridor-specific noise measurements for existing wayside horns or train-mounted horns were available for this project. No corridor-specific noise measurements for wayside horns or train-mounted horns were conducted as no Cascades trains were running along the Point Defiance Bypass route at the time of the study.” Additionally, this area does not seem to have been considered at all for monitoring of noise and vibration operational effects, possibly because it is now considered ‘existing’.

See response to
comment 031-2

Before any decisions are made, a noise analysis of the now operating wayside horns should be prepared. Noise threshold levels should be evaluated for at least a distance of two miles.

In the short term, I would ask that the use of wayside horn use near my neighborhood be restricted to the minimum decibel and duration limits allowed by the FRA.

See response to
comment 031-3

Deirdre Wilson, AICP, Senior Planner
Department of Planning and Land Services
2401 South 35th Street, Tacoma, WA 98409
Phn (253) 798-3713, Fax (253) 798-7425



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E-mail correspondence sent to and from this e-mail address is subject to the
State of Washington's Public Records Act, RCW Chapter 42.56.

From: Roalkvam, Carol Lee [<mailto:RoalkvC@wsdot.wa.gov>]
Sent: Wednesday, November 07, 2012 1:50 PM
To: Deirdre Wilson
Cc: A-SRMD Document Control
Subject: FW: PDB Environmental Assessment

Hello – I will call you in a few minutes to see if you can access the EA on our website. The full EA is a 55 mb file, too big to send as an attachment.

Here's the link =

http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/Rail/PNWRC_PtDefiance/environmental_assessment.htm

Carol Lee Roalkvam

Environmental Policy Branch Manager :: WSDOT Environmental Services roalkvc@wsdot.wa.gov :: 360.705.7126

The Environmental Assessment can be quickly downloaded by section (below) or people can download the [complete Point Defiance Bypass Environmental Assessment](#) (pdf 55 mb). Please allow a few minutes for the entire document to load.

Please, send your responses or questions before November 9 to rail@wsdot.wa.gov. Comments can also be mailed to this address:

WSDOT Rail Office

P.O. Box 47407

Olympia WA 98504-7407

Point Defiance Bypass Environmental Assessment

[Executive Summary](#) (pdf 67 kb)

[Introduction and Project Area Description](#) (pdf 118 kb)

[Project Purpose and Need](#) (pdf 32 kb)

[Description of Alternatives](#) (pdf 222 kb)

- No Build Alternative
 - Build Alternative
 - Construct New Track Adjacent to the Existing Main Line
 - Reconstruct and Rehabilitate the Existing Main Line
 - Improvements at Grade Crossings
 - Tacoma Amtrak Station Relocation
 - Operational Changes
- Laws, Regulations, and Permits

[Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences](#) (pdf 1.9 mb)

- Air Quality
- Noise and Vibration
- Transportation
- Geology and Soils
- Water Resources
- Wetlands
- Fish, Vegetation, and Wildlife
- Hazardous Materials

- Visual Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice
- Land Use
- Public Services, Utilities, and Safety
- Energy
- Indirect and Cumulative Effects
- Indirect Effects
- Cumulative Effects

[Coordination and Consultation](#) (pdf 50 kb)

- Public Involvement
- Agency Coordination

[List of Preparers](#) (pdf 34 kb)

[Abbreviations and Acronyms](#) (pdf 32 kb)

[References](#) (pdf 53 kb)

List of Appendices - *these files are large*

From: Deirdre Wilson [<mailto:dwilso4@co.pierce.wa.us>]

Posted At: Wednesday, November 07, 2012 1:16 PM

Posted To: Rail

Conversation: PDB Environmental Assessment

Subject: PDB Environmental Assessment

Can you email me a copy of the EA?

Deirdre Wilson, AICP, Senior Planner
Department of Planning and Land Services
2401 South 35th Street, Tacoma, WA 98409
Phn (253) 798-3713, Fax (253) 798-7425

 Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.

E-mail correspondence sent to and from this e-mail address is subject to the
State of Washington's Public Records Act, RCW Chapter 42.56.

Response to Comment 031-1

As noted in EA Section 4.2.3.2, the increased noise levels would be caused by new warning devices at signalized at-grade crossings. Warning devices such as wayside horns must be heard to be effective and therefore volumes cannot be reduced. However, no wayside horns are proposed through Nalley Valley.

In addition, under the proposed Amtrak Cascades and Coast Starlight schedule, there would be no train noise effects during normal sleeping hours (10 p.m. to 7 a.m.).

It should be noted that Quiet Zones are initiated by localities. The process to establish new Quiet Zones can be found on the FRA webpage at <http://www.fra.dot.gov/rpd/freight/1318.shtml>.

Local public authorities may designate or request approval of, quiet zones in which train horns may not be routinely sounded (local public authorities are those that are responsible for traffic control or law enforcement at the highway-rail grade crossing). The details for establishment of quiet zones differ depending on the type of quiet zone to be created (Pre-Rule or New) and the type of safety improvements implemented (if required). In general, the process starts with selection of the crossings to be included in the Quiet Zone. Once selected, the conditions of the crossing are documented. The Quiet Zone Calculator is then used to determine whether the Quiet Zone Risk Index of the proposed Quiet Zone is less than or equal to the Nationwide Significant Risk Threshold (NSRT). If it is greater than the NSRT, then supplementary or alternative safety measures must be used to reduce that risk to fully compensate for the absence of the train horn or to reduce risk below the NSRT. The analysis above is submitted with an application to FRA Office of Railroad Safety for approval.

Response to Comment 031-2

Study area and methods for noise and vibration analysis are described in Section 4.2 of the EA and detailed in the Noise and Vibration Discipline Report (Appendix E of the EA). Noise and vibration analyses were conducted to evaluate construction and operation effects from noise and vibration. Although wayside horns were not measured in the field, the noise effects from wayside horns were modeled using standard methods to evaluate the effects of wayside horns on noise sensitive receptors. Receptors are residential, commercial, and industrial uses where noise has the potential to disrupt the activities that take place there.

Section 4.2.1 of the EA states that noise and vibration effects were evaluated within 1,000 feet of the track centerline. A study area of 1,000 feet was selected based on WSDOT's professional judgment to capture the area within which project-generated noise effects would occur prior to conducting the noise analysis and was verified using the results of the analysis to determine that the area was sufficient to capture the project effects. The noise analysis determined that all project impacts would occur within 500 feet of the track or crossing location. As such a 1,000 foot study area was considered more than sufficient to characterize the noise effects of the project.

Response to Comment 031-3

Warning devices such as wayside horns (which are proposed as part of the Project) must be heard to be effective and therefore volumes cannot be reduced. However, the noise effects from their use would be short duration and localized (as compared to on-train horns) (see EA Section 4.2.3.2).

COMMENTS FROM SU DOWIE, NOVEMBER 8, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #032

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Thursday, November 08, 2012 6:13 PM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Public comment on Point Defiance Bypass

From: Su Dowie [<mailto:SDowie@theafoss.com>]
Posted At: Thursday, November 08, 2012 4:06 PM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Public comment on Point Defiance Bypass
Subject: Public comment on Point Defiance Bypass

See response to
comment 032-1

To whom it may concern,

The Foss Waterway Development Authority (FWDA) is supportive of high speed rail and freight mobility in Tacoma. The proposed relocation of the Amtrak station would be beneficial providing it does not cause the train to block traffic on D Street for staging. This street is the only access to the south end of the Foss Waterway. It is a major transportation link between the Dome District, the cultural attractions, freeway access and the Foss.

The Foss Waterway is a major initiative of the City of Tacoma and State of Washington for the revitalization of Tacoma's downtown waterfront. Over a \$100 million has been expended for cleanup of the Foss Superfund site (Federal, State and local funding), the City of Tacoma and FWDA have invested approximately \$22 million on infrastructure and it has attracted over \$200 million in private investment. The Foss project along 1.5 miles of shoreline is a catalyst for economic revitalization of Tacoma's downtown core. The 1.5 miles of waterfront is physically constrained between the water, 705 and the BN railroad. Access from the south end of the waterway (D Street) is critical to making the Foss a viable place to invest, live, work and play. There is no alternative street access to the south end of the waterway.

We strongly urge WSDOT & Amtrak to be sensitive to the significant investment by both the public and private sector and the need for access to this area. I would be glad to make my self available to discuss this matter in greater detail if it will help support the WSDOT/Amtrak project. We look forward to high speed passenger travel from the Tacoma station and anticipate this can be achieved without a negative impact to the Foss, the Tacoma Dome and LeMay Museum.

Sincerely,
Su Dowie
Interim Executive Director
Foss Waterway Development Authority
535 Dock Street, Suite 204
Tacoma, WA 98402
(253) 597-8122
Toll free 1-888-328-8122
Fax (253) 597-8129

See response to
comment 032-2

Response to Comment 032-1

Thank you for your comment.

Response to Comment 032-2

As described in Section 4.3.2 of the EA and Appendix F of the EA, the Coast Starlight train would extend beyond the existing station platform and across East C Street and East D Street for approximately 6 minutes. Coast Starlight trains arrive and depart during non-peak periods. These arrivals and departures may coincide with Tacoma Dome events. The temporary blockage of these two streets would result in a decline of LOS to below LOS D during an event at the Tacoma Dome (see page 4-13 of the EA for definition of LOS D). Minimization of operational effects (Section 4.3.4 of the EA) on traffic as a result of the Coast Starlight dwell time at Freighthouse Square, and during a Tacoma Dome event, would include implementation of a detour plan that could include static signs identifying the detour routes, dynamic message signs that identify the detour routes during a train blockage, lane striping and controller modification. With the detour signage in place, LOS would not go below LOS D. During final design, WSDOT will continue modeling and coordination efforts with the City of Tacoma to identify refinements of the suite of minimization measures, as noted above.

COMMENTS FROM DAVID BUGHER, NOVEMBER 8, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #033



Douglas G. Richardson
Mayor

November 8, 2012

Don Anderson
Deputy Mayor

Washington State Department of Transportation
Rail and Marine Office
Post Office Box 47407
Olympia, Washington 98504-7407
Email: rail@wsdot.wa.gov

Michael D. Brandstetter
Councilmember

The City of Lakewood has reviewed the Point Defiance Bypass Project Environmental Assessment (EA) and submits the following comments.

Mary Moss
Councilmember

The Point Defiance bypass will reroute passenger trains from their current proximity to expensive homes in Tacoma, University Place and Steilacoom to poor neighborhoods in Lakewood. In order to accomplish this as cheaply as possible, there is no grade separation despite the consequences to one of the most congested sections of Interstate 5. The Environmental Assessment suggests a determination to proceed regardless of consequences.

Jason Whalen
Councilmember

Marie Barth
Councilmember

1. Development Standards Have Been Ignored.

Paul Bocchi
Councilmember

Development standards when the current track was laid differ from current standards. The WSDOT/FRA do not take into account the current state of the existing track, which is extremely poor from the Lakewood Station South. The tracks are rarely used, with perhaps two trains per day traveling at the most 10 miles per hour. With the introduction of the Lakewood Sounder commuter rail line, and new rail, there is now a higher level of use in the early morning and later afternoon hours between the Tacoma Station and the Lakewood Station with an average speed of 40 miles per hour and a maximum of 60 miles per hour.

Andrew E. Neiditz
City Manager

Beyond Bridgeport Way SW, which is immediately south of the Lakewood Station the rail lines revert to their existing, poor state. Trains run rarely from this point south, except for infrequent cars switching at low speeds to serve Joint Base Lewis McChord.

The McChord section of line is more akin to a rail spur. Despite this, the Project follows development standards for existing track rather than new track. The Project route, with new track and no grade separations will run trains along this entire section through Lakewood at 79 miles per hour. According to WSDOT/FRA, this dramatic change in use does not trigger current day development standards and poses

6000 Main Street SW • Lakewood, WA 98499-5027 • (253) 589-2489 • Fax: (253) 589-3774
www.cityoflakewood.us

See response to
comment 033-1

no significant impact on transportation. With increased crossings, vehicles and pedestrians, along with higher train speeds, transportation conditions will either remain the same or slightly improve, according to WSDOT/FRA. It defies logic that adding high speed trains at grade improves conditions. At best, the impairment created by the added trains could be mitigated by some of the features described in the EA but it is absurd to think the overall outcome will be an improvement over current conditions.

2. Public Safety Consideration in General is Inadequate.

WSDOT's/FRA's safety modeling includes a review of historic traffic accident data, in addition to FRA running its accident prediction model to consider the effects of the Project on safety. There are some unique aspects to land use and current social conditions that relate to safety:

See response to
comment 033-2

- The existing rail line is adjacent to two elementary schools, Tyee Park and Southgate.
- Railroad right-of-way trespass is frequent in low-income neighborhoods such as Lakeview and Tillicum. In one particular situation, apartments abut the Project route.
- Homeless encampments are found near the existing railroad right-of-way. Lakewood has the second highest homelessness population in Pierce County. About 6% of that population reports alcoholic and substance abuse issues; 7% of the same group suffers from mental illness.
- Previously, Lakewood required Sound Transit to clear brush from its rail line property (this rail line is part of the Project) in the Lakeview neighborhood. Several encampments were discovered and closed. However, unless overgrown vegetation is regularly removed, homeless encampments will return. Homeless encampments have also been located in the Tillicum neighborhood, again near Sound Transit's rail line.
- In addition to a high homelessness population, there are the near homeless. Often, they reside in cheap, substandard motels located along the Pacific Highway/I-5 Corridor which is also proximate to the Point Defiance rail line. There are near homeless families living in these motels. At last count (2012) there are 15 children who call these motels their home.

With this as background, there exists a higher propensity for trespass, and, therefore, railroad related accidents. Trespass regularly takes place in the railroad right-of-way and remains unchecked. Further, unless the railroad right-of-way is properly maintained (and overgrown vegetation removed) homeless encampments become problematic for transportation agencies. WSDOT/FRA fail to understand the implications of trespass. The attitude seems to be: "we'll worry about this issue after the project has been built".

Line side fencing is necessary. Installing surveillance cameras and detection equipment is also highly recommended. The education program suggested in the EA is inadequate, particularly for this population.

See response to
comment 033-3

3. The Specific Public Safety Consideration of Rail Suicide is Absent

See response to
comment 033-4

Due to the location of the project rail line between Western State Hospital and Greater Lakes Mental Health facility and I-5, not to mention suicide concerns reported from JBLM, rail suicide must be studied and mitigated.

This issue is not addressed at all in the EA although there is an ongoing study of rail suicides funded by the FRA.¹ The preliminary findings suggest erecting barriers in targeted areas is likely to be successful.² 52% of train suicides received psychiatric care, with 49% of them being inpatients. These percentages are significantly higher than for other methods of suicide.³ Train studies have been characterized as an “emerging public health problem” with resultant impacts on travel and traffic delays, productivity and PTSD of crews and witnesses.⁴

All suicide prevention studies conclude that delay and restricted access to the implements of suicide have a positive impact on its permanent avoidance. WSDOT/FRA have ignored our concentration of vulnerable individuals and the impact of the route changes in its EA. At a minimum, this is an additional basis for grade separation and fences. It also interferes with the homelessness issues which are discussed, since that population has such a high incidence of mental health problems.

4. Transportation Flow Consideration is Inadequate

See response to
comment 033-5

The Amtrak Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor ridership is roughly 90,000 a month, or about 1,080,000 annually. Average daily vehicle trips on I-5 at Bridgeport Way in Lakewood are 140,000 a day. Minus commercial truck traffic, say 40,000, and assuming one person per vehicle, which is a conservative calculation, I-5 at Lakewood is probably moving around 3 million people per month or 36 million annually. If the \$89.1 million were used to improve efficiencies on the state’s highway system rather than rail operations, it would significantly improve transportation movement, more so than spending money for high-speed rail ridership. A cost versus benefit analysis appears to be in order, which under NEPA, would require the preparation of an EIS.

Pages 4-11 through 4-13 discuss WSDOT’s/FRA’s traffic modeling techniques. Lakewood disagrees with the analysis. Lakewood has examined traffic modeling differently than WSDOT/FRA, focusing on the basics, for example, the number of at-grade crossings, current traffic conditions, and train speeds for both the existing South Sound route and the Project route.

¹ See Railroad Research Foundation, <http://www.railroadresearch.org/safety>. American Association of Suicidology, Current Suicide Prevention research, <http://www.suicidology.org/current-research>; Federal Study Tries to Derail Train Suicides, <http://www.newser.com/story/80468/federal-study-tries-to-derail-train-suicides.html>.

² Boston Globe: Striving to Prevent Suicide by train, http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2010/02/09/shining_a_spotlight_on_suicide_by_train/

³ Mental healthcare Status and Psychiatric Diagnoses of Train Suicides, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/1793238>

⁴ The Age: Hidden Tragedy of Rail Suicides, <http://www.theage.com.au/action/printArticle?id=3346567>

See response to
comment 033-6

The Puget Sound route has seven at-grade crossings. The Project has 21. The greater the number of crossings, the more likely there will be conflicts with vehicles and pedestrians. Significantly, signalization at these crossing belongs to the City. Essentially, WSDOT/FRA are shifting both the financial and risk implications of these crossings to the City for a rail line that does not benefit the City in any way.

The Puget Sound route is adjacent to the waterside of Commencement Bay and the Puget Sound which significantly reduces vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Compare that with the Project route. Most of the Point Defiance Bypass at-grade crossings are arterial streets located in dense, urban environments and that handle significant volumes of traffic. In Lakewood, the Steilacoom Boulevard SW railroad crossing moves over 20,000 vehicle trips; 100th Street SW, 24,000 vehicle trips; 108th Street SW, 11,000 vehicle trips; and Bridgeport Way SW, around 25,000 vehicle trips. In these areas WSDOT/FRA modeling predicts that there is a less likelihood of accidents because of signal and light improvements.

See response to
comment 033-7

5. Socioeconomic Justice Has Been Ignored.

A review of Appendix L, the socioeconomic/environmental justice discipline report, reveals the manner in which accident potential data is being manipulated within the EA. In numerous locations, the EA concludes that accident potential will be improved because of the intersection improvements, etc., and it cites an extremely low accident rate. Meanwhile, two accidents involving passenger rail on the Puget Sound corridor occurred just the week of October 15th: the death of a JBLM soldier in an accident on the waterward line involving Amtrak Cascades; and a Sounder train collision with a semi-truck near Edmonds. Over time, Lakewood has noticed rail-related accidents with both vehicles and pedestrians in the greater vicinity; however, it has become apparent that WSDOT/FRA distinguishes between "legitimate" accidents and those somehow caused by a misdeed on the victim's part (trying to cross the tracks when the train was coming, etc.). The City does not distinguish between reasons for loss of life in this way.

See response to
comment 033-8

Appendix L references the isolation of Tillicum and "trespassing" along the rail corridor to achieve pedestrian connection to the body of the city. As with accident rates, this is painted as non-legitimate use, and is, therefore, not considered as either a connectivity issue or an accident potential issue. The EA discusses dealing with the problem by the installation of linear fencing and trespassing signs, and through public education efforts.

Astonishingly, the EA states that the re-routing of these trains through one of the poorest neighborhoods in the State will actually result in a "minor benefit," to the Tillicum, Woodbrook and Nyanza neighborhoods. (EA at p. 4-45). This "benefit" is alleged to be better connectivity by adding trains across the only two access points.

See response to
comment 033-9

6. There Is No Guarantee That the Use Will Remain Passenger Only.

See response to
comment 033-10

Also of concern is the repeated assurance that freight will not follow the movement of passenger trains to this new route. The deficiencies in the current route as well as the benefits of the new route apply equally to freight trains. The EA must consider the potential for this route to become the preferred course or explain what will prevent that outcome.

7. The EA Consists of a Several Factual Errors, Omissions and is Misleading.

The EA itself contains several factual mistakes. In some instances, it contains a number of statements which lead to incorrect implications.

“The Build Alternative would also improve sidewalks at North Thorne Lane SW, Berkeley Street SW, ...thus improving pedestrian access.”

Page 4-17 (Fourth Paragraph)

See response to
comment 033-11

The statement would seem to imply that WSDOT/FRA are making pedestrian improvements since there is an existing lack of infrastructure; however, the statement is inaccurate. At North Thorne Lane SW, there is an existing dirt/gravel walkway, but it goes nowhere. Currently, the Washington Military Department is using federal and state funds to improve the existing walkway and extending it to Harry Todd Park through a right-of-way permit issued by the City. That same permit is being used to re-route traffic and improve vehicle movements and safety through the North Thorne Lane SW, Berkeley Street SW intersections with Union Avenue SW, the current railroad right-of-way, and I-5.

The EA is contradictory:

“Intersection Signal Improvements: ...The more advanced signal controllers would allow synchronized operation of the nearby signals to reduce the likelihood of vehicles on the tracks.... These improvements would include additional vehicle detectors and enhanced traffic management that would reduce the delay following a train crossing event.”

TDR Page 90

“Details of signal phasing and timing plans would be further refined after the NEPA process....because the Project cannot commit to them at this stage.”

See response to
comment 033-12

TDR Page 91

Although the EA states that it examined potential cultural materials within the Area of Potential Effects, which were located 75 feet from the centerline of the rail line. (EA 4-35). Limiting the scope of the evaluation to 75 feet appears to be arbitrary, and artificially narrow given the other metrics which the EA has used to measure impacts in other areas. The EA failed to list Lakewood historic locations adjacent to, or near the Sound Transit railroad line:

- LW-006; Naches Pass Trail/Military Road Marker, located on Pacific Highway SW near Ponder's Corner's, and is 269 feet from the railroad centerline.
 - LW-007; Ponder's Tavern (1929), located at 12837 Pacific Highway SW, and is 269 feet from the railroad centerline.
 - LW-026; the Mountain View Funeral Home/Memorial Park (1940), located at 4100 Steilacoom Boulevard SW, and is 750 feet from the railroad centerline.
 - LW-028; Judge Wilson House (1894), 4503 108th Street SW, and is located 575 feet from the railroad centerline.
 - LW-031; Max Frolicks Villa & Road House (1920's), 4400 11th Street SW, and is located 125 feet from the railroad centerline.
 - LW-032; Railroad Bridge WPA Project (1935) which is adjacent to the Project rail line.
- All six sites are located in a potential historic district and meet the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places.

See response to
comment 033-13

Should FRA decide to move forward with a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), FRA or its agent, WSDOT is requested to provide the city a copy of same and include information as to the appropriate appeals process.

Additionally, pertaining to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), should WSDOT decide to move forward with a Determination of Nonsignificance (DNS), or a Mitigated Determination of Nonsignificance (MDNS), or an Environmental Impact statement (EIS), WSDOT is requested to

Washington State Department of Transportation
Re: Point Defiance Bypass EA
November 8, 2012
Page 7

provide the city a copy of the relevant document and include information as to the appropriate appeals process.

Respectfully,

See response to
comment 033-14



M. David Bugher
Assistant City Manager/
Community Development Director

Response to Comment 033-1

As described in Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA, the 14 additional passenger trains per day under the Build Alternative would increase the number of times local crossings temporarily closed as trains pass by. Total closing time for each crossing would be relatively short (about one minute per occurrence). The effects of additional trains (and the associated crossing closing at at-grade crossings) would be reduced by the proposed signal and intersection improvements. Based on the analysis presented in the Transportation Discipline Report, the overall effect to local roadway system operations would not be significant, and in some cases represents an improvement over the existing condition. The Project will follow FRA design standards and track design standards set by each jurisdiction as applicable.

Response to Comment 033-2

FRA and WSDOT are also concerned about trespassing on the rail right of way, but do not anticipate that the Project would increase the amount of trespass on rail right-of-way. With increased passenger rail traffic, the opportunities for trespassers on rail right-of-way to interact with trains could increase, causing potential safety issues. In addition to state and federal safety requirements, the infrastructure owner is responsible for developing and implementing security procedures to reduce the likelihood of rail trespass. These security procedures implement and follow the BNSF Railway's *Transportation Security Administration: 24 Security Action Items* flyer, *49 CFR 1580: TSA Rail Regulations Regarding Rail Security Sensitive Materials*, Sound Transit's Safety and Security Plan, and the system safety program plans for both BNSF Railway and Tacoma Rail.

Response to Comment 033-3

FRA and WSDOT are also concerned about trespassing on the rail right of way, but do not anticipate that the Project would increase the amount of trespass on rail right-of-way. With increased passenger rail traffic, the opportunities for trespassers on rail right-of-way to interact with trains could increase, causing potential safety issues. In addition to state and federal safety requirements, the infrastructure owner is responsible for developing and implementing security procedures to reduce the likelihood of rail trespass. These security procedures implement and follow the BNSF Railway's *Transportation Security Administration: 24 Security Action Items* flyer, *49 CFR 1580: TSA Rail Regulations Regarding Rail Security Sensitive Materials*, Sound Transit's Safety and Security Plan, and the system safety program plans for both BNSF Railway and Tacoma Rail.

Response to Comment 033-4

Both WSDOT and FRA agree that rail suicide is a deeply traumatic event for anyone affected, and FRA is currently funding research being conducted by the Railroad Research Foundation to evaluate rail suicides (see <http://www.railroadresearch.org/safety>). It remains that there is "no Specific Public Safety Consideration of rail suicide" within the EA. The Build Alternative would use an existing rail corridor and FRA and WSDOT do not agree with the commenter's statement regarding the proposed change in route, vulnerable individuals and grade separation. The safety of pedestrians and vehicle drivers is adequately assessed in the EA.

As stated in Section 4.14.1 of the EA, health facilities within ½ mile of the Point Defiance Bypass route were included in the analysis. The Western State Hospital and Greater Lakes Mental Health Facility is located approximately 3.6 and 1.6 miles from the route, respectively; therefore neither facility was identified in the analysis. The EA finds that access to public services as well as emergency response would not be significantly affected by the Project.

Ongoing outreach and educational efforts, particularly in the form of *Operation Lifesaver*, including a potential focus on at-risk populations (e.g., providers/clients at these mental health facilities; service providers to the homeless), will continue after construction of the Project.

Response to Comment 033-5

The scope of the Project was limited to evaluation of improvements to rail movement for Amtrak service. A statewide evaluation of transportation system improvements for all modes of transportation is outside the scope of this evaluation. In addition, funding from FRA is mandated for only passenger rail improvements.

Response to Comment 033-6

The EA Section 4.3.3.2, presents a summary of the traffic analysis from the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA). This Report, which was discussed in detail with local stakeholder members of the Technical Advisory Group, presents a more detailed description of the traffic modeling and analysis, including how additional train operations on the Point Defiance Bypass route will affect traffic on the local roadway network.

In short, the Project used two calibrated models: Lakewood/I-5 VISUM travel demand model, and the Pierce County EMME travel demand model. The results of the travel demand modeling efforts were used as an input to the VISSIM and Synchro traffic operations modeling software. VISSIM and Synchro are industry standards that are used nationally as well as throughout Washington state.

Response to Comment 033-7

Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA) notes that the shift and increase of passenger rail from the Puget Sound route to the Point Defiance Bypass route would create multiple daily crossings at at-grade crossings, with resulting delays to vehicles on roadways, as well as pedestrians. At-grade crossings would be closed for about one minute per passenger train crossing. Extensive traffic modeling confirms that there are no significant impacts to the local arterial system. In addition to the one minute crossing time mentioned above, only one *Cascades* trip is scheduled to occur during the AM peak hour, and one in the PM peak hour. All but two *Cascades* trips through Lakewood would occur during off-peak hours.

The signals proposed for the Project would be installed in coordination with the City of Lakewood during final design and permitting. Operation and maintenance of the signals would be conducted by WSDOT.

Local agency concerns about traffic and transportation were heard by WSDOT, and were made a core part of the Technical Advisory Group's meetings between January and October, 2011. Transportation topics discussed in detail included traffic assumptions, baseline traffic counts, modeling outputs, and initial findings.

Response to Comment 033-8

FRA and WSDOT understand there exists the potential for accidents in any transportation corridor where pedestrians and vehicles ignore or avoid safety precautions (see EA page 4-38). For purposes of analyzing risk and comparing alternatives, standard FRA analytical methods were used to determine accident rates at rail crossings associated with the project alternatives. Additional detail is in the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report, Appendix F of the EA, Chapters 2, 4, and 5.

Response to Comment 033-9

When compared to the No Build Alternative, the Project does not split or isolate areas, generate new development, or separate neighborhoods from services. The existing conditions, such as geographic, land use, and transportation features, would all continue to contribute to the sense of isolation and division in neighborhoods. The operation of the Project may increase residents' sense of division during train passbys; however this disruption would be very short in duration (i.e., 12 minutes per day) (see Section 4.12 of the EA and the Socioeconomic and Environmental Justice Discipline Report (Appendix N of the EA) and Section 4.16). The benefit the EA identifies is associated with improvements at several grade

crossings that will aid the traffic flow through the community. FRA and WSDOT assessment complies with the federal executive orders, and is similar to what has been applied elsewhere in the region.

Response to Comment 033-10

Decisions to add Freight traffic is independent of the Sound Transit and Amtrak service along the Bypass route. Sound Transit, as the owner of the majority of the corridor, cannot prohibit freight use but does set the terms and conditions for any freight use of their infrastructure. The operations of the freight will continue to be directed by Tacoma Rail and BNSF.

There would be no change to the operation of freight trains on the Point Defiance Bypass route under the Build Alternative (EA Section 3.2.5). Tacoma Rail and BNSF would continue to operate as many as two trains per day on some portions of the Point Defiance Bypass route to as few as two trains per week on other portions of the Point Defiance Bypass route. BNSF would continue to operate intermittent freight trains on the Point Defiance Bypass route to serve military transportation needs at JBLM. The Project would not enable freight traffic to move beyond the East “D” Street and Tacoma Avenue Overpass due to existing grade restrictions and Sound Transit running rights. The operations of the freight (including freight speeds) will continue to be directed by Tacoma Rail and BNSF.

Response to Comment 033-11

EA Section 4.16.2, Cumulative Effects, contains a list of current and reasonably foreseeable future transportation related projects. As part of the Cumulative Effects analysis, FRA and WSDOT examined the known local and regional roadway improvements. The project identified by the commenter has been added to EA Table 17 and WSDOT and FRA find that it does not change the analysis or conclusions described in the EA.

Response to Comment 033-12

Preliminary design of the Project includes the use of more advanced signal controllers, noted in Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA). These signal controllers are identified for use as they would reduce the likelihood of the vehicles on the tracks as noted in the report. The details of intersection signal phasing and timing will be developed during the final design phase of the project. Upon approval by WSDOT and each applicable local jurisdiction, and once the intersection signals are constructed and become operational, their phasing and timing would be adjusted to ensure that they are accounting for actual traffic conditions. In addition, as a standard practice, WSDOT works with local jurisdictions prior to and once traffic signals are operating to ensure optimized traffic flow.

Response to Comment 033-13

Each resource specific study area was determined based on the independent resource being evaluated and may be different depending on the resource. WSDOT coordinated and consulted with SHPO regarding the Area of Potential Effect (APE) of the Project and the Section 106 analysis. Historic properties within the APE were identified and project impacts were assessed. That information is included in Section 4.10 of the EA. WSDOT received concurrence from SHPO on September 26, 2012, on the APE and findings contained within the Cultural Resources Report.

Response to Comment 033-14

Both the state and federal decision documents will be made available on the WSDOT Project website at http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/rail/pnwrc_ptdefiance. With respect to appeals, SEPA appeal process is outlined in the state regulations [RCW 43.21C.060, 075, and 080](#) and [WAC 197-11-680](#).

NEPA decisions may be challenged pursuant to Federal law.

COMMENTS FROM JOHN NILES, NOVEMBER 8, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #034

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Thursday, November 08, 2012 6:20 PM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Input to Point Defiance Bypass project environmental review
Attachments: PointDefianceGradeCrossingsLetter-FRA.pdf

From: John Niles [<mailto:jniles@alum.mit.edu>]
Posted At: Thursday, November 08, 2012 9:01 AM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Input to Point Defiance Bypass project environmental review
Subject: Input to Point Defiance Bypass project environmental review

See response to
comment 034-1

To whom it may concern:

As a Washington State resident, I'm concerned that the cumulative grade-crossing crash potential of the pending high-speed Port Defiance Bypass Amtrak passenger rail route through Lakewood, Washington has not been revealed in the Environmental Assessment for this project.

The cumulative potential for the entire route is revealed by WSDOT analysis to be approximately one grade-crossing crash per year, but this statistic is not clearly stated in the Environmental Assessment.

My concerns are detailed in the attached letter addressed to Federal Railroad Administration. Please make sure my concerns are addressed in the completed environmental record, which I understand will be considered closely in further decision making on the level and focus of investment for this project.

Respectfully,

John Niles
4005 20th Ave West, Suite 111
Seattle, Washington 98199
206-781-4475

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November 8, 2012

Honorable Joseph Szabo
Federal Railroad Administrator
U.S. Department of Transportation
Washington, DC

Dear Administrator Szabo:

In re: Point Defiance Bypass Project, Washington State, comment period ending November 9, 2012

I am a 30 year resident of Washington State with a deep interest in transportation cost-effectiveness and safety. My profession is public policy and program analysis, which I now practice independently and as an associate of several non-profit organizations.

This letter is a communication from the *Public Interest Transportation Forum*, a civic information web site I have been operating since 1996 at <http://www.bettertransport.info/>. Please make this letter part of the environmental record for the Point Defiance Bypass Project, a track revision which sets up Amtrak passenger trains between Seattle and Portland to move through Lakewood, Washington (just south of Tacoma) on a new high-speed passenger rail corridor at 79 mph, instead of where routed now along the Puget Sound shoreline. There will be 20 at-grade crossings in the urban area where the track passes, already used by slower commuter trains.

In this communication, I'm shining a light on a particular lack of full disclosure of environmental impacts of these 20 road crossings in the Environmental Analysis (EA) for the Point Defiance Bypass Project.

This project was brought to my attention by a journalist's account published at the online news site *Crosscut*, April 20, 2011, "Blowing the whistle on plans to shift Amtrak's route south of Tacoma" available for reading at <http://crosscut.com/2011/04/20/transportation/20728/Blowing-whistle-on-plans-shift-Amtraks-route-south/>. I also noticed the editorial in the *Tacoma News Tribune* on August 20, 2012, "'We Can't Wait' for rail bypass? Job 1 is to make it safe" posted at <http://www.thenewstribune.com/2012/08/24/2266511/we-cant-wait-for-rail-bypass-job.html>.

Based on my examination of an unpublished government working document, a spreadsheet that backs up the grade crossing safety analysis Environmental Analysis, I found that the new passenger rail corridor set up by this project has been professionally analyzed to reveal that the Point Defiance track route is forecast to experience approximately one crash per year at railroad grade crossings along the corridor. However, this quantitative bottom line implication of the analysis is not revealed in the EA.

See response to
comment 034-2

John S. Niles | phone: 206.781.4475 | jniles@alum.mif.edu | 4005 20th Ave West, #111, Seattle, WA 98199

Honorable Joseph Szabo, November 8, 2012, page 2

The Excel spreadsheet I refer to was created by Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and sent to me after I requested the detailed analytics that were applied to the task of predicting future grade crossing accidents at 20 places where the tracks cross roads.

The spreadsheet calculations of the expected number of annual vehicle-train accidents are used as justification in the EA for an important conclusion: Rebuilding of existing busy rail crossings in City of Lakewood and other jurisdictions to have grade separation of tracks and roadway is not necessary for safe operation. This conclusion is reached because of the forecast that crashes at any one crossing are forecast to be rare.

Cumulatively, however, across all of the crossings, the forecast is more troubling – about one crash per year. There is no apparent statement in the published EA document on this important overall, cumulative effect, or if there is, it's buried.

The forecast of about one crash per year along all of the grade crossings in this corridor is shown by the number 1.2 years "Between Accidents" in cell Y33 in the Summary worksheet of the referenced spreadsheet provided to me by WSDOT that I have posted to <http://www.bettertransport.info/pitf/lakewoodspreadsheet.xlsx> .

See response to
comment 034-3

Significantly, the bottom line "All Crossings" crash forecast numbers produced by WSDOT describe a cumulative effect that is left off "Exhibit 59. Individual Crossing Accident Experience Predicted for Year 2030 Conditions" on page 94 of the Transportation Discipline Report in the Environmental Assessment (EA), a table of numbers copied from the same Summary page of the spreadsheet. Along with the fact that the raw spreadsheet is not included in the EA as an appendix, the non-reporting of the cumulative effect of high speed trains moving through a set of urban at-grade road crossings is an oversight that should be corrected in the environmental record.

If Amtrak passenger trains are asserted to be safe in crossing busy municipal streets because quantitative analysis implies they are safe, please make sure the U.S. Government discloses fully what the analysis actually shows.

Respectfully,



John Niles
Co-founder and Chief Editor
Public Interest Transportation Forum
<http://www.bettertransport.info/pitf>

Response to Comment 034-1

Details on the crossing safety analysis are presented in the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (EA Appendix F), and incorporated by reference into the EA. As noted in the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report, “Overall, the time between accidents would be 0.1 years less with the Build Alternative than with the No Build Alternative; however, the number of crossing events increases and the accident rate per million train crossings improves with the Build Alternative.”

Response to Comment 034-2

Details on the crossing safety analysis are presented in the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (EA Appendix F), and incorporated by reference into the EA. As noted in the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report, “Overall, the time between accidents would be 0.1 years less with the Build Alternative than with the No Build Alternative; however, the number of crossing events increases and the accident rate per million train crossings improves with the Build Alternative.”

Response to Comment 034-3

Concerning accident frequency, Section 4.14.3.1 of the EA states: “3.2 accidents for every million train crossings are anticipated. This accident rate would be a decrease in accidents from the No Build Alternative (3.6 accidents per million train crossings).” When expressed in years between accidents, the Build Alternative would have 0.9 years between accidents whereas the No Build Alternative would have 1.0 years between accidents. This shorter period between accidents is attributable to the increased number of crossing events with the Build Alternative. Although the Build Alternative would reduce the accident rate per train crossing event, the increased number of crossing events shortens frequency between accidents relative to the No Build Alternative by 0.1 years.

WSDOT evaluated the both the Puget Sound Route and Point Defiance Route in their entirety to determine potential crash frequency with the No Build Alternative and Build Alternative. The methodology is described in detail in Chapter 2 of the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report and results reported in Exhibit 58 and 59 (see the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report, Appendix F of the EA). In short, analysts reviewed the last five years of historical data from the FRA Office of Safety Analysis from October 2006 through September 2011. The FRA database describes the severity and type of accidents and the analysts used that information to describe the safety issues associated with the current rail crossings, as well as the likely safety issues expected with the Project. In addition to reviewing historical data, analysts used the FRA accident prediction model to consider the effects of the Project on safety. Inputs into the model were taken mostly from the FRA crossing inventory database and traffic volumes gathered for the Project to estimate annual average daily traffic (AADT) on the roadways.

COMMENTS FROM CHRISTINE REICHGOTT, NOVEMBER 8, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #035



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
Seattle, WA 98101-3140



OFFICE OF
ECOSYSTEMS, TRIBAL AND
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

November 9, 2012

Colleen Vaughn
Federal Preservation Officer and Environmental Protection Specialist
Office of Passenger and Freight Programs
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, District of Columbia 20590

Megan White, P.E.
Director, Environmental Services Office
Washington State Department of Transportation
PO Box 47331
Olympia, Washington 98504-7331

Re: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Comments on the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Point Defiance Bypass Project (Project) Environmental Assessment (EA). (EPA R10 project number: 12-0059-FRA).

Dear Ms. Vaughn and Ms. White,

The EPA has reviewed WSDOT and FRA's October 2012 Point Defiance Bypass Project EA and we are submitting comments in accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

We support the Project because of clear overall benefits from improving passenger rail. Benefits associated with the Project's contribution to transportation choice include improved air quality and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Benefits associated with the Project's contribution to supporting existing communities include, for example, improved revitalization and redevelopment for the Tacoma Dome neighborhood. We understand and appreciate these benefits as examples of how the Project is consistent with HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities' Livability Principles: "Provide more transportation choices" and "Support existing communities."¹

We also support the Project because of WSDOT and FRA's thoughtful project design and mitigation planning. We agree with the EA's conclusions that the build alternative will - in spite of an increase in the number of trains - reduce overall transportation effects through improvements to at-grade crossings, and, reduce noise effects by replacing train mounted horns with quieter wayside horns.

¹ <http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/>

While we support the Project because of overall benefits and thoughtful planning, we remain concerned about the potential for increased train activity to contribute to ongoing isolation problems caused by the cumulative effects of past and present land-use and transportation patterns in the Tillicum, Woodbrook, and Nyanza neighborhoods.² To address this concern, we recommend that the EA include additional information on whether and how WSDOT and FRA could further mitigate potential Project related contributions to ongoing isolation issues in these neighborhoods. Consider, for example, prioritizing the following for low-income and minority communities:

- Ongoing opportunities for meaningful involvement with the Project
- Additional pedestrian, bicycle, or, transit facilities
- Earlier implementation of at-grade crossing improvements
- Support for other federal, state or local efforts to improve local mobility and non-motorized access.

See response to
comment 035-1

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. If you have any questions, please contact me at (206) 553-1601 or by electronic mail at reichgott.christine@epa.gov or you may contact Erik Peterson of my staff at (206) 553-6382 or by electronic mail at peterson.erik@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



Christine B. Reichgott, Unit Manager
Environmental Review and Sediment Management Unit

² p. 46 at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/rdonlyres/B504927D-900F-419F-8C49-E99F39750B81/0/App L SocioEJ.pdf>

Response to Comment 035-1

Upgrades to the intersections and signaling would maintain or improve traffic flow overall and thus improve connectivity compared to the No Build Alternative. Intersection and signal improvements would improve connectivity and safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles as well as improve traffic flow for some intersections, which is more fully discussed in Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA.

Therefore, with the Project and the proposed traffic improvements, community connectivity would experience a minor benefit (See Section 4.1.2.3 of the EA). No mitigation measures are required and minimization measures are described in the EA.

Earlier implementation of at-grade crossing improvements will be dependent on project funding and completion of all permitting processes. The remaining proposed considerations will be kept in mind for other future projects in the area but are outside the scope of this EA.

The information gained through this project will continue to inform WSDOT's engagement and outreach strategies with the environmental justice communities in the area. WSDOT will provide regular updates about the project via the project web pages.

COMMENTS FROM ODETTE D'ANIELLO, NOVEMBER 9, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #036

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Friday, November 09, 2012 7:17 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Point Defiance Bypass Comment

From: Celebrity Cake Studio [<mailto:info@celebritycakestudio.com>]
Posted At: Friday, November 09, 2012 5:16 AM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Point Defiance Bypass Comment
Subject: Point Defiance Bypass Comment

See response to
comment 036-1

My name is Odette D'Aniello, property and business owner in the Dome District. It has come to my attention that WSDOT/Amtrak is looking to relocate the trains to Freighthouse Square.

I am excited about the possibility but very concerned about two things:

1. The current plan will block D Street, which is the main thoroughway to get to Foss Waterway. The future is bright for this D Street parking lot; it could hold retail or housing needed for any vibrant transportation hub. I walk from my store on 26th St. to downtown Tacoma using D street and it is a beautiful walk. My walk includes using D street to go up to the Lemay Museum. The thought of trains parked there will completely make D street an unusable street and will block any walking link between the Dome District and the rest of downtown.

Why not stop the train where D street begins so it will keep the street open and usable and that parking lot available for future development. Surface parking in that area is not a good use of space as there are buildings nearby that can easily be converted into covered parking. Urban development around transportation hubs must include mixed use buildings to make it an attractive place to live. Parked cars in this area will completely negate that possibility.

2. I own an apartment on top of one of my buildings and believe it is important that a Quiet Zone application be included in your plans. Housing will be an integral part of this area if it is going to be the city's transportation hub.

Thank you your time and I would really appreciate being notified of any public forums that you will hold regarding this plan. Please contact me through this email or my mobile at 360-790-2123 for any information or clarification.

Sincerely,

Odette D'Aniello

See response to
comment 036-2

--
Celebrity Cake Studio
"Where Every Cake is a Work of Art!"
We've Moved! We are now located at
314 E 26th St. Tacoma, Wa. 98421
www.celebritycakestudio.com
www.facebook.com/celebritycakestudio
253.627.4773

Response to Comment 036-1

As described in Section 4.3.2 of the EA and Appendix F of the EA, the Coast Starlight train would extend beyond the existing station platform and across East C Street and East D Street for approximately 6 minutes. Coast Starlight trains arrive and depart during non-peak periods. These arrivals and departures may coincide with Tacoma Dome events. The temporary blockage of these two streets would result in a decline of LOS to below LOS D during an event at the Tacoma Dome (see page 4-13 of the EA for definition of LOS D). Minimization of operational effects (Section 4.3.4 of the EA) on traffic as a result of the Coast Starlight dwell time at Freighthouse Square, and during a Tacoma Dome event, would include implementation of a detour plan that could include static signs identifying the detour routes, dynamic message signs that identify the detour routes during a train blockage, lane striping and controller modification. With the detour signage in place, LOS would not go below LOS D. During final design, WSDOT will continue modeling and coordination efforts with the City of Tacoma to identify refinements of the suite of minimization measures, as noted above.

Response to Comment 036-2

The process to establish new Quiet Zones can be found on the FRA webpage at <http://www.fra.dot.gov/rpd/freight/1318.shtml>.

Local public authorities may designate or request approval of, quiet zones in which train horns may not be routinely sounded (local public authorities are those that are responsible for traffic control or law enforcement at the highway-rail grade crossing). The details for establishment of quiet zones differ depending on the type of quiet zone to be created (Pre-Rule or New) and the type of safety improvements implemented (if required). In general, the process starts with selection of the crossings to be included in the Quiet Zone. Once selected, the conditions of the crossing are documented. The Quiet Zone Calculator is then used to determine whether the Quiet Zone Risk Index of the proposed Quiet Zone is less than or equal to the Nationwide Significant Risk Threshold (NSRT). If it is greater than the NSRT, then supplementary or alternative safety measures must be used to reduce that risk to fully compensate for the absence of the train horn or to reduce risk below the NSRT. The analysis above is submitted with an application to FRA Office of Railroad Safety for approval.

COMMENTS FROM KEN MAUERMANN, NOVEMBER 8, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #037

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Friday, November 09, 2012 7:17 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Public Comment - Point Defiance Bypass Project

From: Ken Mauermann [<mailto:kmauermann@comcast.net>]
Posted At: Thursday, November 08, 2012 6:47 PM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Public Comment - Point Defiance Bypass Project
Subject: Public Comment - Point Defiance Bypass Project

To whom it may concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Point Defiance Bypass Project. My comments are specific to the undocumented potential for vibration as it relates to unstable soils along a specific area within the project right-of-way.

According to your assessment, soils and geology were studied at various points in conjunction with vibration monitoring. These studies included a stretch of the project corridor from Freighthouse Square to "M" Street. Immediately west of "M" Street adjacent to the south right-of-way is a warehouse constructed and occupied by Tacoma Electric Supply. It sits adjacent to the former BNSF right-of-way on a parcel that slopes towards the tracks. After occupying the concrete, tilt-type building for a number of years, building owners began to observe structural damage along the north side (track side) of the building. A major separation of the north wall from the roof and floor progressively occurred.

A licensed, geotechnical engineering firm was brought in to determine the cause and propose a solution. They verified that the building had been properly designed and constructed to applicable code requirements, and determined that the likely cause of the failure was vibration from passing freight trains on the adjacent BNSF rail line. They designed a structural repair which was reviewed by the City of Tacoma. The repair included additional bracing and gusseting, as well as tying the building to a series of bored/poured-in-place pilings placed in a parallel fashion to the rail right-of-way. The total cost of the repair was approximately \$270,000.

Shortly after the this repair was completed, BNSF discontinued the use of this portion of the line. Since that time, further structural problems have not been noted.

I am concerned that the resumption of rail traffic by Sound Transit (10 trains per day), and additionally, more frequent and higher-speed traffic (14 additional Amtrak trains per day), could exacerbate the risk to structures in this area and lead to resumed structural damage.

According to the Environmental Assessment, the subject hillside, and most certainly the history of this hillside, was not considered... most likely because staff were unaware of the problem. Please consider further research into this situation so that adequate mitigating measures can be developed. You may learn more through an onsite visit and review of relevant engineering reports and plans/specifications associated with the structural issue at Tacoma Electric. I am a former employee of the firm, and anticipate that company management would be happy to share their documents with WSDOT.

Respectfully,

Ken Mauermann

See response to
comment 037-1

Response to Comments from Ken Mauermann, November 8, 2012

Commenter ID #037

Response to Comment 037-1

As described in Section 4.2.1.2 of the EA, vibration effects from train operations were assessed using the FTA vibration impact assessment procedures. Land uses along the alignment were investigated to determine those that would be affected by the project. No vibration effects were identified in the "M" Street vicinity (see Section 4.2.3.2 of the EA and page 46, Noise and Vibration Discipline Report, Appendix E of the EA).

COMMENTS FROM T.C. BROADNAX, NOVEMBER 8, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #038



November 8, 2012

Lauris C. Mattson, PMP
Environmental Manager, Point Defiance Bypass Project
Cascades High-Speed Passenger Rail Program
310 Maple Park Avenue Southeast
Olympia, WA 98504-7300

Subject: Point Defiance Bypass Project Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Mattson:

The City of Tacoma received a copy of the Point Defiance Bypass Project Environmental Assessment (EA) and appreciates the opportunity to provide comments.

Tacoma supports the project proposal of re-routing the Amtrak Cascades passenger rail service to an inland route and relocating the existing Amtrak Station from Puyallup Avenue to Freighthouse Square. The project proposal will augment the multimodal transportation system and promote mixed-use development, consistent with the goals and policies as articulated in the City's Comprehensive Plan and many of its elements (such as the Tacoma Dome Area Plan, Downtown Element, Transportation Element, and Generalized Land Use Element).

We support, in particular, the co-location of Amtrak Station with the operations and services of Pierce Transit, Greyhound, and Sound Transit's Sounder Commuter, Regional Express, and Tacoma Link Light Rail. Businesses at and around Freighthouse Square will benefit; so will events at the Tacoma Dome, LeMay – America's Car Museum, and various venues in the Greater Downtown area. More importantly, the relocation provides an opportunity to stimulate Transit Orientated Development (TOD).

Although the City supports the project proposal, we have the following significant issues and concerns that must be addressed prior to moving forward with the project pertaining to the following sections of the EA:

Section 3.2.4 Tacoma Amtrak Station Relocation

Issue: Street blockage by Amtrak trains.

Comments: The Coast Starlight passenger train is 1,235 feet long and requires the construction of a platform at the parking lot between East C and East D Streets. The train will stop at the new Freighthouse Square station in the morning and evening. The train will block East C and East D Streets for boarding. Blocking the streets will impact vehicle and pedestrian movements and could impact Dome events. The Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix E) does not detail the length of time for blocking the streets. The EA shall analyze potential impacts and provide mitigation.

See response to
comment 038-1

Issue: Modification of on-street parking and parking lots.

Comments: Surface parking is not the best use of land and is not an option that is acceptable to the City for the Dome District. Structured parking is a viable option outside of the Core of the Dome District but only if included in a mixed-use building complex that is built to the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The final design must be compatible with well established TOD principles. The new Amtrak Station should be planned to grow density in the Dome District and not create less dense, suburban type development. The EA should recognize these planning principles of the City and analyze potential impacts of parking and provide mitigation.

See response to
comment 038-2

Section 4.2.4 Minimization Measures – Noise and Vibration

Issue: Train horns.

Comments: The existing Sound Transit rail crossings have wayside horns installed at East D, East C, South C, South 50th, South 56th, South 60th, and South 74th Streets. However, Sound Transit is currently not operating the wayside horns at East D and East C Streets due to continuous horn sounding during loading at Freighthouse Square. The EA shall review wayside horn operation, establishing quiet zones and installing medians to promote crossing safety and address noise impacts at every rail crossing. Following are Tacoma's crossing locations: East D Street, East C Street, South C Street, Chandler Street, Alaska Street, Wilkeson Street, Pine Street, South 35th Street, South 50th Street, South 56th Street, South 60th Street, South 74th Street, Portland Avenue (grade separated), East G Street (grade separated), Pacific Avenue (grade separated), South 66th Street (grade separated).

See response to
comment 038-3

Section 4.3 Transportation

Issue: Rail Crossing safety.

Comments: All crossings shall meet ADA requirements. The EA must address rail crossing safety and traffic impacts at City streets for all modes of transportation.

See response to
comment 038-4

Issue: Additional rail activity and speed of trains impacting the South 66th Street grade crossing and the East G Street Trestle.

Comments: The EA shall provide for analysis of all structures.

See response to
comment 038-5

Issue: Potential impacts to South 56th Street and South 74th Street is a particular concern. These arterial streets are located in commercial areas with high traffic volumes. Traffic delays on these streets will also impact adjacent arterial streets.

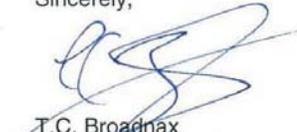
Comments: The EA shall include a detailed traffic analysis and provide mitigation.

See response to
comment 038-6

Lauris C. Mattson, PMP
November 8, 2012
Page Three

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the planning of this important transportation project. We encourage you to continue to ensure that the business community, property owners, governmental agencies, and residents in the affected area are fully engaged in every step of the project. If you have any questions, please contact Chris Larson, Public Works Department, by phone at 253-591-5538 or by e-mail at clarson@cityoftacoma.org.

Sincerely,



T.C. Broadnax
City Manager

cc: Mayor Strickland and Council Members
Richard E. McKinley, Public Works Director
Ricardo Noguera, Community and Economic Development Director

Response to Comment 038-1

As described in Section 4.3.2 of the EA and Appendix F of the EA, the Coast Starlight train would extend beyond the existing station platform and across East C Street and East D Street for approximately 6 minutes. Coast Starlight trains arrive and depart during non-peak periods. These arrivals and departures may coincide with Tacoma Dome events. The temporary blockage of these two streets would result in a decline of LOS to below LOS D during an event at the Tacoma Dome (see page 4-13 of the EA for definition of LOS D). Minimization of operational effects (Section 4.3.4 of the EA) on traffic as a result of the Coast Starlight dwell time at Freighthouse Square, and during a Tacoma Dome event, would include implementation of a detour plan that could include static signs identifying the detour routes, dynamic message signs that identify the detour routes during a train blockage, lane striping and controller modification. With the detour signage in place, LOS would not go below LOS D. During final design, WSDOT will continue modeling and coordination efforts with the City of Tacoma to identify refinements of the suite of minimization measures, as noted above.

Response to Comment 038-2

As described in Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA and the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA), the proposed Freighthouse Square station would provide the same or more parking spaces than are currently available at the Tacoma Amtrak Station. Parking would most likely be located on a parcel near Freighthouse Square (see Section 3.2.4 of the EA) that either has parking available for lease or which can be purchased and developed into a parking lot for exclusive use by Amtrak passengers. In addition to this proposed parking, there would be some available on-street parking near the station (see Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA).

The Tacoma Dome Area Plan was reviewed as part of the Project. As discussed in Section 4.13.3.2 of the EA, the Project is consistent with adopted plans and would implement policies adopted by the City of Tacoma. No policy was found that would cause the Project to be inconsistent with these adopted plans and regulations (see Section 4.13.1 of the EA). Based on this review, the Project is consistent with the comprehensive plan and zoning regulations adopted by the City of Tacoma and is not inconsistent with the Tacoma Dome Area Plan.

WSDOT will continue to work with the City of Tacoma and Sound Transit during final design of the Project.

Response to Comment 038-3

Noise analysis was conducted to evaluate construction and operation effects on noise-sensitive receptors. The noise effects from wayside horns were modeled using standard methods to evaluate the effects of wayside horns at locations near to noise-sensitive receptors. EA section 4.2.2.1 states that horn noise modeling indicates that L_{dn} noise levels of 60 dBA would be experienced at up to 190 feet from the intersection. Noise-sensitive receptors (such as residences) were not found within 190 feet of the crossings listed. Also, there would be no noise effects during common sleeping hours (10 p.m. to 7 a.m.) due to the proposed Amtrak Cascades and Coast Starlight schedule (trains will run after 7 a.m. and until 10 p.m.).

Response to Comment 038-4

Proposed crossing improvements include ADA-accessible route over tracks.

Response to Comment 038-5

The Cultural Resources Report for the Point Defiance Bypass Project notes that the S-Turn Bridge (a.k.a. Freighthouse Square Bridge) was completed in 1909. This is the same as the East G Street trestle bridge. As stated in this Report, "This timber trestle structure has been rebuilt several times over the years,

including a complete refurbishment in the 1960s and the subsequent replacement of all structural members (e.g., stringers and pilings) in the 1990s.” Since replacement of structural components completed in the 1990s, no additional analysis was conducted for the Project. The structures are currently used by Sound Transit and routinely inspected and maintained. To date no structural issues have been identified.

Response to Comment 038-6

Section 4.3.3.3 of the EA summarizes the findings of the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report. This Report (Appendix F of the EA) presents detailed documentation of the traffic analysis. Impacts to levels of service and queue length on South 56th Street and South 74th Street were specifically addressed per the City of Tacoma’s request. Overall, the Levels of Service (LOS) at local intersections that exist now are not predicted to change with the Build Alternative. LOS at South 56th Street and South 74th Street would be same under the Build and No Build Alternative. Signal improvements, which would include installation of more advanced devices to control intersections, are included as part of the Project and would reduce the delay and vehicle queues at improved intersections.

COMMENTS FROM JANICE MCNEAL, NOVEMBER 9, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #039

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Sunday, November 11, 2012 11:53 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Pt. Defiance Bypass project

From: janicemcneal@janicemcneal.com [<mailto:janicemcneal@janicemcneal.com>]
Posted At: Friday, November 09, 2012 12:05 PM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Pt. Defiance Bypass project
Subject: Pt. Defiance Bypass project

To Whom it May Concern:

I am a property owner in Dome District and recently learned of the new site location for the Amtrak train station. I would like to forward my comments and concerns. Our community has not had a chance to hear directly from WSDOT to gain the information useful in contributing to your EA study, but the little we do know, there appears to be some obvious issues that need to be addressed. One suggestion would be to learn more about the area you are considering. There has been an ongoing planning effort in this district and sub-area plan for promoting density and economic growth for some time. The addition of the station would be fully embraced if done with care and concern to optimize mobility and future growth in this valuable TOD.

Below are points of concern that need further examination and consideration.

See response to comment 039-1

1). **Street blockage by Amtrak trains.** You can not have trains sit idle while boarding passengers and block the main street in the district "D" street. There would be a severe negative impact in mobility and commerce with the congestion it would create to cars and pedestrians, especially during LeMay and Dome events.

2). **Street Parking.** We are now in planning with the South Downtown sub area plan which has recognized surface parking is not the best use of land. This district is a TOD, and recognizes this land is scarce. This type of parking solution in the district is not encouraged if you want growth in density to be achieved. Placing structured parking outside the "core" of the district, as long as it has a mixed-use complex is supported.

See response to comment 039-2

3). **Train Horn Noise.** Noise needs to be carefully addressed in this district in order to add the density to this TOD. Apply quiet-zone standards used to avoid continual horn noise.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our community concerns.

See response to comment 039-3

Janice McNeal
V.P.
Dome District Development Group

Response to Comment 039-1

As described in Section 4.3.2 of the EA and Appendix F of the EA, the Coast Starlight train would extend beyond the existing station platform and across East C Street and East D Street for approximately 6 minutes. Coast Starlight trains arrive and depart during non-peak periods. These arrivals and departures may coincide with Tacoma Dome events. The temporary blockage of these two streets would result in a decline of LOS to below LOS D during an event at the Tacoma Dome (see page 4-13 of the EA for definition of LOS D). Minimization of operational effects (Section 4.3.4 of the EA) on traffic as a result of the Coast Starlight dwell time at Freighthouse Square, and during a Tacoma Dome event, would include implementation of a detour plan that could include static signs identifying the detour routes, dynamic message signs that identify the detour routes during a train blockage, lane striping and controller modification. With the detour signage in place, LOS would not go below LOS D. During final design, WSDOT will continue modeling and coordination efforts with the City of Tacoma to identify refinements of the suite of minimization measures, as noted above.

Response to Comment 039-2

As described in Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA and the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA), the proposed Freighthouse Square station would provide the same or more parking spaces than are currently available at the Tacoma Amtrak Station. Parking would be located on a parcel near Freighthouse Square (see Section 3.2.4 of the EA) that either has parking available for lease or purchase by WSDOT and developed into a parking lot for exclusive use by Amtrak passengers. In addition to this proposed parking, there would be some available on-street parking near the station (see Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA).

The Tacoma Dome Area Plan was reviewed as part of the Project. As discussed in Section 4.13.3.2 of the EA, the Project is consistent with adopted plans and would implement policies adopted by the City of Tacoma. No policy was found that would cause the Project to be inconsistent with these adopted plans and regulations (see Section 4.13.1 of the EA). Based on this review, the Project is consistent with the comprehensive plan and zoning regulations adopted by the City of Tacoma and is not inconsistent with the Tacoma Dome Area Plan.

WSDOT will continue to work with the City of Tacoma and Sound Transit during final design of the Project.

Response to Comment 039-3

As noted in EA Section 4.2.3.2, the increased noise levels would be caused by new warning devices at signalized at-grade crossings. Warning devices such as wayside horns must be heard to be effective and therefore volumes cannot be reduced. However, no wayside horns are proposed through Nalley Valley.

In addition, under the proposed Amtrak Cascades and Coast Starlight schedule, there would be no train noise effects during normal sleeping hours (10 p.m. to 7 a.m.).

It should be noted that Quiet Zones are initiated by localities. The process to establish new Quiet Zones can be found on the FRA webpage at <http://www.fra.dot.gov/rpd/freight/1318.shtml>.

Local public authorities may designate or request approval of, quiet zones in which train horns may not be routinely sounded (local public authorities are those that are responsible for traffic control or law enforcement at the highway-rail grade crossing). The details for establishment of quiet zones differ depending on the type of quiet zone to be created (Pre-Rule or New) and the type of safety improvements implemented (if required). In general, the process starts with selection of the crossings to be included in the Quiet Zone. Once selected, the conditions of the crossing are documented. The Quiet Zone Calculator is then used to determine whether the Quiet Zone Risk Index of the proposed Quiet Zone is less than or

equal to the Nationwide Significant Risk Threshold (NSRT). If it is greater than the NSRT, then supplementary or alternative safety measures must be used to reduce that risk to fully compensate for the absence of the train horn or to reduce risk below the NSRT. The analysis above is submitted with an application to FRA Office of Railroad Safety for approval.

COMMENTS FROM BRIAN ZIEGLER, NOVEMBER 9, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #040



Pierce County

Public Works and Utilities

9850 64th Street West
University Place, Washington 98467-1078
(253) 798-4050 Fax (253) 798-4637

Brian J. Ziegler, P.E.
Director

Brian.Ziegler@co.pierce.wa.us

November 9, 2012

U-106340

Larry Mattson
Environmental Manager, Rail Office
Washington State Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 47407
Olympia, WA 98504-7407

Re: Comments on Point Defiance Bypass Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Mattson:

The Pierce County Public Works and Utilities Department has reviewed the Environmental Assessment (EA) document for the Point Defiance Bypass Project which would reroute intercity passenger trains from the Puget Sound rail corridor to the existing rail corridor along the west side of Interstate 5 between Tacoma and Nisqually. In addition to unincorporated areas, our Department serves as the sewer utility provider for the Cities of Lakewood and DuPont. Our Department would like to offer the following comments for your consideration:

- 1) To assist us in assessing any potential impacts to the County's sewer facilities, our Department requests that the EA document include more details about the location of existing and future County sewer facilities in the Cities of Lakewood and DuPont that are located within the half-mile study area. This information is available in County's Unified Sewer Plan (USP), which can be viewed on this web page:

<http://www.co.pierce.wa.us/pc/abtus/ourorg/pwu/sewer/unifiedplan.htm>

See response to
comment 040-1

- 2) Consistent with the mitigation language utilized in Sound Transit's Lakewood-to-Tacoma Commuter Rail environmental document, our Department recommends that the implementation of utility relocation agreements be included as a minimization measure in Section 4.14.4. These agreements should include the verification of utility locations before final design and construction and should require the relocation and protection of County sewer facilities.

See response to comment 040-2

- 3) The references to the planned Sounder service to Lakewood in Section 1.2, Section 3.1, and Section 4.16 should be updated to indicate that this commuter rail service started in October 2012.

See response to
comment 040-3

- 4) The construction schedule for this project may coincide with the 2015 U.S. Open at Chambers Bay Golf Course. The major access routes to Chambers Bay from I-5 include several crossings of the proposed bypass. As part of the traffic control plan that is proposed as a transportation minimization measure, our Department requests that no construction and/or roadway obstructions occur in June of 2015 to avoid impacts to that tournament. Further information about the 2015 U.S. Open can be viewed on this web page:

<http://www.chambersbaygolf.com/chambersbay.asp?id=232&page=7996>

Thank you for your coordination efforts on this environmental review process. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Galizio, Sewer Utility, at (253) 798-2865.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Ziegler, P.E.
Director

See response to
comment 040-4

BJZ:MG
Cors/U106340-MG

cc: Andrew Neiditz, City of Lakewood
David Bugher, City of Lakewood
Dawn Masko, City of DuPont
Hugh Taylor, Council Office
Dennis Hanberg, Planning and Land Services
Tony Tipton, Public Works and Utilities
Kip Julin, Public Works and Utilities
Steve Chanfrau, Public Works and Utilities
Jesse Hamashima, Public Works and Utilities
Shawn Phelps, Public Works and Utilities
File

Response to Comment 040-1

The EA considered the potential effects of the project on existing and future sewer facilities, including those identified in the Pierce County Unified Sewer Plan. The EA identifies potential utility conflicts (i.e., areas where utilities cross under or over the tracks), although the need for relocations, hardening, and deepening has not been finalized. As noted in the EA, locations of potential conflicts are detailed in the Public Services and Utilities Discipline Report, Appendix P of the EA, Exhibits 9 and 10. During final design and permitting, additional coordination with the County and City would occur and address sewer facilities that would be affected by the project.

Response to Comment 040-2

Verification of utilities locations will occur during final design and as noted in Section 4.14.4 of the EA, WSDOT will coordinate with utility owners to determine conflicts and determine a suitable resolution to avoid or minimize disruption.

Response to Comment 040-3

References to the service start date for *Sounder* service was accurate when the EA was published. The correct service start date has been added to the revised EA.

Response to Comment 040-4

WSDOT will coordinate with Pierce County and other local jurisdictions regarding the construction schedule, construction areas, and detour routes during Project development to minimize community disruption including for events such as the US Open. This commitment has been included in the EA and FONSI.

COMMENTS FROM ERIC BECKMAN, NOVEMBER 9, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #041



November 9, 2012

Megan White, PE
Director, Environmental Services Office
Washington State Department of Transportation
WSDOT Rail Office
P.O. Box 47407
Olympia WA 98504-7407

Dear Ms. White:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Environmental Assessment for the Point Defiance Bypass Project. Sound Transit values our longstanding relationship with WSDOT and the collaborative work on this project including representation on the Technical Advisory and Executive Advisory Committees. The Point Defiance Bypass Project will positively benefit the growth of passenger rail service in Washington State while the addition of the Amtrak Cascades service at the Tacoma Dome Station provides another mode to this vibrant multi-modal hub. We look forward to continued collaboration through design, construction and launch of service. The comments offered are intended to help shape a stronger project that meets the needs of all the stakeholders throughout the project.

1. The Environmental Assessment (EA) states that there are residual noise impacts (moderate impacts under FTA criteria) at two locations (equal to 12 receivers) due to warning devices, which now must be considered under the FTA 2006 noise guidance. WSDOT's proposed mitigation consists of using wayside horns as an alternative to using on-train (locomotive) horns, in order to lessen the size of the noise impact area. The intersections with noise impacts (108th SW and Bridgeport Way SW in Lakewood) already have wayside horns installed by Sound Transit as part of the Lakewood to Tacoma Commuter Rail project. As noted in the EA, moderate impacts from the Point Defiance Bypass project remain even with wayside horns. Sound Transit's policy is to mitigate for moderate and severe impacts to noise sensitive receptors, such as residences. WSDOT needs to coordinate with Sound Transit regarding consideration of potential additional mitigation for the remaining moderate impacts.
2. The description of the Build Alternative details additional platform construction in Tacoma between East "D" and East "C" streets to accommodate the Amtrak long-haul Coast Starlight train. This configuration would indicate the train would be blocking those two crossings for the length of time that it dwells at the station. The Coast Starlight dwell time is not detailed in the document but has been reported as 6 minutes or more and occurs twice a day.

Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority • Union Station
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Issaquah Deputy Council President

Richard Conlin
Seattle Councilmember

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

Dave Earling
Edmonds Mayor

Dave Enslow
Sumner Mayor

Paula J. Hammond, P.E.
Washington State Secretary of Transportation

John Marchione
Redmond Mayor

Joe McDermott
King County Councilmember

Mike McGinn
Seattle Mayor

Mary Moss
Lakewood Councilmember

Larry Phillips
King County Councilmember

Paul Roberts
Everett Councilmember

See response to comment 041-1

Peter von Reichbauer
King County Councilmember

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Joni Earl

Megan White
November 9, 2012
Page Two

See response to
comment 041-2

Appendix E the *Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report* does not appear to analyze the impact that this configuration would have on local circulation including pedestrians, vehicles, and bus service.

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3. Two of the key attractions of the Dome District neighborhood are the Tacoma Dome and LeMay Car Museum both which attract thousands of visitors at all times of the day and evening throughout the week. East "D" and East "C" streets are primary entrances to both facilities. Sound Transit prefers a configuration that has the train platform extend to the East of the station and includes any necessary infrastructure improvements to support that within the project.

See response to comment 041-3

4. The EA does not provide any details on potential modifications to the platform at Tacoma Dome Station as these are generally details to be worked out during final design. Changes to the height of the platform built and used by Sounder service will be unacceptable as it will impact our compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act throughout our system. In the event either the Cascades or Coast Starlight service need platforms of differing heights, they will need to be separate from the current Sounder platform.

Sound Transit is supportive of the Cascades High Speed Rail Program and the Point Defiance Bypass project. As this project progresses we look forward to our continued collaboration with WDOT, FRA and all the stakeholders along this corridor.

Sincerely,



Eric Beckman, P.E.
Project Director

See response to
comment 041-4

EC:ab Review and Comment on the Environmental Assessment for the Point Defiance Bypass Project

c: Jodi Mitchell, Project Manager
Lauren Swift, Environmental Planner

Response to Comment 041-1

Noise effects to sensitive receptors are below the FTA noise impact threshold for severe effects and wayside train horn volumes are below the maximum noise level allowed by FRA for train-mounted horns; therefore, noise effects to sensitive receptors would not be significant (see EA Section 4.2.3.2). WSDOT will coordinate with Sound Transit regarding potential minimization for the remaining moderate impacts.

Response to Comment 041-2

As described in Section 4.3.2 of the EA and Appendix F of the EA, the Coast Starlight train would extend beyond the existing station platform and across East C Street and East D Street for approximately 6 minutes. Coast Starlight trains arrive and depart during non-peak periods. These arrivals and departures may coincide with Tacoma Dome events. The temporary blockage of these two streets would result in a decline of LOS to below LOS D during an event at the Tacoma Dome (see page 4-13 of the EA for definition of LOS D). Minimization of operational effects (Section 4.3.4 of the EA) on traffic as a result of the Coast Starlight dwell time at Freighthouse Square, and during a Tacoma Dome event, would include implementation of a detour plan that could include static signs identifying the detour routes, dynamic message signs that identify the detour routes during a train blockage, lane striping and controller modification. With the detour signage in place, LOS would not go below LOS D. During final design, WSDOT will continue modeling and coordination efforts with the City of Tacoma to identify refinements of the suite of minimization measures, as noted above.

Response to Comment 041-3

FRA and WSDOT worked with City of Tacoma and Sound Transit and others through the technical advisory groups which included discussions regarding the relocation of the Amtrak station to Freighthouse Square. Section 4.13.3.2 of the EA includes an analysis of the Project's consistency with local plans.

WSDOT identified that the west end of the Freighthouse Square building, beginning immediately west of the Sound Transit atrium, presented the least challenge with respect to the elevation differences between the existing floor and the platform. This configuration would make passenger movements, including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and baggage movements, easier. The west end also allows for upgrades to the station entrance.

WSDOT will work with the local agencies and the community to ensure that the Project remains consistent with local area plans during final design and construction.

As described in Section 4.3.2 of the EA and Appendix F of the EA, the Coast Starlight train would extend beyond the existing station platform and across East C Street and East D Street for approximately 6 minutes. Coast Starlight trains arrive and depart during non-peak periods. These arrivals and departures may coincide with Tacoma Dome events. The temporary blockage of these two streets would result in a decline of LOS to below LOS D during an event at the Tacoma Dome (see page 4-13 of the EA for definition of LOS D). Minimization of operational effects (Section 4.3.4 of the EA) on traffic as a result of the Coast Starlight dwell time at Freighthouse Square, and during a Tacoma Dome event, would include implementation of a detour plan that could include static signs identifying the detour routes, dynamic message signs that identify the detour routes during a train blockage, lane striping and controller modification. With the detour signage in place, LOS would not go below LOS D. During final design, WSDOT will continue modeling and coordination efforts with the City of Tacoma to identify refinements of the suite of minimization measures, as noted above.

Response to Comment 041-4

As stated in Section 3.2.4 of the EA, the reconstructed portion of the existing Freighthouse Square building (to create a passenger ticketing and waiting area, and baggage handling space) would be ADA compliant. The platform at the Freighthouse Square Station will be constructed to meet the needs of the Cascades, Coast Starlight, and *Sounder* trains. WSDOT will continue to coordinate with Amtrak and FRA to ensure that ADA requirements are met throughout final design and construction of the Project.

COMMENTS FROM DON WICKSTROM, NOVEMBER 9, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #042



Douglas G. Richardson
Mayor

Don Anderson
Deputy Mayor

Michael D. Brandstetter
Councilmember

Mary Moss
Councilmember

Jason Whalen
Councilmember

See response to
comment 042-1

Paul Bocchi

See response to
comment 042-2

See response to
comment 042-3

Andrew E. Neiditz
City Manager

See response to
comment 042-4

November 9, 2012

Washington State Department of Transportation
Rail and Marine Office
P.O. Box 47407
Olympia, WA 98504-7407
Email: rail@wsdot.wa.gov

The City of Lakewood Public Works Department has reviewed the Point Defiance Bypass Project Environmental Assessment (EA) and submits the following comments:

1. While safety improvements at crossings are proposed as part of the Build Alternative, the introduction as passenger trains at speeds of 79 mph is significantly different from the minimal number of slow moving freight trains that utilize this route today. At-grade crossing improvements do not appear to be proportionate to the increase in potential conflicts and should be further analyzed through the EA.
2. If freight traffic has the potential to increase along the Project route, it should be evaluated as part of the EA process. Otherwise, are there assurances in place that would keep freight traffic from increasing?
3. Previous comments regarding the Transportation Discipline Report requested information on the assumptions made in the traffic modeling. The summary output was provided but the City requests the input assumptions in order to concur, and prior to a final environmental document.
4. The summary of effects listed in the Build Alternative under the Transportation Resource Area (see table on Page ix) and throughout the EA are the result of improvements that will be made by the City of Lakewood or others. These improvements should be included in the No Build Alternative and include signal timing and the work associated with the Madigan Access Improvement Project (including a coordinated signal controller). Both projects are included in the 6 year TIP and should be considered Current and Reasonable Foreseeable Projects. The Transportation Discipline Report should be modified to reflect this and the EA should be amended accordingly.

6000 Main Street SW • Lakewood, WA 98499-5027 • (253) 589-2489 • Fax: (253) 589-3774
www.cityoflakewood.us

5. Interstate 5 often backs up in the vicinity of Berkeley Street and North Thorne Lane. Additionally, vehicles are routinely caught on the railroad tracks due to an inability to move downstream. While safety improvements can be made at the crossings, there may be situations in which there is no place for backed up cars to go. In the event that drivers proceed to the crossing but are unable to proceed through the crossing due to backups, trains will not have sufficient time to stop. This is similar to a case in Tukwila, Washington (Owen v. Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad Company) and should be further analyzed as part of the EA.

See response to comment 042-5

6. A Sound Transit train was stuck on the track between Freighthouse Square and M Street in Tacoma on November 8, 2012 due to the grade on a 1.4 mile section of track that is 2.85 percent. While this has been attributed to faulty equipment, there is concern that passenger trains could lose traction or have insufficient braking capacity. This should be further analyzed as part of the EA.

See response to comment 042-6

7. TIGER III improvements should be included in the EA and analyzed. This funding is secured and should be considered as a foreseeable project.

8. North Thorne Lane interchange improvements should be considered in the EA.

See response to comment 042-7

Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contract me at (253) 983-7795.

Sincerely,



Don Wickstrom, PE
Public Works Director/City Engineer

Response to Comment 042-1

WSDOT and FRA propose crossing improvements as part of the project (signals, signage) to minimize potential safety effects of increased passenger rail. WSDOT and FRA applied standard methods for analyzing rail crossing safety, and determined that the Project would result in generally lower accident rates than the No Build Alternative (see Section 4.14.3.2 of the EA and the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report, Appendix F of the EA). The crossing improvements are designed to provide for vehicle and pedestrian safety at crossings. In addition, the horns and crossing gates will be controlled in a manner that provides for the clearing of the crossing well in advance of the train approach.

Response to Comment 042-2

Decisions to add Freight traffic is independent of the Sound Transit and Amtrak service along the Bypass route. Sound Transit, as the owner of the majority of the corridor, cannot prohibit freight use but does set the terms and conditions for any freight use of their infrastructure. The operations of the freight will continue to be directed by Tacoma Rail and BNSF.

There would be no change to the operation of freight trains on the Point Defiance Bypass route under the Build Alternative (EA Section 3.2.5). Tacoma Rail and BNSF would continue to operate as many as two trains per day on some portions of the Point Defiance Bypass route to as few as two trains per week on other portions of the Point Defiance Bypass route. BNSF would continue to operate intermittent freight trains on the Point Defiance Bypass route to serve military transportation needs at JBLM. The Project would not enable freight traffic to move beyond the East "D" Street and Tacoma Avenue Overpass due to existing grade restrictions and Sound Transit running rights. The operations of the freight (including freight speeds) will continue to be directed by Tacoma Rail and BNSF.

Response to Comment 042-3

Chapter 2 of Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA) documents the assumptions used in the traffic model. These assumptions were also provided during the Technical Advisory Group meetings to solicit input in to the assumption development and review the results of the VISSIM modeling. Additional input and coordination with the City of Lakewood will be sought during final design, including the design of signal timing, permitting, and construction.

Local agency concerns about traffic and transportation were heard by WSDOT, and were made a core part of the Technical Advisory Group's meetings between January and October 2011. Transportation topics discussed in detail included traffic assumptions, baseline traffic counts, modeling outputs, and initial findings.

Response to Comment 042-4

FRA and WSDOT examined Puget Sound Regional Council's current program, which included the Madigan Access Improvement Project and the funded improvement projects in the state transportation improvement program. The projects noted in the comment are not yet complete but are reasonably foreseeable future projects that are considered as part of the cumulative impacts analysis in Section 4.16.2, Cumulative Effects, of the EA. These projects are also noted in Exhibit 120 of the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA).

Response to Comment 042-5

Improved signage and signals would minimize safety risks associated with at-grade crossings and increased passenger rail traffic on the Point Defiance Bypass route. Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA) presents details on proposed crossing improvements that would minimize safety risk at at-grade crossings. Measures include:

- Signage: “Do Not Stop On Tracks” signs will be installed at the crossings.
- Wayside horns: A wayside horn system is an automated warning system that is installed at a rail/roadway at-grade crossing to warn people of an approaching train.
- Median barriers: Median barriers will be installed in the middle of the roadway approaching the railroad tracks to discourage vehicles from driving around the railroad crossing gates.
- Sidewalks: Sidewalks provide an ADA-accessible route over the tracks. Additionally, tactile strips provided with the improvements alert the sight-impaired to changes ahead.
- Pre-signals: Pre-signals control vehicle traffic approaching a railroad crossing and minimize queuing across the at-grade railroad crossing.

In addition, as stated in Section 4.14.4 of the EA, WSDOT would continue the *Operation Lifesaver* program training on track safety for community members and continue to work with communities to ensure there are safe routes that avoid the illegal use of the railroad right-of-way for pedestrians and non-vehicular travel.

Response to Comment 042-6

Operational problems, such as the one cited in the comment, are not expected to occur as trains proposed for use on the tracks would be designed and maintained to operate at the grades along the Point Defiance Bypass route. As the rail operators, Amtrak and Sound Transit are responsible for remedying those types of problems as quickly as possible should they occur.

Response to Comment 042-7

The Interstate 5 – Joint Base Lewis-McCord Area Congestion Management Project and SR 510 to SR 512, a TIGER III improvement, has been added to Table 17 in the revised EA. The potential effects associated with these projects are intended to improve traffic flow and relieve I-5 congestion primarily through traffic management strategies and operational enhancements. Improvements to local roads and key connections within JBLM will not contribute to a cumulative effect on resources potentially affected by the Point Defiance Bypass. The conclusions described in Chapter 4.16.2 of the EA, Cumulative Effects, remain valid.

Comments by Gordon and Anita Russ, Tacoma, WA:

043

See response to
comment 043-1

MR. RUSS: At present, they can only put a single track through the tunnel. Now, if they would lower the tunnel, they could put a second track through there, and they wouldn't have to move away from the waterfront, and the Amtrak station on Puyallup Avenue would still stay where it is. The way they have talked about it, running the train through Freighthouse, and that would interfere with everything, but everything would be with the old -- with the regular Puyallup Avenue.

And there's no question about it; it would be a big job to lower the rig so they can put both trains through the tunnel, the way it's set, and this is an engineering problem that they possibly -- no way they could do that. The dirt in there, they can move all that out and put the trains through the tunnel. They would be able to do that if they lowered the grade.

MRS. RUSS: We both agreed, when we took the trip on the Sounder from Lakewood, that it's so dumpy, and the tourists would get a very bad impression of Tacoma along there. Some of the backyards are just so dumpy, I would hate to have anybody I knew take the train along there and see what it looks like. It's so

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beautiful along the water.

See response to
comment 043-2

Anything else, Gordon?

MR. RUSS: If they do -- if they eliminate the tunnel, there's all kinds of overpasses. They're going to have to construct those. All of those things will have to be built, and down the road, how long is it going to take them to do that? The Pacific Avenue crossing is a good example of how important it is to take that. They've already done that, and now there is some question that they're going to double-track those trains from Nisqually to Freighthouse. That seems like that's an impossibility.

All those overcrossings of all those intersections right off the -- you have to take that into consideration. I don't know how many overpasses there will be from Nisqually to Freighthouse, and all of that would have to be taken care of.

I have a son in Baltimore, and I was in hopes that he would get something in writing on this, and he could express his views better than I can. I just have lost a lot of this.

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Comments by Lloyd H. Flem, Olympia, WA:

See response to
comment 044-1

044

MR. FLEM: Originally I had mixed feelings, because some of the most beautiful pieces of railroad scenery in the Pacific Northwest is around the waterfront, you know, and trading this for the less glamorous, urban industrial landscape is not a real good trade-off, in terms of aesthetics; okay?

However, in terms of practical movement of people, I certainly favor the project and what it does represent. I just wish there was one train a day that still went around, but there won't be.

The two concerns that people have addressed that I would like to discuss in favor of the project are, number one: "This will lower our property values." No, it won't. Any time passenger trains who are using the same track as the Sounder, where they've ever been instituted in the American West in the last 20 years, the property values have increased dramatically, and we're talking very conservative cities, like Salt Lake City, Phoenix, and Dallas.

The people opposed this to begin with, you know, passenger trains. Once the trains went through, you know: "Why don't they stop in front of my store? Why don't they stop in front of my house? We want more

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1 of these," because the property values, the utility
2 brought by the passenger trains really increased the
3 value of the property, and it almost inevitably makes it
4 a more attractive environment in and around the train
5 stations and train stops and tracks. You can see this
6 in Seattle right now in the Rainier Valley, improvements
7 where the station stops are. If one travels to
8 Vancouver, B.C., the increase in property values
9 surrounding the stations in Vancouver, B.C., are
10 absolutely stunning, they're dramatic. This would
11 eventually occur.

12 Now, the Amtrak Cascades won't be stopping
13 here in the near future, maybe eventually, yes, but
14 they'll be using the same track as the Sounder, and the
15 Sounders will do that. So the passenger trains, in
16 general, will improve the property values.

See response to
comment 044-2

17 The second point I want to make is safety.
18 People have said: "Oh, these trains will go fast and
19 kill our children." Do your children play on I-5? No.
20 You don't let them. They're not allowed to. And if
21 they get out onto the I-5, the chances of accident or
22 death are pretty high. The kids shouldn't be playing on
23 railroad tracks. It's a matter of educating the kids or
24 adults or others to respect the railroad tracks, just as
25 they respect I-5. It is not a place where people play.

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1 And in terms of adults, you do not cross when the guards
2 are down. You respect the trains, you obey the trains.

3 And they don't hold up traffic either. The
4 Amtrak Cascades will take about seven to ten seconds to
5 cross a rail crossing. Most people should not be in
6 such a hurry. They can't wait seven to ten seconds.
7 And the same with the Sounder trains.

8 Now, 110-car freight train hauling coal or
9 grain takes a long time. That's a different animal.
10 But they'll be traveling along the coast. These will be
11 passenger trains, overwhelmingly passenger trains.
12 They're quick. And people have to use the same
13 reasonable and prudent behaviors they use in reference
14 to I-5 or other highways they would to a railroad track.

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Comments by Roche Scheuerman, Tacoma, WA

045

20 MR. SCHEUERMAN: I've been considering the
21 station platforms at Freighthouse Square. The platforms
22 that I've seen or heard are all too short to accommodate
23 the Coast Starlight, the train running between
24 Los Angeles and Seattle. I think a platform on the
25 south side of the track at Freighthouse Square at the

See response to
comment 045-1

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1 Amtrak's height, starting at East "D" Street and going
2 east over East "G" Street to the -- well, along the
3 viaduct would be long enough to accommodate Coast
4 Starlight and still be close enough to Freighthouse
5 Square to have a ticket office in the building. People
6 could cross over Sound Transit's track and the Tacoma
7 eastern track and then walk down the platform to
8 where -- the coaches and sleepers in the train.

9 The East "D" Street sidewalk would also
10 provide a passageway for baggage carts going to the
11 train. The cost would be the cost of the platform to
12 East "G" Street, and then the East "G" Street bridge
13 would need to be modified, widened, to accommodate the
14 extension of the platform over East "G" Street and along
15 the wooden viaduct.

16 I think this is a feasible solution. It's not
17 very costly, and I think it's one that should be
18 considered for the station itself. Thank you.

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DIXIE CATTELL & ASSOCIATES, COURT REPORTERS & VIDEOCONFERENCING

Response to Comment 043-1

The Shoreline Alternative noted in Section 3.0 of the EA and detailed in the Point Defiance Shoreline Alternatives Analysis (Appendix A of the EA) included the addition of one tunnel approximately 1 mile-long with a diameter of 39 feet to the south of the existing Nelson Bennett Tunnel. The evaluation determined that boring a new tunnel of this size underneath a neighborhood would present many structural risks due to the unsuitability of the soil, the condition of the structures, and buildings above the proposed tunnel alignment. The new tunnel also would require the acquisition of additional right-of-way and increase Project cost.

This alternative would also require approximately 6.6 miles of retaining walls, ranging in height from 20-35 feet. The increased cost and potential environmental impacts coupled with the additional right-of-way acquisition, large amounts of excavation (approximately 1.7 million cubic yards), 100 acres of clearing and grubbing required caused FRA and WSDOT to eliminate it from further evaluation in the EA.

As described in EA Section 3.0 and further detailed in Appendix A (Alternatives Analysis), FRA and WSDOT considered geotechnical, environmental, social and other factors into the potential use of the Puget Sound route. The preliminary findings of the Alternative Analysis indicate that needed improvements to the route would be prohibitively expensive and would result in significant environmental impacts. The possibility of lowering the Nelson Bennett Tunnel floor was not evaluated in detail. However, the Nelson Bennett Tunnel represents only one piece of a complex (and high-risk) geotechnical puzzle. In addition, it is likely that lowering the Nelson Bennett Tunnel would not meet the freight and passenger rail needs of the corridor, as it is not likely that the tunnel floor could be lowered without taking both freight and passenger rail out of service during construction. Moreover, the geometric requirements to bring the rail back to grade while meeting the grade requirements for freight and passenger rail would result in an extremely long tunnel likely resulting in significant environmental effects (e.g., property acquisitions, visual impacts from retaining walls, permanent effects to wetlands).

The Point Defiance Shoreline Alternative Technical Memorandum presents geotechnical and environmental challenges south of the tunnel, if it were to be improved to serve both the proposed Amtrak Cascades service and existing freight traffic. As discussed in that Memorandum, the Shoreline Alternative would likely result in significant environmental impacts and greater construction costs would be necessary to reduce or eliminate the route's geotechnical challenges.

Response to Comment 043-2

As discussed in Section 4.9.3.2 of the EA, the Point Defiance Bypass route would have a different character and the view of Puget Sound in the area mentioned in the comments would no longer be available. However, the objective of the proposed project is to provide faster, more frequent, and more reliable passenger rail service in the corridor and therefore many issues including, but not exclusively, aesthetic issues were considered.

Response to Comment 044-1

Improved signage and signals would minimize safety risks associated with at-grade crossings and increased passenger rail traffic on the Point Defiance Bypass route. Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA) presents details on proposed crossing improvements that would minimize safety risk at at-grade crossings. Measures include:

- Signage: "Do Not Stop On Tracks" signs will be installed at the crossings.

- Wayside horns: A wayside horn system is an automated warning system that is installed at a rail/roadway at-grade crossing to warn people of an approaching train.
- Median barriers: Median barriers will be installed in the middle of the roadway approaching the railroad tracks to discourage vehicles from driving around the railroad crossing gates.
- Sidewalks: Sidewalks provide an ADA-accessible route over the tracks. Additionally, tactile strips provided with the improvements alert the sight-impaired to changes ahead.
- Pre-signals: Pre-signals control vehicle traffic approaching a railroad crossing and minimize queuing across the at-grade railroad crossing.

Response to Comment 044-2

As discussed in the Section 4.12 of the EA and the Socioeconomic and Environmental Justice Discipline Report (Appendix N of the EA), the Project is not anticipated to affect property values, given that the rail corridor already exists, is used for freight and commuter service, and measures to minimize or eliminate noise and vibration will be implemented by the Project.

Response to Comments from Roche Schererman, October 24, 2012

Commenter ID #045

Response to Comment 045-1

Coast Starlight trains, which are 1,234 feet long, require a longer platform than both Sounder and Cascades trains, which are 700 feet long. However, the proposed platform as described in Section 3.2.4 of the EA will be of sufficient length to support Coast Starlight, Cascades, and *Sounder* trains.

COMMENTS FROM KENNETH BOUNCHER, KEN MAUERMANN, BARBARA BILLINGSLEY, MATT ROYER, BOB BREGENT, DAVID BUGHER, PENNY COFFEY, JOAN COOLEY, LEE CHASE, SHARON TAYLOR, BILL PALMANTEER, OCTOBER 25, 2012 - COMMENTER ID #046, 045, 046, 047, 048, 049, 050, 051, 052, 053, 054, 055, 056

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POINT DEFIANCE BYPASS OPEN HOUSE AND PUBLIC HEARING

October 25, 2012
DuPont, Washington

DIXIE CATTELL & ASSOCIATES
COURT REPORTERS & VIDEOCONFERENCING
(360) 352-2506 *** (800) 888-9714

1 BE IT REMEMBERED that on Thursday, October 25,
2 2012, at 4:00 p.m., at 1700 Civic Center Drive, DuPont,
3 Washington, before REBECCA S. LINDAUER, Certified Court
4 Reporter, in and for the State of Washington, the following
5 proceedings were had, to wit:
6

046 7 MR. KENNETH BOUCHER: I'm a retired Union Pacific
8 Railroad conductor of 41 years, just retired. And my -- I
9 have seen a lot of information in the newspapers and stuff
10 about people complaining about high speed rail.

11 And my thoughts on that, from sitting inside locomotive
12 cabs watching traffic, is that slower trains cause people to
13 take more chances crossing in front of them. High speed
14 trains, people will wait and let the train go. A faster
15 train clears the crossing much, you know, quicker than a
16 slow train.

17 And I guess the point I want to make is, I'm in favor
18 of the 79 miles an hour through all these little towns.
19 And -- because people will wait for a high speed train,
20 whereas they might think I can beat it and drive right
21 across in front of them and get clipped. That's about it.

See response to
comment 046-1

047 22 MR. KEN MAUERMANN: I live in Thurston County.
23 And we're looking beyond the scope that's being considered
24 here today and possibly -- for the possible extension of
25 Sounder service on into Thurston County over existing rail

1 lines past the DuPont proposed terminal -- terminus across
2 the Nisqually River to a junction called St. Clare where
3 Sounder trains would be -- would leave BNSF mainline and go
4 on to an existing branch line into the eastern end of Lacey
5 where there's -- looks to be a fair amount of land available
for a park and ride.

See response to
comment 047-1

7 Having watched Interstate 5 for the last 24 years of
8 commuting to Tacoma and watching it turn into what I used to
9 dread when I traveled on 405, I think this would make sense.
10 The bulk of the population in Thurston County is not
11 necessarily Olympia. It's based in Lacey, and I think the
12 park and ride at that location and the extension of that
13 service would benefit everybody.

048 14 MS. BILLINGSLEY: From the looks of the picture,
15 they're more likely to kill at least 50 percent more people
16 going this alternate route they want, the bypass route,
17 because this side, there's water on one side and houses on
18 the other. This side, there's houses and families on both
19 sides. So the chances are, they're going to kill more
people with this new idea.

See response to
comment 048-1

21 And the other thing is, they're going to have to reduce
22 our property taxes because it's going to devalue our
23 property.

24 And I guess that's all the comments I have to make on
that right now. It's a bad idea. I think it's a stupid

See response to
comment 048-2

1 idea.

2 MR. BILL PALMANTEER: They are not talking
3 about --

4 MS. BARBARA BILLINGSLEY: They are not --

5 MR. BILL PALMANTEER: I've asked the people that
6 are in charge of this thing, supposedly. They can't tell me
7 how many people died in Puyallup last year alone by the
8 hands of Amtrak. "How many?"

9 "I don't know."

10 "Who owns Amtrak?"

11 "I don't know. I don't know."

12 Who do these people work for? They work for
13 Rockefeller. Rockefeller owns Amtrak. We're just building
14 him another fortune. That's all we're doing.

15 MS. BARBARA BILLINGSLEY: And we're going to be
16 taxed on it. I don't approve of it at all. I think it's a
17 bad idea, but it will probably go through anyway. That's
18 it. I'll get up and make a comment. I'm glad you got the
19 information down.

20 MR. BILL PALMANTEER: They're just going to do it,
21 Barbara. This is just more of a show.

22 MS. BARBARA BILLINGSLEY: I know. I know.

23 MR. BILL PALMANTEER: It's what they always do.

24 MS. MARTINEZ: I'm going to go ahead and get us
25 started. Great.

1 Welcome to the open house and public hearing for the
2 Point Defiance Bypass Project. I hope you guys all had an
3 opportunity to review the environmental assessment or look
4 at the project information that was displayed earlier today.
5 We are now going to transition into the hearing portion of
6 tonight's event.

7 So before we go there, I want to first do a couple
8 things. I want to introduce you to a couple of the key
9 project members. I'm going to have one of them give you a
10 quick overview of where we're at, why we're here tonight,
11 and where we're at in the environmental process for the
12 project. Then I'm going to go over how we're going to run
13 tonight's public testimony, so kind of go through the ground
14 rules and that sort of thing.

15 So with that, let me first introduce you to the project
16 team members here on my left, our panel. David Smelser is
17 the program manager for the Cascades High Speed Rail
18 Program. Frank Davidson is the project manager for the
19 Point Defiance Bypass Project, and Larry Mattson is the
20 environmental manager for the project.

21 My name is Christina Martinez. I'm the environmental
22 compliance manager for the Washington State Department of
23 Transportation. My role as the compliance manager is really
24 to make sure that projects follow the environmental process,
25 and the environmental assessment and public involvement is

1 part of that process. You know, my role here really is to
2 make sure that we're doing our due diligence.

3 So with that, let me kick it off to Dave Smelser for a
4 couple words and then Larry Mattson to give you a quick
5 project overview.

6 MR. SMELSER: Good evening. I just wanted to say
7 welcome. I appreciate you all taking your time to come out
8 and learn about the project tonight, and I'm very interested
9 to hear what you have to say about the environmental
10 assessment and just wanted to thank you for being here.

11 MR. MATTSON: I'm really excited to be here
12 tonight. We spent the last two and a half years working on
13 this project and putting this environmental assessment
14 together. We're very eager to get it out, get it in your
15 hands, have you take a look at it, and get back to us with
16 your thoughts and comments on it.

17 Over the last two and a half years, we've had over
18 20 public outreach events. And during those events, we've
19 heard your concerns about traffic and possible effects on
20 your commute to and from work, and traffic is one of the
21 areas that we studied most intensely as part of this
22 project.

23 We listened to your concerns about safety, and safety
24 is another area that affects transportation. It affects
25 neighborhoods, so it's interwoven throughout this document

1 as well.

2 We're heard your concerns about the effects of noise
3 and vibration, and the results of that analysis are in this
4 document as well. So the reason I keep holding it up is,
5 this is the focus of tonight's event, is the environmental
6 assessment. And then on the CD here -- we have lots of
7 copies of the CD's, if you don't have them -- there's 1,500
8 pages of supporting documentation on this CD. So the best
9 way to look at this is the environmental assessment is a
10 summary of what's on the compact disc. And we want your
11 thoughts and comments on the whole package. That's why
12 we're here tonight.

13 Real quickly, we sent 27,000 mailers out to announce
14 the availability of the document. It's online at our Web
15 site to announce the public hearings as well, and we've
16 distributed fliers in four different languages in an effort
17 to get as many people as we can to help them be aware of the
18 project and the fact that the EA is out -- environmental
19 assessment, excuse me.

20 The review period for this document started
21 October 8th. It will run through Friday, November 9th.
22 Tonight you can comment. You can give testimony at the
23 podium here. You can go to our project Web site. There's
24 an e-mail address there. You can send an e-mail. You can
25 send a letter to WSDOT. Our address is on our project page

1 as well and we do have a comment form. Comment forms are
2 available as well. Lots of avenues, methods, ways for you
3 to leave comments.

4 So what's going to happen after November 9th? We are
5 here. The Federal Railroad Administration is here with us
6 in spirit. They are our federal lead agency, and this is
7 their document. And so when we are done, after
8 November 9th, we will sit down with the Federal Railroad
9 Administration, look at all of your comments, and analyze
10 them to see what you have to say, and then the Federal
11 Railroad Administration will issue a decision.

12 They can do one of three things. They can issue what's
13 called a finding of no significant impact or they can do a
14 finding of no significant impact with an amended
15 environmental assessment. Or the third option is a finding
16 of significance where they direct us to prepare an
17 environmental impact statement. So those are the three
18 paths the Federal Railroad can go down, the Federal Railroad
19 Administration.

20 And then once the Federal Railroad Administration is
21 done with their decision, we will issue our State
22 Environmental Policy Act decision shortly thereafter.

23 That's it in a nutshell. I hope I didn't put you to
24 sleep.

25 MS. MARTINEZ: Thanks, Larry.

1 Now, let me just kind of go over the plan for running
2 tonight's hearing. A lot of you, maybe, have probably been
3 through these types of things before, but let me give you a
4 refresher.

5 We are going to hear testimony tonight from those who
6 signed up to provide it. So if you signed your name up
7 earlier and you indicated that you wanted to provide verbal
8 testimony, we're going to go in the order of those that
9 signed up on the sign-in sheet. So if you haven't yet
10 signed up and you want to provide it, please talk to the
11 folks out here. They'll get me your names.

12 The panel is here to listen to your testimony. These
13 are the folks that have been working on the project every
14 day, and they want to hear your input, as it can influence
15 the outcome of the project.

16 So we're going to hear testimony in the order of the
17 names listed on the sign-in sheet. What's going to happen
18 is, I'm going to call on the first name, and that person
19 will come to the podium. I will also call on the next two
20 in line and you can go ahead -- the next two in line can
21 have a seat up here, just so you know what order we're in.

22 We will have the speaker come to the podium, hand me
23 their name card. That name card's important because I'm
24 going to give to it Becky here, our court recorder, and she
25 will need to know how to spell your name. That's why that

1 name card is important.

2 Each speaker will state their name and they will have
3 three minutes to present their verbal testimony. You'll
4 know how that three minutes work is because there's a red,
5 yellow, and green light box up here. Unfortunately, the
6 green light is broken. Green light usually gives you the
7 one minute warning, but I'm going to start the timer right
8 when you start speaking. Keep in mind the green light is
9 broken, but the yellow light will come on when you have
10 30 seconds left to speak, and the red light will come on
11 when your three minutes is over. So you will need to stop
12 speaking and leave the podium by the time that red light
13 comes on. I'll be here to kind of help move things along.

14 The court recorder here, Becky, will be recording your
15 testimony. I'm going to be your moderator and timekeeper.
16 I will require that you leave the podium after speaking for
17 three minutes.

18 In order to move through our list of speakers
19 efficiently, I'm going ask that everybody in the audience
20 refrain from shouting or clapping or anything like that
21 because it really does cut into the time that the speakers
22 have to present. So if you would refrain from doing that, I
23 would really appreciate it.

24 And with that, if -- does anybody have any questions
25 about how we're running it?

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Carol Lee?

MS. ROALKVAM: Could you mention the other ways to comment between now and November 9th?

MS. MARTINEZ: Yes. This is just one of your ways to comment. You know, not everybody wants to get up and provide verbal testimony. We're also accepting comments, written comments, via snail mail or via e-mail. That information on how to comment is listed in this environmental assessment, probably within the first couple pages, and that assessment -- that hard copy document is also available on the CD's, so you can take a look at that.

Is it also listed on our project Web site?

MR. MATTSON: Yes. It's on that first page, the contact information.

MS. MARTINEZ: You can provide written comments via snail mail, e-mail. We also have a comment sheet at the front table, if you wanted to write your comments down and provide them, drop them off with us today.

Tonight we will not be able to respond to your comments, really. These guys here are here to listen to your comments and consider them as we're moving along with the project as we're trying to figure out what our next steps are and what the project decisions will be. So it's not really an opportunity to hear back from them, providing responses, but they will be listening to your comments,

1 taking notes, and considering those as they go back to their
2 offices.

3 Any other questions? Any other thoughts?

4 So with that, let me call on the first speaker. Let's
5 see. The first person on our list is Matt Roger, I believe
6 is the name.

7 MR. ROYER: Royer.

8 MS. MARTINEZ: Royer. After that, we'll have
9 Robert Bregent. I apologize if I'm butchering last names.
10 And after that, we'll have D. Bugher.

049 11 MR. ROYER: Thank you. I'm sure most of my
12 neighbors will talk about the safety and noise concerns.

13 I really just want to focus on, I guess, some of the
14 transit stops. From what I understand, there's no
15 additional transit stops between Lacey and Tacoma as part of
16 this particular project. Although I am glad to hear that
17 they are planning on upgrading the rail system to be able to
18 handle that additional traffic and that expands some of the
19 potential future opportunities that Sound Transit and other
20 transportation on the rail can go off and use, moving
21 forward.

22 I would like to encourage, as part of this environmental
23 impact, that we reevaluate whether or not there is an
24 opportunity for another stop either in DuPont or the general
Fort Lewis area, based on the population that we have here

See response to
comment 049-1

1 and the congestion that it might offload off of I-5,
2 specifically in this particular area. Although that may not
3 be a direct impact of Amtrak Cascade, based on that
4 particular opportunity to put a new stop in here and bring
5 in that Sound Transit down here, it might provide an
6 opportunity for that.

7 So, once again, you know, I do have safety and noise
8 concerns, but I'm sure the rest of my neighbors will
9 contribute to that.

10 Thank you.

11 MS. MARTINEZ: Okay. I would like to call up
12 Robert Bregent.

050 13 MR. BREGENT: My name is Bob Bregent. I'm from
14 Olympia, Washington. Surprisingly, most of you have your
15 jobs here today because of what we started back in 1987. In
16 1987, I was writing op ed articles for the *P.I.* about rail
17 transit and how important it would be.

18 I got a call from George Barner, who is our county
19 commissioner, and he said, we need a train station. We
20 formed an ad hoc committee. The state of Washington said we
21 don't have any money for trains. Nobody rides the trains
22 anymore. We're not going to give you any money. So we
23 built it, and we're going to celebrate our 20th anniversary
24 this year.

25 We have now formed an ad hoc committee again with

1 Commissioner Barner, who is now port commissioner, and the
2 focus of our committee is to bring Sound Transit to Olympia.
3 That's why this project is important to us. Because when
4 this project is completed, the next logical stop will be the
5 state capital.

6 And amazingly enough, ad hoc committees, even though
7 we're not paid and we're just volunteers, we can accomplish
8 a lot. That's why this project is so important to us.
9 We're very concerned about what's being done.

10 I've been retired for some years. I'm a semi-retired
11 locomotive engineer. I still run trains, and the only
12 concern that I would have is I notice that you have wayside
13 horns at your crossings here. I know that the FRA does have
14 exemptions so horns don't have to be blown at all, given
15 that the crossings have proper protection. So this is
16 something you may want to consider in your future planning
17 on the Point Defiance Line so the horns could be eliminated
18 completely.

See response to
comment 050-1

19 But we support you. Thurston County supports you.
20 Anything we can do to help your project, we'll be glad to do
21 it.

22 Thank you.

23 MS. MARTINEZ: Thank you.

24 Next we're going to hear from D. Bugher and in cue
we'll have Barbara Billingsley and Penny Coffey.

See response to
comment 050-2

051 1

MR. BUGHER: Good evening. My name is David Bugher. I work as the assistant city manager for the City of Lakewood, Washington. I'm also here in my capacity as an environmental official for the City of Lakewood. The City of Lakewood has reviewed the environmental assessment and accompanying appendices. And we will be submitting written comments to Department of Transportation prior to the November 9th deadline.

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However, this evening, very briefly, the City of Lakewood would make note to this group that we have concerns with the following issues. The first is the transparency of the environmental assessment process, and that comment is directed at the Federal Railroad Administration and not Department of Transportation.

Other issues include purpose and need of the environmental assessment, transportation issues, project cost, visual quality, cultural resources, socioeconomic and environmental justice concerns, public safety, and mitigation monitoring.

The City of Lakewood concludes that this EA should be modified and that mitigation measures be incorporated into the document. And then, without those mitigation measures, we find that the EA is insufficient. Either that, or the City -- our Department of Transportation should also include an environmental impact statement.

See response to
comment 051-1

1 Furthermore, detailed comments will follow that outline
2 the City's position when correspondence is submitted to
3 Mr. Mattson prior to November 9th.

4 Thank you.

5 MS. MARTINEZ: Let's hear from Barbara
6 Billingsley.

048
continued

7 MS. BILLINGSLEY: I just wanted to say I totally
8 disagree with the train going through our neighborhood
9 because it's going to kill a lot more people there. One
10 side here, you have the water, and on here, you have
11 neighborhoods on both sides. There's a lot of people. You
12 have to drive through their neighborhoods, and you're going
13 to kill a lot of people this way.

14 And you're going to pollute their neighborhoods. We
15 can smell pollution already when the train stops, and it
16 doesn't turn off its motor. It just keeps going, for like
17 an hour or so right in one spot, and you can smell it. You
18 know it's polluting already. Maybe you can't smell it from
19 your houses, but we can smell it from ours. And I can hear
20 the train at eleven o'clock at night, three o'clock in the
21 morning. Already the train horn is going off, you know.
22 It's disrupting our neighborhoods.

See response to
comment 048-3

See response to
comment 048-4

23 It's devaluing my property already. It's a bad idea.
24 You should have just left it along the waterfront and
25 improve those tracks and then the people that ride the train

1 can have a view when going down the tracks.

2 It's a bad idea to go through the neighborhoods. It's
3 going to affect a lot of people.

See response to
comment 048-5

4 And the taxes, you know, they're going to have to be
5 lowered or something on property taxes if you take it
through because our houses aren't worth as much. What is

7 it? Twelve times a day at 80 miles an hour you're going to
8 put them through? Try it in your backyard, you know. If
9 someone gets hit -- if it was your child that got hit, your
10 grandma that got hit trying to save their child, you're not
11 going to get used to that.

12 I remember last meeting you said, you'll get used to
13 it. Well, we're not going to get used to it. It's a bad
14 idea.

15 Thank you.

16 MS. MARTINEZ: Next we're going to hear from Penny
17 Coffey and then in the cue Joan Cooley and Lee Chase.

052 18 MS. COFFEY: Penny Coffey. And for the record, I
19 am a city counsel member, but I'm speaking as a citizen.

See response to
comment 052-1

20 As you've heard, a lot of citizens have talked about
21 the safety issues. I feel that there should be at least a
22 chain-link fence built between both Exit 118 and 119 to
mitigate that.

24 Also, are you aware of all the additional traffic that
25 the new gate at Stelicoom-DuPont Road and Wharf Road from

See response to
comment 052-2

1 JBLM is going to be dumped onto Steilacoom-DuPont Road,
2 which will, in turn, use Exit 119? In their traffic study,
3 they didn't have to take into account the level of service
4 D for traffic at Barksdale, Exit 119. But this is going to
impact that whole situation.

6 And right now, one night when I was trying to come to a
7 council meeting, I took Exit 119. There was a freight train
8 stopped, and I sat there for ten minutes. I finally got out
9 of my car to ask the guy behind me to back up so I could go
10 around and get back on the freeway to take Exit 118 to
11 access DuPont. So you are going to have some real impacts
12 on the community.

13 Thank you.

14 MS. MARTINEZ: Okay. Joan Cooley, please.

053 15 MS. COOLEY: Thank you very much.

16 And I've spoken before at the meetings. I would like
17 to say today is my 79th birthday and --

18 (Clapping.)

19 MS. COOLEY: No. Please no applause.

20 And I can be home -- I could be out to dinner with
21 friends or home with my feet up having a lovely glass of
22 wine, but I chose to come here and speak against this
23 project.

24 I feel so very strongly. I only -- I live two blocks
25 from the tracks in a very lovely home that I've lived in for

See response to
comment 053-1

2 46 years. I have all of the normal, average concerns that
3 everybody has addressed: safety. I'm very concerned about
4 noise pollution. I'm very concerned about the devaluation
of my property that I hope to live in for a few more years.

See response to
comment 053-2

6 And I'm just -- I'm concerned about also the cross --
7 our cross-city traffic. We are talking about saving ten
8 minutes for Amtrak to zip through the -- or the train to zip
through, as opposed to the Steilacoom route, as I call it.

9 How many ten minutes will it cost the citizens of
10 Lakewood and the visitors to Lakewood to cross, to wait, and
11 then being blocked up back to back to back through those
12 signals trying to make it through while a train passes?

See response to
comment 053-3

14 When you count those ten minutes, it far supersedes the mere
ten minutes. I find that disingenuous.

15 I also feel like the decisions -- you know, I think the
16 City of Lakewood, as well as all communicating --
17 communities -- I appreciate, Dave, what you had to say
18 today. It's not just flying through the prairie. It's
19 flying through a community. And it is our community that
it's flying through and it is dividing. And I'm very
21 concerned about what happens to one's community at large
22 when we divide it with a train. I'm very in favor of train
23 travel. I just do not believe that this is the appropriate
24 place for Amtrak to go.

See response to
comment 053-4

25 Should have been done -- you know, I was born in

1 Seattle in 1933. And I know I've watched the city -- my
2 grandfather was a construction person when the freeway went
3 through downtown Seattle.

4 I said, "Why are they doing it?"

5 "It's political."

6 I feel that anything having to do with this train --
7 we're going through the Department of Transportation in our
8 state of Washington. We have our city. We have our federal
9 government, which is further removed from us. The farther
10 away the decisions are made from the communities that it is
11 impacting, the easier it is for them to just say it is a
12 done deal. It is my understanding and it is my observation,
13 watching politics and watching projects all these years,
14 that it's a done deal.

15 MS. MARTINEZ: Thank you.

16 Let's hear from Lee Chase, and then I don't have
17 anybody else on the sign-in sheet, unless there's anybody
18 else that would like to sign in. Please do.

054 19 MR. CHASE: My name is Lee Chase. I live here in
20 DuPont about three blocks away from the intersection of
21 Wilmington Drive and Barksdale Avenue. My concern gets down
22 to a wonderful suggestion that was made earlier tonight
23 about automatic train horns or train whistles, whatever they
24 call it, the proper name. My concern is in the -- in your
25 environmental statement, at least as it was shared before

1 the DuPont City Council, was that there be no impact or no
2 noticeable impact in the evening hours.

3 My question or my comment is: In the evening hours,
4 that's the time that Tacoma Rail uses and makes up trains
5 here in their switch yard. As I understand it, your
6 automatic system does not differentiate between who owns the
7 engine that comes through. So you're going to have a horn,
8 an automatic horn, that starts prior to them getting into
9 the intersection. You're going to have it continue to run
10 while it stops, and you're going to have it continue to run
11 afterwards. I already hear the horn. I already am sure
12 that I will hear your automatic horn.

See response to
comment 054-1

13 I think, at least from my standpoint, that it is an
14 environmental impact to my house and my sleep. If it isn't,
15 I'll be glad to give any one of the three of you an evening
16 in my house, and you can see whether you get woken or not.
17 It's much easier when the horn goes off three times and the
18 train doesn't make any more noise. However, being I'm for,
19 as Ms. Coffey -- Mrs. Coffey said for ten minutes at a
20 whack, I'm sure I will be awakened. I'm sure you will be
21 too. My concern is there needs to be something done with
22 it.

23 I also appreciate your comment about the safety at that
24 intersection, Exit 119. That whole area, I have some
25 concerns. That's basically the only way I have to get out

1 of town, short of driving miles in another direction.

2 So thank you.

3 MS. MARTINEZ: Okay. Thank you.

4 That is all I have on the list signed up to speak. Is
5 there anybody else that would like to speak at this point?

6 So I would ask you to come up and since I don't have a
7 card for you, if you could state your name and spell your
8 name for us and go from there.

055 9 MS. TAYLOR: Sharon Taylor, S-h-a-r-o-n
10 T-a-y-l-o-r. I live in Tillicum. One thing that nobody has
11 brought up tonight, between Exit 122 and 123, Berkeley and
12 Thorne Lane and Union runs parallel to the railroad tracks.

13 There's a strip of land between Union, railroad tracks, and
14 I-5. What happens to that strip of land? You've got
15 property there that you're trying to sell that you can't
16 sell because, oh, guess what? Amtrak is coming. Now we're
stuck.

See response to
comment 055-1

18 People have talked about devalue of, you know, land, as
19 we are living in it in Nyanza, Lakewood, DuPont, wherever,
20 but you're trying to sell something, and you need to get rid
21 of it because you can't do anything with it. You can't
22 build on it -- well, we can now because we have sewers --
23 what do you do with the land? You can't because Amtrak is
24 coming through. One thing -- you know, there's a lot of
25 people that live on there, a lot of kids that are back

1 there.

2 Again, the safety, going back and forth, Woodbrook and
3 Tillicum, there's a lot of foot traffic, kids going back and
4 forth to school, busses, adults, handicapped, that kind of
5 thing. You know, you can only do so much as far as educate
 everybody. But, you know, the strip of land between Thorne

See response to
comment 055-2

7 Lane and Berkeley there is something that needs to be looked
8 at as far you guys buying up or, you know, reducing the
9 property taxes, exactly.

10 That was all I had to say. Thank you.

11 MS. MARTINEZ: Anybody else? Please come up and
12 state your name and spell it for us.

056 13 MR. PALMANTEER: Bill Palmanteer's my name.

14 All you have to do to really find out the truth about
15 what's -- what they're selling here, Google this -- anybody
16 that has a computer, you can Google it -- Amtrak kills to
17 find out just in Puyallup alone. How many people were
18 killed in Puyallup? I asked these people that. Simple
19 question. Nobody could tell me.

20 So just for the heck of it, I said, "Well, I think it
21 was 17."

22 She says, "No. It was 19."

23 So somebody was lying, and it wasn't me. All you got
24 to do is Google it: Amtrak kills. Very simple to remember.
25 Google that and find out the facts, the truth about what

1 these fast trains are really doing and who owns it. Who
2 owns Amtrak? Take a guess. But all you got to do is Google
3 it and find out the facts.

4 There was 19 people two years ago in Puyallup died at
5 the hands of Amtrak. They don't talk about that. They're
6 not going to tell you about that, the child that wandered
7 out on the tracks and now they're dead. I can tell you what
8 it's like to lose a son, not to Amtrak, but just to lose
9 somebody. And all I see is the train running out of control
10 at an out-of-control speed, and you can't tell me that they
can stop that train quick enough.

See response to
comment 056-1

12 MS. BILLINGSLEY: To save a life.

13 MR. PALMANTEER: And it's just another step toward
14 you know what.

15 Thank you.

16 MS. MARTINEZ: Thank you.

17 MR. PALMANTEER: Amtrak kills. Google it.

18 MS. MARTINEZ: Anybody else? Okay. We have this
19 room until 6:30, I believe. The project team members here
20 are going to stick around, in case you would like to talk to
21 them some more. We also have our court recorder here,
22 Becky, that will be here until six o'clock. If you would
23 like to provide her with testimony for the record, she can
24 record that for you.

25 And since we don't have anybody else on our sign-in

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sheet or to speak, that concludes tonight's hearing.
Thank you everybody for participating tonight and for
your comments.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, REBECCA S. LINDAUER, a Certified Court Reporter in and for the State of Washington, residing at Lacey, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing interview of JAYSEPH TYLER WELLS was taken before me and completed on the 19th day of October, 2012, and thereafter transcribed by me by means of computer-aided transcription; that the interview is a full, true, and complete transcript of the testimony of said witness;

That I am not a relative, employee, attorney, or counsel of any party to this action or relative or employee of any such attorney or counsel, and I am not financially interested in the said action or the outcome thereof;

That I am herewith securely sealing the interview of JAYSEPH TYLER WELLS and promptly mailing the same to MR. SAX RODGERS.

IN WITNESS HEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 31st day of October, 2012.



Rebecca S. Lindauer, CSR#2402
Certified Court Reporter, in and for the
State of Washington, residing at Lacey.

Response to Comment 046-1

Thank you for your comment.

Response to Comments from Ken Mauermann, October 25, 2012**Response to Comment 047-1**

The extension of Sounder service into Thurston County is outside the scope of this EA and not within the control of FRA or WSDOT. In addition, there are procedural hurdles if Sound Transit sought to extend the Sounder service. For example, prior to extending service into Thurston County, Sound Transit would need to extend its service area and taxing authority to include Thurston County since currently only King, Pierce and Snohomish counties are included in Sound Transit jurisdiction. If Sounder decides to implement additional service as suggested, it would need to lead a separate environmental review.

Response to Comments from Barbara Billingsley, October 25, 2012**Response to Comment 048-1**

Analysis of crossing accidents indicates that the rate of accidents would actually be lower for the Build Alternative (3.2 accidents for every million train crossings) than for the No Build Alternative (3.6 accidents per million train crossings). The Build Alternative includes safety improvements for crossings on the Point Defiance Bypass Route. Additional detail is in the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report, Appendix F of the EA, Chapters 2, 4, and 5.

Response to Comment 048-2

Amtrak trains would pass through neighborhoods along the rail corridor and would not sit idle in one spot. Amtrak trains would dwell for approximately 6 to 10 minutes at the Freighthouse Square Station. As described in Section 4.2.1 of the EA, the existing air quality (including odors associated with emissions) in the study area would not be affected by Amtrak trains.

Response to Comment 048-3

Amtrak trains would pass through neighborhoods along the rail corridor and would not sit idle in one spot. Amtrak trains would dwell for approximately 6 minutes at the Freighthouse Square Station. As described in Section 4.2.1 of the EA, the existing air quality (including odors associated with emissions) in the study area would not be adversely affected by Amtrak trains.

Response to Comment 048-4

Section 4.2.3.2 of the EA states that no noise effects as a result of the project are anticipated during common sleeping hours (10 p.m. to 7 a.m.) due to the proposed Amtrak Cascades and Coast Starlight schedule (trains will run after 7 a.m. and until 10 p.m). Noises related to existing yard operations for Tacoma Rail and Sound Transit were considered as part of the baseline noise analysis for the project.

Tacoma Rail owns and operates the line referred to in the comment, and operations on the line are an existing condition. While Tacoma Rail's operations on this line are outside the scope of this EA, WSDOT will continue working with Tacoma Rail on improving rail operations in the Barksdale-vicinity.

Response to Comment 048-5

As discussed in the Section 4.12 of the EA and the Socioeconomic and Environmental Justice Discipline Report (Appendix N of the EA), the Project is not anticipated to affect property values, given that the rail

corridor already exists, is used for freight and commuter service, and measures to minimize or eliminate noise and vibration will be implemented by the Project.

Response to Comments from Matt Royer, October 25, 2012

Commenter ID #049

Response to Comment 049-1

As stated in Section 3.0 of the EA, additional alternatives suggested during the public involvement process included adding a Cascades station within the Lakewood or DuPont city limits. However, the additional stops would not be consistent with the purpose and need of the Project to provide more frequent and reliable intercity passenger rail service along the PNWRC between Tacoma and Nisqually and would not meet WSDOT's performance standards. Additional intercity passenger rail stops in Lakewood or DuPont would reduce the speed of the intercity passenger rail and would not decrease travel time along the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor. Therefore, no additional stops were evaluated or proposed for this Project.

The proposed Freighthouse Square site is positioned to act as a regional transportation center serving the surrounding communities including Dupont, Lakewood, and Tacoma, allowing shorter connections between Amtrak passenger rail and other transit services provided at the Tacoma Dome Station. This reduction in connection time would improve passenger connections and convenience for passengers connecting between Amtrak, *Sounder*, Tacoma Link light rail, and bus transit (Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA).

Response to Comments from Bob Bregent, October 25, 2012

Commenter ID #050

Response to Comment 050-1

As noted in EA Section 4.2.3.2, the increased noise levels would be caused by new warning devices at signalized at-grade crossings. Warning devices such as wayside horns must be heard to be effective and therefore volumes cannot be reduced. However, no wayside horns are proposed through Nalley Valley.

In addition, under the proposed Amtrak Cascades and Coast Starlight schedule, there would be no train noise effects during normal sleeping hours (10 p.m. to 7 a.m.).

It should be noted that Quiet Zones are initiated by localities. The process to establish new Quiet Zones can be found on the FRA webpage at <http://www.fra.dot.gov/rpd/freight/1318.shtml>.

Local public authorities may designate or request approval of, quiet zones in which train horns may not be routinely sounded (local public authorities are those that are responsible for traffic control or law enforcement at the highway-rail grade crossing). The details for establishment of quiet zones differ depending on the type of quiet zone to be created (Pre-Rule or New) and the type of safety improvements implemented (if required). In general, the process starts with selection of the crossings to be included in the Quiet Zone. Once selected, the conditions of the crossing are documented. The Quiet Zone Calculator is then used to determine whether the Quiet Zone Risk Index of the proposed Quiet Zone is less than or equal to the Nationwide Significant Risk Threshold (NSRT). If it is greater than the NSRT, then supplementary or alternative safety measures must be used to reduce that risk to fully compensate for the absence of the train horn or to reduce risk below the NSRT. The analysis above is submitted with an application to FRA Office of Railroad Safety for approval.

Response to Comment 050-2

Thank you for your comment.

Response to Comment 051-1

The EA contains the appropriate environmental commitments and design features to minimize or avoid the potential environmental effects of the Project. Those commitments are included in Section 8.0 of FRA's Finding of No Significant Impact.

Response to Comments from Penny Coffey, October 25, 2012**Response to Comment 052-1**

Noise barrier placement is not feasible because openings in the walls would be needed for roadway crossings. Noise barriers could also create vehicular sight-distance hazards (see page 55, Noise and Vibration Discipline Report, Appendix E of the EA). Section 4.2.3.2, Noise and Vibration, of the EA notes that noise effects to sensitive receptors would not be significant and no mitigation is required.

Fencing locations and type will be determined during final design in collaboration with Sound Transit. The fencing and barriers currently in place are adequate and sufficient for the currently planned level of service of Sound Transit. If it appears that additional fencing and/or barriers are needed to meet WSDOT's Cascades level of service, WSDOT would evaluate, install, and maintain additional barriers.

Response to Comment 052-2

Chapter 4.16.2 of the EA, Cumulative Effects, includes a list of current and reasonably foreseeable future transportation related projects. In addition, Page 4-69 explains that FRA and WSDOT considered the prior studies related to Joint Base Lewis McCord and the projects outlined in the Grow the Army Final EIS and other decision documents. This specific project was not included in Table 17 in the EA under known local and regional roadway improvements. This project has been added to Table 17 in the EA and does not change the analysis or conclusions described in the EA.

Traffic studies conducted for the Point Defiance Bypass Project were informed by the Technical Advisory Group (which City of DuPont participated in). The potential for a new JBLM access control point at Wharf Road was mentioned by the City of DuPont during the October 2011 facilitated review of the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report. The JBLM project was not included in the traffic analysis because at the time, it was considered speculative and JBLM/Department of Defense had not issued a notice of intent or other formal notice to stakeholders that an EA was being prepared. Subsequent qualitative analysis of the Wharf Road access control point (ACP) EA indicates that this ACP is located off the Steilacoom-DuPont Road into the Lewis North portion of JBLM. As part of Appendix C of the JBLM Lewis North Access Control Facility Traffic Study (prepared by Black & Veatch dated September 7, 2011), the redistribution of vehicles was determined by an Origin Destination Analysis for the roadway network as a result of the new ACP at Steilacoom-DuPont Road. Based on this analysis, an additional 135 vehicles will take the southbound I-5 off-ramp at Barksdale and an additional 129 vehicles will take the northbound I-5 off-ramp at Barksdale to use the new ACP. In total, 264 additional vehicles will divert to the Barksdale interchange in order to access the new ACP. Ultimately, according to analyses made as part of the JBLM EA for the new ACP, channelization lanes would be added at the DuPont-Steilacoom and Barksdale Avenue intersections, which would result in overall intersection operations of LOS C. Coupled with the Point Defiance Bypass project and the improvements proposed at Barksdale Avenue as part of the project, significant effects would not occur at this location. Nonetheless, WSDOT and FRA would continue to work with the City of DuPont and JBLM to evaluate the coordination of intersection improvements at this location as part of the final design effort, and as part of the larger planning studies being conducted for I-5 interchanges by WSDOT.

Response to Comment 053-1

As noted in EA Section 4.2.3.2, the increased noise levels would be caused by new warning devices at signalized at-grade crossings. Warning devices such as wayside horns must be heard to be effective and therefore volumes cannot be reduced; however the noise effects from their use would be short duration and localized.

Response to Comment 053-2

As discussed in the Section 4.12 of the EA and the Socioeconomic and Environmental Justice Discipline Report (Appendix N of the EA), the Project is not anticipated to affect property values, given that the rail corridor already exists, is used for freight and commuter service, and measures to minimize or eliminate noise and vibration will be implemented by the Project.

Response to Comment 053-3

As stated in Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA, 14 additional passenger train trips per day are proposed for the Point Defiance Bypass route. Passenger trains are substantially shorter and travel faster than freight trains. Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA states that “road closure time for a train crossing would be similar to crossing closures for *Sounder* trains (approximately one minute or less).” With proposed signal improvements, overall traffic operations are not anticipated to be significantly affected when compared to the existing condition.

Response to Comment 053-4

When compared to the No Build Alternative, the Project does not split or isolate areas, generate new development, or separate neighborhoods from services. The existing conditions, such as geographic, land use, and transportation features, would all continue to contribute to the sense of isolation and division in neighborhoods. The operation of the Project may increase residents’ sense of division during train passbys; however this disruption would be very short in duration (i.e., 12 minutes per day) (see Section 4.12 of the EA and the Socioeconomic and Environmental Justice Discipline Report (Appendix N of the EA) and Section 4.16). The benefit the EA identifies is associated with improvements at several grade crossings that will aid the traffic flow through the community. FRA and WSDOT assessment complies with the federal executive orders, and is similar to what has been applied elsewhere in the region.

Response to Comment 054-1

Section 4.2.3.2 of the EA states that no noise effects as a result of the project are anticipated during common sleeping hours (10 p.m. to 7 a.m.) due to the proposed Amtrak Cascades and Coast Starlight schedule (trains will run after 7 a.m. and until 10 p.m.). Noises related to existing yard operations for Tacoma Rail and Sound Transit were considered as part of the baseline noise analysis for the project.

Tacoma Rail owns and operates the line referred to in the comment, and operations on the line are an existing condition. While Tacoma Rail’s operations on this line are outside the scope of this EA, WSDOT will continue working with Tacoma Rail on improving rail operations in the Barksdale-vicinity.

Response to Comment 055-1

The use of the Point Defiance Bypass route by Amtrak would not preclude the use or sale of adjacent land.

Response to Comment 055-2

Proposed signal and signage improvements described in the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA) would provide practicable measures to reduce safety risks associated with crossings. Furthermore, as state in Section 4.14.4 of the EA, FRA and WSDOT would continue the *Operation Lifesaver* program training on track safety for community members and continue to work with communities to ensure there are safe routes that avoid the illegal use of the railroad right-of-way for pedestrians and non-vehicular travel.

Response to Comment 056-1

Proposed signal improvements and rail operations planning as detailed in the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA) would reduce risks associated with at-grade crossings. A Safety and Security Plan is being developed by WSDOT and will be finalized prior to the Cascades becoming operational on the Point Defiance Bypass route.

COMMENTS FROM MATTHEW RUDOLF, NOVEMBER 9, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #057

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Tuesday, November 13, 2012 8:28 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Comments on Tacoma Dome district Amtrak project

From: Matt Rudolf [<mailto:Matt@summitcapital.com>]
Posted At: Friday, November 09, 2012 6:23 PM
Posted To: Rail
Conversation: Comments on Tacoma Dome district Amtrak project
Subject: Comments on Tacoma Dome district Amtrak project

I am a property owner in Dome District; and recently learned of the new site location for the Amtrak train station. I have the following comments and concerns.

Our community has not had a chance to hear directly from WSDOT to gain the information useful in contributing to your EA study. And what little I do know, there appears to be some obvious issues that need to be addressed. One suggestion would be to learn more about the area you are considering. There has been an ongoing planning effort in this district and sub-area plan for promoting density and economic growth for some time, yet I am unsure if this group has been consulted. I agree that the addition of the station could be fully embraced -- if it is done with care and concern to optimize mobility and future growth in this valuable TOD.

Below are some of my specific points of concern:

1). **Street blockage by Amtrak trains.** You can not have trains sit idle while boarding passengers and block the main street in the district "D" street. There would be a severe negative impact in mobility and commerce with the congestion it would create to cars and pedestrians, especially during LeMay and Dome events.

[See response to comment 057-1](#)

2). **Street Parking.** We are now in planning with the South Downtown sub area plan which has recognized surface parking is not the best use of land. This district is a TOD, and recognizes this land is scarce. This type of parking solution in the district is not encouraged if you want growth in density to be achieved. Placing structured parking outside the "core" of the district, as long as it has a mixed-use complex is supported.

[See response to comment 057-2](#)

3). **Train Horn Noise.** Noise needs to be carefully addressed in this district in order to add the density to this TOD. Apply quiet-zone standards used to avoid continual horn noise.

[See response to comment 057-3](#)

Thank you for the opportunity to share our community concerns.

Matthew Rudolf
Property Owner



Response to Comment 057-1

As described in Section 4.3.2 of the EA and Appendix F of the EA, the Coast Starlight train would extend beyond the existing station platform and across East C Street and East D Street for approximately 6 minutes. Coast Starlight trains arrive and depart during non-peak periods. These arrivals and departures may coincide with Tacoma Dome events. The temporary blockage of these two streets would result in a decline of LOS to below LOS D during an event at the Tacoma Dome (see page 4-13 of the EA for definition of LOS D). Minimization of operational effects (Section 4.3.4 of the EA) on traffic as a result of the Coast Starlight dwell time at Freighthouse Square, and during a Tacoma Dome event, would include implementation of a detour plan that could include static signs identifying the detour routes, dynamic message signs that identify the detour routes during a train blockage, lane striping and controller modification. With the detour signage in place, LOS would not go below LOS D. During final design, WSDOT will continue modeling and coordination efforts with the City of Tacoma to identify refinements of the suite of minimization measures, as noted above.

Response to Comment 057-2

As described in Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA and the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA), the proposed Freighthouse Square station would provide the same or more parking spaces than are currently available at the Tacoma Amtrak Station. Parking would be located on a parcel near Freighthouse Square (see Section 3.2.4 of the EA) that either has parking available for lease or purchase by WSDOT and developed into a parking lot for exclusive use by Amtrak passengers. In addition to this proposed parking, there would be some available on-street parking near the station (see Section 4.3.3.2 of the EA).

The Tacoma Dome Area Plan was reviewed as part of the Project. As discussed in Section 4.13.3.2 of the EA, the Project is consistent with adopted plans and would implement policies adopted by the City of Tacoma. No policy was found that would cause the Project to be inconsistent with these adopted plans and regulations (see Section 4.13.1 of the EA). Based on this review, the Project is consistent with the comprehensive plan and zoning regulations adopted by the City of Tacoma and is not inconsistent with the Tacoma Dome Area Plan.

WSDOT will continue to work with the City of Tacoma and Sound Transit during final design of the Project.

Response to Comment 057-3

As noted in EA Section 4.2.3.2, the increased noise levels would be caused by new warning devices at signalized at-grade crossings. Warning devices such as wayside horns must be heard to be effective and therefore volumes cannot be reduced. However, no wayside horns are proposed through Nalley Valley.

In addition, under the proposed Amtrak Cascades and Coast Starlight schedule, there would be no train noise effects during normal sleeping hours (10 p.m. to 7 a.m.).

It should be noted that Quiet Zones are initiated by localities. The process to establish new Quiet Zones can be found on the FRA webpage at <http://www.fra.dot.gov/rpd/freight/1318.shtml>.

Local public authorities may designate or request approval of, quiet zones in which train horns may not be routinely sounded (local public authorities are those that are responsible for traffic control or law enforcement at the highway-rail grade crossing). The details for establishment of quiet zones differ depending on the type of quiet zone to be created (Pre-Rule or New) and the type of safety improvements implemented (if required). In general, the process starts with selection of the crossings to be included in the Quiet Zone. Once selected, the conditions of the crossing are documented. The Quiet Zone Calculator is then used to determine whether the Quiet Zone Risk Index of the proposed Quiet Zone is less than or

equal to the Nationwide Significant Risk Threshold (NSRT). If it is greater than the NSRT, then supplementary or alternative safety measures must be used to reduce that risk to fully compensate for the absence of the train horn or to reduce risk below the NSRT. The analysis above is submitted with an application to FRA Office of Railroad Safety for approval.



November 9, 2012

Mr. Larry Matson
Environmental Manager, Point Defiance Bypass Project
Washington State Department of Transportation
PO Box 47407
Olympia, Washington 98504-7407

Dear Mr. Matson:

See
response to
comment
058-1

The City of DuPont has reviewed the Environmental Assessment (EA) document for the proposed Point Defiance Bypass Project, received on October 8, 2012. The City appreciates the opportunity to participate and provide comments to the project team during development of the environmental document. Following our review, however, we feel that there are several concerns which were raised during this process that have either not been fully incorporated or have not been adequately addressed in the EA as published. The City offers the following comments for your consideration:

General Project Impacts

As proposed, the Bypass Project would result in rerouting of high-speed passenger trains (Amtrak Cascades and Coast Starlight) from the current route along Puget Sound to an existing rail line along the west side of I-5 through the cities of Tacoma, Lakewood, and DuPont. This existing rail line currently has limited use, with approximately 2 freight rail movements per day travelling at 5-10 miles per hour. With the rerouting of passenger trains, this rail corridor will experience the addition of 12 to 14 high speed passenger trains travelling at speeds of up to 79 miles per hour through our cities. While it is our understanding that the number of freight trains is not expected to increase after completion of the project, there is uncertainty as to whether increases in freight rail also at higher speeds will occur in the future.

See
response to
comment
058-2

Consistent with previous comments, the city feels the use of the rail corridor for Amtrak operations will have likely have significant impacts on traffic flows in and around the communities within the project area. While the project proposal includes identifying improvements to crossings and elements described as avoidance and minimization measures, the City feels that impacts should be mitigated, versus minimized.

Land Use and Property Impacts

See
response to
comment
058-3

The Point Defiance Rail Bypass Project parallels I-5 through DuPont and has a grade-crossing at the Exit 119 interchange area. There are existing commercial and residential buildings adjacent and near the railroad right-of-way within the project area which are likely to be impacted by Amtrak trains traveling at high speeds in close proximity to this development. As part of identifying the extent of these impacts, noise and vibration influences on adjacent development areas were included in the environmental review.

Previous comments have been provided requesting that information pertaining to public facilities and services adjacent to the project corridor be reviewed and updated to reflect existing developed conditions. These corrections have not been made in the EA as published. More specifically, the depiction of Public and Social Services Facility Locations shown on page 4-58 (Panel 9) reflects inaccurate location for City Hall and also omits other facilities such as dental offices and hotel facilities located within ½ mile of the project corridor. These facilities are also not reflected in the description of facilities and services within the study area as provided on page 4-49 of the EA. Because this information has not been corrected, it is unclear whether there are additional project impacts which should be addressed in the document relative to various aspects of the crossing at Barksdale (noise and vibration impacts, traffic, etc.). At a minimum,

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the facilities and services exhibit (Panel 9) should be corrected, the analysis of impacts revisited, and the environmental document amended accordingly. Additional safety and noise minimization measures, such as fencing or barriers, should also be considered in this review to separate rail and adjacent uses.

Transportation and Mobility

See response to comment 058-4

See response to comment 058-5

Prior comments/concerns provided to the project team with respect to the traffic signal operations and project traffic volumes used in the analysis do not appear to have been fully addressed in the EA, however, the documents do indicate that the further review and coordination for the future traffic signal operation is intended to be addressed during the final design phase. It will be important that the traffic modeling is reviewed using the latest traffic volumes and patterns and that any noted differences in peak hours are considered in the final design phase for the operational improvements to the signal.

See response to comment 058-6

Future traffic volume projections were noted in the EA as being consistent with prior work, although these volumes do not appear to have taken into account several large projects within DuPont nor does it appear that the new JBLM access gate proposed at Wharf Road has been considered in the current analysis. Recent information provided by JBLM pertaining to this new gate indicates that the Barksdale/I-5 ramps would be impacted by an additional 410 trips in the AM peak hour and 613 trips in the PM peak hour, a significant increase. These additional trips would also pass through the Barksdale Avenue/DuPont-Steilacoom Road intersection. As noted, the analyses provided for the EA may not reflect the future operating conditions since the volumes appear to be considerably lower than those expected over the next 20 years. It is important that these and other planned projects such as the installation of ramp metering at interchanges are considered in cumulative impacts of the project and in the future signal design that has yet to occur, as noted above. The EA summarizes information based on the average LOS showing little change, although this is somewhat misleading – as the driver may see substantially more delay depending on the time needed for system recovery after a crossing (clearing the queue of vehicles).

See response to comment 058-7

While the EA does identify other area projects that were considered in the transportation impact analysis, only the summary information for traffic model outputs near the at-grade crossings is provided. It remains unclear what assumptions for volumes and distributions of traffic flows from these projects was introduced into the VISSIM traffic modeling to generate the summary outputs provided in the documents. The City has previously requested more detailed information on traffic volumes and specific assumptions that were used in the traffic modeling to analyze queue lengths, delays, and levels of service for the intersections near the at-grade crossings. It is requested that this information be provided prior to finalizing the environmental documents to more fully assess the adequacy of the LOS determinations summarized in the report relative to cumulative and project impacts on transportation under the build and no build conditions.

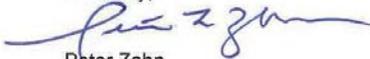
Other General Comments

See response to comment 058-8

Some of the primary public concerns we have continued to hear include the following: are the proposed improvements to at-grade crossings adequate to mitigate the substantial increases in rail usage and travelling speeds and the related traffic impacts; does the project appropriately balance mitigation of impacts along the corridor with the projected benefits the project seeks to provide for a limited number of users; will commuter rail stops further south be added; why not separate grade and elevate stops? As part of the efforts to address these concerns, we recommend that opportunities for separation of rail and road operations at existing at-grade crossings be pursued to limit project impacts to the rail corridor.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this environmental review process. Please feel free to contact me at (253) 912-5380 or via e-mail at pzahn@ci.dupont.wa.us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Peter Zahn
Public Works Director

Cc: Dawn Masko - City Administrator
Tamara Nack, P.E. – Gray & Osborne, Inc.; Geri Reinart, P.E.

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Response to Comment 058-1

Decisions to add Freight traffic is independent of the Sound Transit and Amtrak service along the Bypass route. Sound Transit, as the owner of the majority of the corridor, cannot prohibit freight use but does set the terms and conditions for any freight use of their infrastructure. The operations of the freight will continue to be directed by Tacoma Rail and BNSF.

There would be no change to the operation of freight trains on the Point Defiance Bypass route under the Build Alternative (EA Section 3.2.5). Tacoma Rail and BNSF would continue to operate as many as two trains per day on some portions of the Point Defiance Bypass route to as few as two trains per week on other portions of the Point Defiance Bypass route. BNSF would continue to operate intermittent freight trains on the Point Defiance Bypass route to serve military transportation needs at JBLM. The Project would not enable freight traffic to move beyond the East "D" Street and Tacoma Avenue Overpass due to existing grade restrictions and Sound Transit running rights. The operations of the freight (including freight speeds) will continue to be directed by Tacoma Rail and BNSF.

Response to Comment 058-2

Overall, traffic effects of the Proposed Build Alternative would be minimized by proposed signal improvements and would not be substantially different from conditions under the No Build Alternative. Details of anticipated traffic effects of the Build and No Build Alternative are presented in detail in the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA). Appropriate measures to further minimize identified impacts are described in Section 4.3.4 of the EA.

Response to Comment 058-3

The Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA) documents the general assumptions, methods, and results of the traffic analysis. This information was shared with local stakeholders during the Technical Advisory Group meetings to solicit input on assumptions and methods, and review the results. During the final design and the associated permit process, additional coordination with the City of DuPont would occur.

Response to Comment 058-4

Noise barrier placement is not feasible because openings in the walls would be needed for roadway crossings. Noise barriers could also create vehicular sight-distance hazards (see page 55, Noise and Vibration Discipline Report, Appendix E of the EA). Section 4.2.3.2, Noise and Vibration, of the EA notes that that noise effects to sensitive receptors would not be significant and no mitigation is required.

Fencing locations and type will be determined during final design in collaboration with Sound Transit. The fencing and barriers currently in place are adequate and sufficient for the currently planned level of service of Sound Transit.

Response to Comment 058-5

The City of DuPont City Hall location in the EA is incorrect and the error is noted and included in the revised EA. The area land uses are summarized in the EA Section 4.13.2. Supporting material, including current development zoning descriptions, are in the Land Use Discipline Report (Appendix O of the EA). Dental offices and hotel facilities are typically private businesses and included in the general characterization of commercial areas. Since they are not classified as public facilities or services they are not shown on Figure 15 in Section 4.14.2 of the EA. Barksdale Avenue crossing was evaluated for traffic effects in the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA) and noise effects in the Noise and Vibration Discipline Report (Appendix E of the EA). The location of City Hall in relation to the Barksdale Avenue crossing does not change the impact evaluations completed for that intersection.

Response to Comment 058-6

Chapter 4.16.2 of the EA, Cumulative Effects, includes a list of current and reasonably foreseeable future transportation related projects. In addition, Page 4-69 explains that FRA and WSDOT considered the prior studies related to Joint Base Lewis McCord and the projects outlined in the Grow the Army Final EIS and other decision documents. This specific project was not included in Table 17 in the EA under known local and regional roadway improvements. This project has been added to Table 17 in the EA and does not change the analysis or conclusions described in the EA.

Traffic studies conducted for the Point Defiance Bypass Project were informed by the Technical Advisory Group (which City of DuPont participated in). The potential for a new JBLM access control point at Wharf Road was mentioned by the City of DuPont during the October 2011 facilitated review of the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report. The JBLM project was not included in the traffic analysis because at the time, it was considered speculative and JBLM/Department of Defense had not issued a notice of intent or other formal notice to stakeholders that an EA was being prepared. Subsequent qualitative analysis of the Wharf Road access control point (ACP) EA indicates that this ACP is located off the Steilacoom-DuPont Road into the Lewis North portion of JBLM. As part of Appendix C of the JBLM Lewis North Access Control Facility Traffic Study (prepared by Black & Veatch dated September 7, 2011), the redistribution of vehicles was determined by an Origin Destination Analysis for the roadway network as a result of the new ACP at Steilacoom-DuPont Road. Based on this analysis, an additional 135 vehicles will take the southbound I-5 off-ramp at Barksdale and an additional 129 vehicles will take the northbound I-5 off-ramp at Barksdale to use the new ACP. In total, 264 additional vehicles will divert to the Barksdale interchange in order to access the new ACP. Ultimately, according to analyses made as part of the JBLM EA for the new ACP, channelization lanes would be added at the DuPont-Steilacoom and Barksdale Avenue intersections, which would result in overall intersection operations of LOS C. Coupled with the Point Defiance Bypass project and the improvements proposed at Barksdale Avenue as part of the project, significant effects would not occur at this location. Nonetheless, WSDOT and FRA would continue to work with the City of DuPont and JBLM to evaluate the coordination of intersection improvements at this location as part of the final design effort, and as part of the larger planning studies being conducted for I-5 interchanges by WSDOT.

Response to Comment 058-7

Data and methods, including collection of traffic data and analytical tools and methods, are documented in Chapter 2 of the Traffic and Transportation Discipline Report (Appendix F of the EA). This information was shared during the Technical Advisory Group meetings to solicit input on assumptions and methods, and review the results. During the final design and the associated permit process, additional coordination with the City of DuPont would occur.

Response to Comment 058-8

As described in the Grade Separation Concept Evaluation (Appendix B of the EA), some concepts have rail under the roadway while others have rail over the roadway. As the concept evaluation proceeded, a host of factors were considered when deciding whether to elevate the roadway or trench it, or to elevate or trench the rail bed. These factors include maintaining a reasonable rail grade before and after the grade crossing (approximately 2% or less), clearance at structures, underground utilities, and groundwater, as well as the acquisition of adjacent properties that would be required to accommodate the grade separation, roadway structures and slopes.

The Grade Separation Concept Evaluation Report revealed that current and projected future traffic volumes do not warrant the construction of new (or modified) grade-separated crossings. The report found that the construction and operation of grade-separated crossings would result in significant environmental impacts to the surrounding community (e.g., noise, property acquisitions, visual impacts from retaining walls, and the increased perception of community isolation, particularly in Tillicum).

However, the construction of the Build Alternative would not preclude the future construction of grade-separated crossings within the Project Area.

COMMENTS FROM MIKE GREEN, NOVEMBER 2, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #059

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Tuesday, November 13, 2012 2:11 PM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Tacoma bypass power requirements

From: Mike Green [<mailto:mangreen@wavecable.com>]
Sent: Friday, November 02, 2012 1:08 PM
To: Mattson, Larry
Subject: Tacoma bypass power requirements

I am curious as to what extra locomotive power that will be required, especially with the southbound Coast Starlight. The climb through Nalley Valley in Tacoma looks to be the steepest grade that will be encountered. If power is needed, would it be in the form of a helper engine?
I'm not sure about northbound braking requirements and I don't know if it would be any issue. The Sounders to Lakewood shouldn't have any problems, but I guess I'm wondering about the southbound Cascadian and Coast Starlight.
I like the project and I'm hoping to see it completed.

Thanks for any information you can give me.

Mike Green

mangreen@wavecable.com

See response to
comment 059-1

Response to Comments from Mike Green, November 2, 2012

Commenter ID #059

Response to Comment 059-1

Amtrak would utilize the existing trains that are used on the current Puget Sound route.

Motive power needs will be evaluated during the testing phase that will precede Amtrak operations on the Point Defiance Bypass route. Sound Transit tested Sounder extensively with multiple train configurations and multiple runs. WSDOT/Amtrak will do the same prior to the Point Defiance Bypass route becoming operational. This analysis will determine if a helper engine will be required.



Point Defiance Bypass Public Comment Form

Please use this form to share any comments or suggestions about the Point Defiance Bypass Environmental Assessment document. Please use the reverse side of this sheet if you need more space. Please note the comment period ending date is November 9, 2012. Our mailing address is:

You can email us at rail@wsdot.wa.gov to share your thoughts, or send your comment via US Mail to:

WSDOT Rail and Marine Office
P.O. Box 47407
Olympia, WA 98504-7407

Thank you for your interest.

Comments: My concern is the existing rail overpass of southbound I-5 near RM 20. It was built in 1936 for the then new ^{4 lanes} U.S. 99. Now I-5 southbound uses that space. The Federal Highway Commission granted a variance for a shorter mounts road on-ramp so the ramp traffic could merge with south bound I-5 traffic before the too-narrow trestle opening. The trestle will be in its final two decades of 100 years of service when (over)

Would you like WSDOT to get back to you?

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email _____

Would you like to receive email updates about this project? Y N

Phone 253 964 0606

See response to comment 060-1

(cont)

Amtrak starts using this ~~new~~ trestle.
How long is its safe structural life?
Should it be replaced before Amtrak
service is started? whenever that
happens please remember (w/WSDOT)
to widen the interstate opening to
allow for a longer & safer ramp merge.

Thank you

Sincerely

John Mounts

Response to Comments from John Mounts, November 9, 2012

Commenter ID #060

Response to Comment 060-1

WSDOT is planning to conduct a load-rating analysis as part of the Final Design portion of the Point Defiance Bypass Project. If required, necessary structural upgrades will be implemented prior to Amtrak operations over the bridges.

COMMENTS FROM BRANDON ARENAS, NOVEMBER 21, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #061

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Monday, November 26, 2012 10:35 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Point Defiance Amtrak Bypass

From: Arenas, Brandon [mailto:Brandon_Arenas@cable.comcast.com]
Sent: Wednesday, November 21, 2012 9:55 AM
To: Mattson, Larry
Subject: RE: Point Defiance Amtrak Bypass

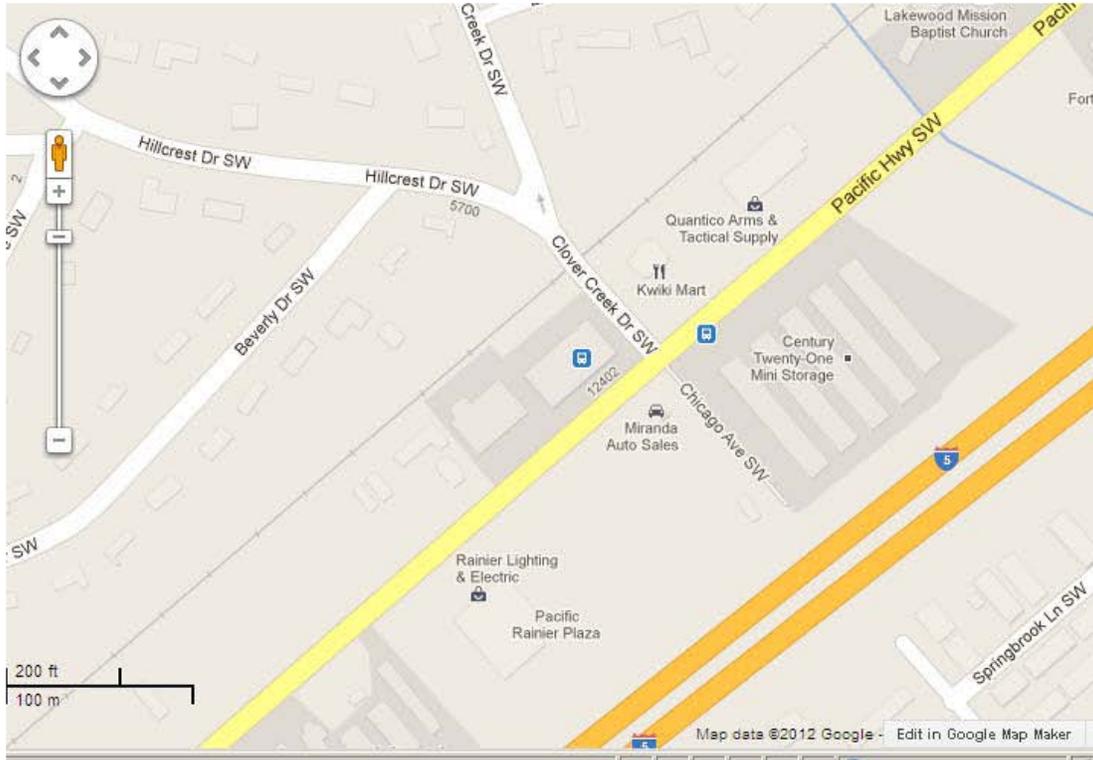
See response to
comment 061-1

Larry,

Thank you for the quick response. My questions could probably be answered via email as well.

- My first question is if this change will be a temporary solution or if this plans to be the permanent route going forward for Amtrak Cascades?
- My second question is what will be done, if anything, near my house to make the rain crossing safer. Please see the map below which shows the rail crossing at Clover Creek Dr SW. Current at the crossing there is nothing but a Yield sign. This is a major access point for all the houses in this area of Lakewood because it is the ONLY Pacific Hwy SW access point to the houses in the area between Gravelly Lake Dr and Bridgeport Way Sw. If the point of this project is to make it so Amtrak can pass through the Tacoma area without stopping or slowing continuously, I can't imagine the train will slow much when passing this area. To my knowledge, it is also the only crossing through Tacoma which does not have lights or a bar that comes down. Every street the train passes through Tacoma/Lakewood has lights, lowering bars, or both except this crossing near my house. This is a big concern for me as we already have trains passing much more regularly now and to add the Amtrak trains to this route could cause significant issues in my area. Any info on this would help. Thank you.

See response to
comment 061-2



Brandon Arenas

Senior Business Account Executive
Mobile: 253.405.7797
Fax: 360-357-1297
24/7 Tech Support: 1-800-391-3000
brandon_arenas@cable.comcast.com



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From: Mattson, Larry [<mailto:Mattsol@wsdot.wa.gov>]
Sent: Wednesday, November 21, 2012 9:39 AM
To: Arenas, Brandon
Subject: RE: Point Defiance Amtrak Bypass

Brandon-

I apologize for the incorrect listing. Our webmaster is correcting my phone number.

2

I'm currently out of the office but you can reach me at the following numbers:

Larry Mattson, PMP
Environmental Manager - Point Defiance Bypass Project,
Cascades High-Speed Passenger Rail Program
mattsol@wsdot.wa.gov

(509) 577-1922 (direct)
(509) 930-4464 (mobile)

From: Arenas, Brandon [mailto:Brandon_Arenas@cable.comcast.com]
Sent: Wednesday, November 21, 2012 9:24 AM
To: Mattson, Larry
Subject: Point Defiance Amtrak Bypass

Matt,
Please call me at your earliest convenience as I have some questions regarding this project. Your number is wrong on the website. Please call me at the number below or 253-224-9563. Thanks.

Brandon Arenas

Senior Business Account Executive
Mobile: 253.405.7797
Fax: 360-357-1297
24/7 Tech Support: 1-800-391-3000
brandon_arenas@cable.comcast.com

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Response to Comments from Brandon Arenas, November 21, 2012

Commenter ID #061

Response to Comment 061-1

Once approved, WSDOT intends for this to be the permanent intercity rail service route for Amtrak Cascades service.

Response to Comment 061-2

If the project is approved, the rail crossing at Clover Creek Drive Southwest would be improved with the following features:

- Crossing gates and flashing lights
- Median barriers
- Wayside horns
- Related rail safety signage

COMMENTS FROM THOMAS CORNILLIE, NOVEMBER 26, 2012 – COMMENTER ID #062

Cleveland, Leandra L.

From: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Sent: Thursday, November 29, 2012 11:26 AM
To: Cleveland, Leandra L.
Subject: FW: Question regarding fuel consumption information stated in the Point Defiance Bypass Project Environmental Assessment dated October 1

-----Original Message-----

From: Thomas Craig Cornillie [<mailto:tcornill@umich.edu>]
Sent: Monday, November 26, 2012 11:38 AM
To: WSDOT State Rail and Marine Office
Subject: Question regarding fuel consumption information stated in the Point Defiance Bypass Project Environmental Assessment dated October 1

Dear Sir or Madame,

I am writing with a question regarding the fuel consumption information stated in the Point Defiance Bypass Project Environmental Assessment dated October 1, 2012.

In several places in the document it is stated that the fuel is consumed at the rate of 0.7 miles per gallon. This appears on Page 4-62 table 15 and in page 9 of the Energy Discipline Report.

Would it be possible for WSDOT to provide additional information as to how this figure was arrived at? How does this take into account the differences in fuel usage between Amtrak Cascades service and Amtrak's Coast Starlight?

Thank you,
Thomas Cornillie

See response to
comment 062-1

Response to Comments from Thomas Cornillie, November 26, 2012

Commenter ID #062

Response to Comment 062-1

In Chapter 2 of the Energy Discipline Report (Appendix Q of the EA), it notes that operational energy use was estimated from train fuel efficiency information prepared as part of the *Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor (PNWRC) Washington State Segment – Columbia River to the Canadian Border, Program Environmental Assessment (EA)* (WSDOT, 2009). In the PNWRC EA, page 5-26 and in Table 13, fuel consumption was calculated for the Amtrak Cascades rail passenger service on a daily, gallon, and trip basis. The Point Defiance Bypass Project energy analysis focused on the Cascades service because it is the service being added as a result of the Project.