

May 14, 2020

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington DC 20590

RE: **BUILD Grant Application submitted by City of Spokane Valley, WA for
Pines Rd/BNSF Grade Separation Project**

Dear Secretary Chao;

I am writing to express the support of Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) for the BUILD Grant application for the **Pines Rd/BNSF Grade Separation Project** submitted by the **City of Spokane Valley**. The SRTC Board of Directors discuss the BUILD grant application at their May 14 meeting and approved a measure to express support for this regionally significant project.

This at grade road/rail crossing is a deficient component of an east-west corridor of commerce that supports the economic vitality of more than 38 million Americans across eight states. This project will improve the efficiency of the rail movements along the corridor and services to address safety, environmental, noise and congestion issues impacting the region's transportation network.

In 2017 the Washington State Legislature directed the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board to update the Road-Rail Conflicts database and develop a Corridor-Based Project Prioritization Process. Out of this process, the Pines Rd/BNSF Grade Separation Project emerged as the top ranked priority in our state because it provided the greatest community benefit in terms of safety, mobility, and noise reduction.

SRTC is very aware of the challenges associated with the Pines Rd/BNSF at-grade crossing, especially given the proposed growth in train traffic through the Spokane region due to increased shipments to the West Coast. I'd like to highlight some of the details of the project that are most significant to transportation in our area:

Increasing Regional Economic Competitiveness

- Promotes efficient freight mobility via road and rail networks.
- Links SR 27 and SR 290 at the project site with links to I-90 to the south.
- Enhances access to over 150 acres of prime buildable industrial and mixed-use properties.

Improves Mobility

- WSDOT's Washington State Rail Plan states that almost 94% of Washington east-west bulk cargo rail traffic moves through this corridor.
- The BNSF line carries an average of 58 freight and two passenger trains daily. Usage is estimated to increase to 114 trains by 2035.
- On average, people and freight are delayed over 20,000 times per year at this crossing, totally over 1,000 hours of gate-down time annually.
- The existing intersection operates as a level of service F. Conversion of the intersection will improve to a level of service A in the morning and B in the afternoon.

Improves Safety, Quality of Life & the Environment

- This project eliminates the risk of fatalities, serious injuries and road-related commodity spills which can occur at at-grade crossings.
- The project will eliminate 60 daily train horns across a 2.1-mile section in a residential area of the city.
- Adds ADA-accessible pedestrian and bicycle features to increase safety.
- Improves network redundancy, important for emergency vehicles and transit operations.
- Eliminates train crossing delays and improves neighborhood connectivity between residences, businesses, schools and parks.
- Reduced fuel consumption and tailpipe emissions for vehicles idling in delayed traffic.

Regional Strategy

- The grade separation project is consistent with the region's long-range transportation plan.

We believe strongly in the future of Spokane County as a regional center for manufacturing. A new grade-separated crossing at the BNSF tracks will efficiently, safely, and economically service the City of Spokane Valley, Spokane County and the Spokane regional as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project.

Respectfully,



Sabrina C. Minshall, AICP
Executive Director
Spokane Regional Transportation Council