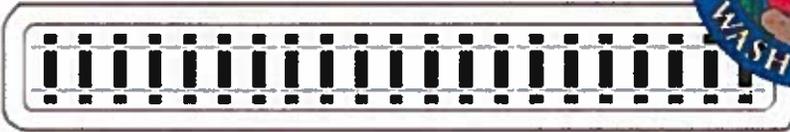


Connell Rail Interchange



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City of Connell

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P.O. BOX 1200 • CONNELL, WASHINGTON • 99326-1200
(509) 234-2701

May 5, 2015

Senator Mark Schoesler
P.O. Box 40413
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: City of Connell – Connell Rail Interchange – Transportation Plan

Dear Senator Schoesler:

Thank you for your leadership and support of the Connell Rail Interchange project. The City of Connell issued a Fact Sheet to highlight impact and value (*attached*). Connell has a very important rail connection point – which affects an entire region.

Timing is crucial to obtain construction funding by State Transportation package. This aim will best synchronize overall project tasks and assure timely completion. For this reason, we respectfully request that \$10 million be allocated in the 2015-17 biennium for the Connell Rail Interchange.

Significant progress has been achieved to collaborate with Rail Coalition partners. Our CERB-funded Planning Study will connect the plan – and the implementation. This approach will create successful public infrastructure and private investment. We appreciate your efforts to advance economic development for our communities.

Thank you,

Mayor Bruce Blackwell
CITY OF CONNELL

Jed Crowther
City Administrator

it possible to expedite design, engineering and construction of the new interchange in the next Biennium. The result would be major improvements in the seamless movement of products from Adams and Grant Counties to the BNSF mainline and beyond to regional shipping ports and the world.

Without this \$10 million investment in the regional rail system, it could be several years before full funding can be assembled to construct the new interchange, which will result in continued shipping delays. Such delays are already occurring at the interchange and have been for quite some time.

Here's a summary of what has been done to prepare for this project through a multi-county regionalized approach.

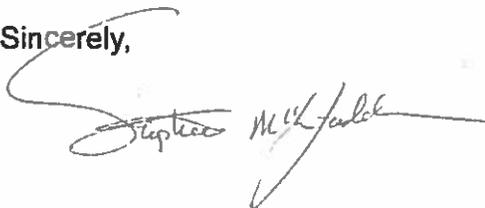
- On March 19 CERB awarded a \$50,000 grant for Feasibility, Preliminary Design & Cost Estimate for the Connell.
- An additional \$17,000 in match money was committed for the study including \$5,000 each from both railroad companies, and funds from four port districts and three economic development agencies.
- On May 19 a panel of 5 of us will review the RFPs submitted for the above mentioned study. Once the Connell City Council approves the recommended consultant, the study will commence. Estimated document completion is December.
- BNSF has indicated to Connell that it will likely provide the ground for construction of the interchange on its current easement.
- Columbia Basin Railroad is also poised to invest in the construction of the new interchange.

When complete, this investment in regional infrastructure will play a key role in economic growth in Adams, Benton, Franklin and Grant Counties.

In conclusion, we would greatly appreciate your support and your consideration of the City of Connell's \$10 million funding request for this important transportation infrastructure project.

We appreciate your time and effort regarding this project. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,



Stephen McFadden
Adams County
Economic Development



Jonathan Smith
Grant County Economic
Development Council

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What is the Connell Rail Interchange project and why is it important? The Connell Rail Interchange is located in the City of Connell in eastern Washington, where the Columbia Basin Railroad (CBRW) line intersects with the BNSF line. Rail congestion at the existing intersection is caused by an outdated and undersized rail interchange configuration. The current downtown location impacts safety, causes onerous vehicle delays at primary street crossings, and serves as a pinch-point for rail transportation. There is need to expand and modernize the Connell Rail Interchange to add efficiency to rail service along the Great Northern Corridor. This project plan proposes to enhance the ability of the railroads to perform interchange of longer trains while minimizing the time that interchange operations interfere with mainline operations and capacity. The improvements are intended to facilitate better service and improved transit times for unit trains. A new reconfigured interchange will allow for reduced delays to automotive traffic at grade crossings within Connell and improve safety.

Who is sponsoring/paying for the project? The City of Connell is the lead proponent of the project. Potential funding (e.g., monetary, in-kind) sources include the City of Connell; state grants and transportation funding; federal transportation grants; eleven city, county, and port agencies, and economic development councils; and railways.

Will this project affect my accessibility to downtown and the highway during and after construction? Construction should have minimal effect on or cause delays at the grade crossings as the primary construction activities will be further down the line from crossings. Post-construction accessibility will be greatly improved over existing conditions due to the reduction in stacking of trains across road crossings causing traffic delays.

What are the impacts of the project as related to noise, health (coal and hazardous materials), visual, and safety? The interchange modifications will be designed to reduce the overall impacts of train-interchange activities by moving them away from the at-grade crossings. The improved interchange will allow greater capacity without the need for increased rail traffic and will provide for future growth in product transport while minimizing the increase in rail movements. The new interchange will also improve multi-modal safety by decreasing train stacking which impacts sight distances and can block or partially block intersections.

A goal of the project is to improve rail transportation of the agricultural goods and products produced in Connell and surrounding areas to enhance economic development. At this time, the City is not aware of any movement towards transport of large quantities of coal or hazardous materials as cargo via the rail lines passing through Connell. Either type of cargo would be subject to US Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration shipping regulations specific to those materials.

What are other options to the proposed alignment? Two alternate alignments were considered and eliminated from further consideration because of higher design and construction cost without more benefit than the selected alignment.

What would happen if the new interchange is not constructed? Without the new interchange, the existing conditions would continue to be a pinch point in the rail system resulting in rail transport inefficiencies. It could also be a limiting factor for economic development potential. And local residents and visitors to Connell would continue to experience significant delays at grade crossings.