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**Sheri Sanchez**

**From:** Paul H LeMay [ex967@ncf.ca]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 14, 2006 11:32 AM  
**To:** Mike Myers; Bonnie Onyon; Ken Ely; Charlie Hawkins; City of Blaine - City Councillor - Ward 3  
Jason Overstreet; Bruce Wolf; John Liebert; Gary Tomsic  
**Cc:** Sheri Sanchez  
**Subject:** Transportation Planning - A new railroad consideration  
**Importance:** High

City of Blaine Mayor and Council,  
and City Manager,  
344 "H" Street,  
Blaine, Washington  
USA 98230

Dear Mayor, Members of Council and City Manager,

Having last week been told that your city will be holding a public consultation on Thursday night about plans for a new airport, which may or may not involve land holdings that may impinge on a new railroad right-of-way, it obviously becomes quite important for our group to make City of Blaine officials aware of rail re-routing discussions now taking shape on the Canadian side of the border.

I write to you as the Facilitator of a recently established Canadian coalition of citizens called the Semiahmoo Peninsula Citizens for Public Safety. Given the recurrent incidence of mudslides along the shoreline track on the peninsula, our group is committed to seeing the relocation of the BNSF railway track off our shoreline to a safer inland location, and for the creation of a paved recreational cycling and pedestrian path that would extend from the Peace Arch border crossing to Crescent Beach and beyond.

Toward this end, we have embarked upon both a political advocacy and a public awareness campaign about the danger train traffic represents to the area's population, particularly from the perspective of a derailment involving a train carrying dangerous goods such as chlorine, ammonia or propane. We also recently launched the first iteration of our website to help inform people in a more detailed way about the unacceptable nature of the risks involved (go to: [www.PeaceArchDisasterPrevention.ca](http://www.PeaceArchDisasterPrevention.ca) for more information).

During the course of our research, we came to learn that we are by no means the first group of people that has banded together to advocate for a relocation of the track off the shore. We were especially heartened to learn that between 1970 and 1972, none other than the White Rock and District Chamber of Commerce played one of the leading roles in pushing for the re-routing of the train, and that they came close to succeeding in their objective. We also learned that at one time in the mid-1990s (and in previous years as well apparently) the Washington State Department of Transportation, Amtrak and BNSF were involved in negotiating an alternative crossing point for rail in Blaine near the Pacific Highway (which our research tell us was the original rail crossing point between 1891 and 1912).

We are also aware that back in 2001 that the cities of White Rock, Surrey and Blaine, Washington had entered into a common effort to see passenger rail service re-established in White Rock, and that a number of businesses in Blaine supported this effort provided there was a shuttle established between

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the communities. This plan died at the time in large part due to 9/11 and the subsequent tightening of border security. You may be happy to learn that we may have stumbled upon a novel solution to resolving this problem, and which may help pave the way to re-establishing passenger rail service on both sides of the border, hopefully in time for the 2010 Winter Olympics if all goes well.

By moving the track away from its existing shoreline location at the Peace Arch border crossing where trains carrying dangerous goods are currently vulnerable to a car bomb terrorist attack from the roadway, we have proposed the idea of creating the first-of-its kind international train passenger terminal that would literally straddle both sides of the border near the Pacific Highway crossing area.

This of course offers several advantages. It would not only allow for passengers to embark or disembark in either Blaine or Surrey for points north or south, it would also allow for a cost efficient deployment of border security resources, since they are already stationed on the border in any case. The US Customs pre-clearance of Amtrak passengers in Vancouver, and then "sealing" the train would no longer be necessary.

Given this fact, and given our history of collaboration in past, it now makes abundant sense for all to revisit the question of track relocation so we might be in a better position to marshal our distinct efforts into a combined plan of action that no level of government will be able to defer to some future time.

In reviewing the contents of our site, you will soon see that we have assembled a rather convincing array of facts that can only result in one reasonable conclusion, namely the timely relocation of the train line. While I do not wish to reiterate here all the elements contained on the site, I do feel I should summarize a number of the key points.

1. First, the consequences of a potential dangerous goods train derailment are serious. It could result in hundreds of deaths, tremendous property damage caused by fire, high settlement tort actions against the railway, municipalities and the federal government, and bring about a lot of very negative publicity to the area that could hurt tourism.
2. Second, the mudslide risks presented by the bluffs along the shoreline are not about to disappear over the long term, and nor is the probability that one such slide might cause a dangerous goods train derailment. There have been at least 7 such slides since the line opened in 1909, and there are 55 documented accounts of slides that have resulted in the closure of the track.
3. Third, the wood trestle bridge structure over Mud Bay is coming to the end of its life expectancy, and will require costly replacement, perhaps in the order of \$20 million. Given the fact the BNSF would have to invest this amount of money in any event, opens up a window of opportunity to leverage this expenditure against the cost of a new right-of-way.
4. Fourth, we have costed out one alternative routing scenario out at just over \$100 million, about one quarter the cost of the plan discussed in 1997 which involved paralleling Highway 99 and the need for extensive tunnelling. We have since learned that the City of Surrey's planning department commissioned its own very thorough internal planning study in 2002 entitled "The North/South Connector Corridor Study - Road & Rail" which looked at a combined road/rail option up the 176th/188th corridor, with a bottom line cost of \$138 million. Under a \$100 million scenario (which assumes a land swap arrangement of new right-of-way for old), and an assumed BNSF contribution to the project of \$20 million, this leaves in the order of \$80 million to be split between the provincial and federal governments. To put this in some context, the City of Langley in conjunction with Translink, the BC Ministry of Transportation, and the federal government, are spending more than \$35

million for a single highway overpass. Our proposed track relocation project involves the laying of only 13 kilometres (8 miles) of new track to service a train transportation capability vital to US-Canada trade. Though the overall project is about three times the cost, its larger economic implications surely outweighs the economic impact that a single highway overpass is apt to generate over similar periods of comparison.

5. Fifth, as mentioned above, the re-routing of the BNSF line further inland opens up the possibility of establishing a new international passenger rail terminal on the border itself, which would otherwise likely never return to the area in a post 9/11 world where US Homeland security is deemed a priority.

6. Sixth, a new recreational cycling path across the border would help to promote environmentally-friendly international cycling tourism between our communities, and would in the course of time, add to the region's reputation as a desirable tourist destination.

These represent the main points which we discuss in much greater detail on our website.

In view of what I have presented here, it is my hope that members of our group might be given an opportunity to meet with you at your earliest opportunity to answer any of your questions, and so that we might consider a course of action that includes, as it must, consideration of Blaine's interest in this matter.

In any event, I and a colleague plan to attend the public consultation event on Thursday evening, and perhaps we will get a chance to meet and speak with a number of you then.

Sincerely,

Paul H. LeMay  
member of the Semiahmoo Peninsula Citizens for Public Safety

b.c.c. - the other members of the coalition