

Sheri Sanchez

From: Paul H LeMay [ex967@ncf.ca]
Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2006 11:38 AM
To: Bonnie Onyon
Cc: Sheri Sanchez; John Liebert; Bruce Wolf; Jason Overstreet; Charlie Hawkins; Ken Ely; Gary Tomsic
Subject: Further to BNSF shoreline track realignment

Mayor and Council,
City of Blaine, Washington

Dear Mayor and Council,

Further to our short and informal appearance before some members of council during a public forum on the future of the Blaine municipal airport some months ago now, our group would to ask for a more formal opportunity to make a presentation to council, as we have now done with both the City of Surrey and the City of White Rock.

On a second related matter, I wanted to advise council that half a dozen members from our group had an opportunity to meet with four middle-management representatives from BNSF on May 22nd in White Rock.

First, BNSF's Gus Melonas indicated that they would investigate the possibility of paying for and installing warning sirens along the shoreline in South Surrey and White Rock to alert members of the public in the event of a train derailment.

Second, they also advised us that they were undertaking some millions of dollars of repair work in August along the line, and that they are also sponsoring the Royal Hudson steam train to visit White Rock during Seafest.

Though we suspect the two last items are in likely response to some of the negative publicity BNSF received in the newsmedia in recent months in view of the mudslides and the public concerns expressed on the Canadian side of the border, I have to admit that the installation of warning sirens would be a significant step to help safeguard the lives of residents in the event of a derailment. Installation of the sirens would be done in conjunction with a public awareness program sponsored by the municipality to ensure that all residents living within a 3 mile radius from the track were advised of what the sirens would mean in the event they sounded, and what actions to take.

Naturally, the City of Blaine may wish to consider formally expressing its own interest in BNSF taking a similar step.

But even more interesting, I should mention that the BNSF reps also saw the longer term merits of moving the line inland given the railway's desire to streamline the security processing of train traffic at the border. It seems, the track's current location along the shore can at times be a major pain, since there are no sidings to shunt rail cars that customs wants to inspect at random.

This fact proves especially troublesome when tanker cars need to be emptied of their liquid contents and their cavities inspected, as happens from time to time. It can literally halt traffic on the line for days, and requires all sorts of special equipment to be brought in at great expense. Moving the track inland

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slightly would give both the railway and US Customs the potential to do so, particularly since Blaine is considering moth balling its little municipal airport, and the land could be converted into a switching yard by US Customs and/or BNSF to facilitate inspections. Needless to say, this puts the train at something of a competitive disadvantage when competing with truck traffic going through the border, particularly when US Customs and Washington State is modifying the 543 Pacific Hwy crossing to help streamline truck inspections at the border.

Incidentally, I am told by a former Surrey City Planner that there are plenty of precedents for a rail trench in some other US communities. One such took place in Alameda, California. We would hope to provide some basic information in this regard, should an opportunity to present to council be granted.

I was sorry to hear from WCOG that there was a decision to defer further IMTC Rail-Subcommittee discussion about BNSF track realignment. Perhaps the foregoing information may cause them to reconsider the matter.

Paul H. LeMay
Semiahmoo Peninsula Citizens for Public Safety