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Decision ID No. FD 39478

Service Date: 11/07/2008  
Comment Due Date: 12/08/2008

## **PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

### **SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD FINANCE DOCKET NO. 34936**

**Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project  
Grant County, Washington**



#### **Co-Lead Agencies**

Surface Transportation Board – Section of Environmental Analysis  
and Washington State Department of Transportation



# **Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project**

## **Preliminary Environmental Assessment**

Prepared by the

**Surface Transportation Board  
Section of Environmental Analysis**

and the

**Washington State Department of  
Transportation**

**November 7, 2008**



For more information or to submit comments:

- Call Christa Dean with the Surface Transportation Board at (202) 245-0299
- Write to:
  - Surface Transportation Board
  - Attn: Christa Dean
  - Section of Environmental Analysis
  - 395 E Street, SW, Room 1108
  - Washington, DC 20423-0001
  - Attn: Finance Docket No. 34936
- Fax: (202) 245-0454; or
- E-mail: [christa.dean@stb.dot.gov](mailto:christa.dean@stb.dot.gov)
  
- Call Elizabeth Phinney with the WSDOT Rail Office at (360) 705-7902
- Write to:
  - WSDOT Rail Office
  - P.O. Box 47407
  - Olympia, WA 98504-7407
- Fax: (360) 705-6821; or
- E-mail: [phinnee@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:phinnee@wsdot.wa.gov)
  
- Comments may also be filed electronically on the Surface Transportation Board's website at [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov) by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. A Login Account is not needed; simply click on "Environmental Comments," which will take you to the comment screen. Type in the docket number "FD 34936" then select "Christa Dean" in the drop down list under "attention of." Complete the form by adding your name, address, phone, and e-mail, and click "Submit."

### ***Title VI***

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*For questions regarding WSDOT's Title VI Program, you may contact the Department's Title VI Coordinator at (360) 705-7098.*



*Materials can be provided in alternative formats: large print, Braille, cassette tape, or on computer disk for people with disabilities by calling the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) at (360) 705-7097. Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may contact OEO through the Washington Relay Service at 7-1-1.*

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***SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD***

*Section of Environmental Analysis*

***Washington, DC 20423***

November 7, 2008

Dear Reader:

The Surface Transportation Board's (STB's) Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) and the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) are pleased to provide you with the enclosed Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed construction and acquisition of an approximately 11.5-mile-long rail route in Grant County, Washington.<sup>1</sup> The project proponent is the Port of Moses Lake, which would own and construct the rail lines. Columbia Basin Railroad Company would operate over the proposed rail lines. The purpose of the proposed project is to provide rail service to lands designated for industrial development in northern Moses Lake, as well as to the eastern side of the Grant County International Airport, to enhance opportunities for economic development, and to attract new rail-dependent businesses to those areas.

SEA and WSDOT prepared this EA pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, the STB's environmental rules, the Washington State Environmental Policy Act, WSDOT requirements, and other applicable state and federal laws, including the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).<sup>2</sup> The EA discusses potential environmental impacts that could result from the proposed rail project and includes preliminary recommendations for mitigating possible environmental effects. The EA also considers the views of the public, as well as federal, state, and local agencies.

Availability of the Preliminary Environmental Assessment

Copies of this EA are being provided to all parties of record for this proceeding and the environmental distribution list, as well as to appropriate government agencies and groups. In addition, as part of the tribal consultation required under Section 106 of the NHPA, all Native

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<sup>1</sup> The proposed project would involve approximately 11.1 to 11.5 miles of rail line depending on the route selected.

<sup>2</sup> A signature page is included with this document that indicates the approval of this EA by Megan White, the Director of Environmental Services at WSDOT.

American tribes that may have ancestral connections to the project area are being provided copies of this EA.

Public Comment and Review of the Preliminary Environmental Assessment

A Notice to the public will be published in the Federal Register announcing the availability of the EA. SEA and WSDOT invite comments on all aspects of this EA, including suggestions for additional mitigation measures. SEA will consider all comments received in response to the EA in making its final recommendations to the STB. The STB will consider the entire environmental record, SEA's final recommendations, including final recommended mitigation measures, and the environmental comments in making its final decision in this proceeding.

All comments must be postmarked by **December 8, 2008**. Please send written comments (one original and two copies) to either SEA or WSDOT:

Christa Dean  
Section of Environmental Analysis  
Surface Transportation Board  
395 E Street, SW, Room 1108  
Washington, DC 20423-0001  
E-Mail: [christa.dean@stb.dot.gov](mailto:christa.dean@stb.dot.gov)

Elizabeth Phinney  
Washington State Department of  
Transportation, Rail Office  
P.O. Box 47407  
Olympia, WA 98504-7407  
E-Mail: [phinnee@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:phinnee@wsdot.wa.gov)

Written comments may also be filed electronically on the STB's website at <http://www.stb.dot.gov/stb/efilings.nsf>. From this link, click on "Environmental Comments" to be directed to an electronic comment form. Please refer to STB Finance Docket No. 34936 in all correspondence.

Thank you for your interest and participation in the environmental review process. If you have any questions regarding this EA or would like additional information about the environmental review process, please contact Christa Dean at (202) 245-0299 or Elizabeth Phinney at (360) 705-7902.

Sincerely,



Victoria Rutson  
Chief  
Section of Environmental Analysis

# Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project

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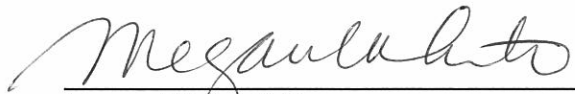
City of Moses Lake, Grant County, Washington

## Preliminary Environmental Assessment

Submitted pursuant to Section 42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c) and 23 C.F.R. Part 771

By the Surface Transportation Board and the Washington State Department of Transportation

10/30/08  
Date of Approval

  
Megan White, P.E.  
Director, Environmental Services  
Washington State Dept of Transportation

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, this Environmental Assessment describes the environmental effects of constructing two segments of new rail line and refurbishing one segment of existing rail in the northern part of the City of Moses Lake in Grant County, Washington. The analysis concludes that the project will not have a significant adverse effect on the environment.

The Environmental Assessment is available for review at the City of Moses Lake Public Library, 418 E 5th Avenue, as well as at the Port of Moses Lake, 7810 Andrews Street NE. It is also available on the project website: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/rail/northerncolumbiabasinrr/>

A Public Open House regarding this project will be held on November 20, 2008, at the Port of Moses Lake, 7810 Andrews Street NE, Moses Lake, Washington.

Comments are due by December 8, 2008.

For additional information about this document, please contact:

Elizabeth Phinney  
State Rail Office  
Washington State Dept of Transportation  
PO Box 47407  
Olympia, WA 98504-7407  
[phinnee@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:phinnee@wsdot.wa.gov)

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