



# Clark County Railroad Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 8, 2024, 4:00pm to 5:11pm  
Public Service Center, 1300 Franklin St., 6<sup>th</sup> Floor BOCC  
Training Room and virtual via Microsoft Teams

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**Advisory Board-Present:** Dan Weaver, Jim Malinowski, Jim Pearson, John Hansen, John Shaffer, Mark Daniels, Mark Herceg, Neil Chambers

**Advisory Board-Not Present:** Eric Fuller, Gregg Smith, Zack Keith

**Clark County Staff and Leadership:** Glen Yung, Jordan Boege, Kathleen Otto, Kevin McDowell, Kevin Tyler, Rocky Houston, Sue Marshall

**Battle Ground, Yacolt, Chelatchie Prairie Railroad (BYCX):** Randy Williams, Doug Auburg

**Portland Vancouver Junction Railroad (PVJR):** None

**Guests:** Dave Rowe, Jerry Jacobus, Kim O'Hara, Maggie Derk (City of Vancouver), Marvin Mathison, Michael O'Connell, Nate Boyd, Steve Jagelski, Terry Gardner (Town of Yacolt)

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**4:00pm** Quorum present and meeting called to Order – Dan Weaver

**4:04pm** March 11, 2024, minutes adopted (Motion by Neil Chambers, Second by John Shaffer)

**Comments from the Chair** – Community Planning was going to hire a consultant to implement 5517 Freight Rail Dependent Use and was to be voted on by council at a recent meeting. The contract was withdrawn from approval and not voted on so now there is nobody to implement at this point in time – Dan is assuming it is surrounding the issues of what the operator is doing at this time.

**Portland Vancouver Junction Railroad (PVJR)** – No one in attendance – car count for January/February but nothing in March yet – Kevin will ask for it – comparable to last year at this time – Kevin will send the car counts.

**Battle Ground, Yacolt, Chelatchie Prairie Railroad (BYCX)** – Randy Williams

- Doing mechanical work, deferred maintenance on diesel
- Trying to get steam engine put back together so it can run this summer if we get some track
- Volunteers are working on the coach (fixing upholstery, updating bathroom, painting) and the open car (floorboards replaced, seats painted, new seats, new railings)
- Concern about Bridge 25 being out of service as the county consultant found it defective
- Evaluating rockslide around MP 23.8 to see if they can take care of it – they have a new crane that may be big enough to take care of it and a volunteer crane operator
- Still working on maintenance building in Yacolt – Contractor Doug has been working with had suggestions regarding grant money

**County Activities** – Kevin Tyler

- Bridge Repairs Project Update

- Went out for bid April 3<sup>rd</sup> and bid opening scheduled for April 23<sup>rd</sup> and that includes slide removal – that and Bridge 25 were identified as priorities
- Kevin will provide updates on construction
- Railroad Roadbed Rehabilitation Project Update
  - Exeltech performed track inspections on first set of tracks up through Yacolt
  - Exeltech will do investigation further north up to Chelatchie in a couple weeks
  - John asked if the bid has language in it for locally sourcing the ballast material – Kevin said when projects are bid there is a requirement that all sources of material are approved by the construction manager so the source is agreed upon before it's delivered to the site – it has to meet specifications
  - Randy asked if the repair contract included the Heisson crossing where the motor vehicle was – Kevin said it does not at this time – he would like to put in a change order to include it or pursue a separate contract to get the repair done – it has been evaluated and Kevin has two out of three bids so far
  - Mark Daniels asked if the contractors dispose of ties and Kevin said they are
  - Dan asked if there are any new grants – Kevin said he is working with transportation staff to put together a grant through the UTC for a Grade Crossing Protection Fund that would allow incremental improvements to existing crossings such as changing out gates or installing new lights
  - Mark Daniels sat in on a presentation for federal grants and will pass it on – there is a substantial amount of money out there – includes tie, rail, bridge use – if you put in for a grant you might wrap everything into one big project and see what sticks – he asked about security issues and there are grants for that, not for patrol, but security fencing, cameras, etc. – federal grants pay up to 80% for locomotives and these make it more environmentally friendly – could lobby the state or WSDOT – Jim said from an energy perspective we should emphasize that we can move freight for 10% of the energy you can on trucks – we should build up the rail system
- Railroad Bridge Management Plan
  - Plan was sent to Federal Railroad Administration and we are waiting to get comments back
  - Initial load rating analysis has been completed and we're reviewing those internally
  - Bridge 25 has some defects where the consulting firm, KPFF, recommended that it not be used under the loads that would be with a standard locomotive - they evaluated both locomotives that BYCX uses and the locomotive that PVJR uses, all three fail under normal and maximum rating - the bridge repairs we've identified should solve that problem and as soon as those repairs are made, the bridge can be put back into service
  - Will address Bridge 23 defects and that will be open as well and then further down the line 18 and 20
  - Load rating analysis results will continue through internal review
- Freight Rail Dependent Use -Update
  - Consulting firm was pulled from the agenda and no update on if it's coming back or status – Jose Alvarez with Community Planning is giving updates as they are available

#### **Unfinished Business – Dan Weaver**

- Candidates for vacant RRAB Positions – Dan said they can't tell new candidates what's going on with the rail because they don't know – it has some hiccups that need to be dealt with before they can say it's a great thing – John doesn't think this is a good time to add people to the board – He believes it is a good time to assess and see how it's going to go – He mentioned the issues with the rail operator, upset neighbors, bad press, county stopping the progress of implementing 5517 which means the development of the railroad stops at 119<sup>th</sup>, problems in Chelatchie, grants possibly being opposed, the sales tax exemption not passing the senate, not being able to answer questions at the open house, the railroad could be a boon for Clark County, but how do we get this board to get traction again rather than spinning wheels – Dan said he feels like every year they make progress but taking steps back now, he doesn't know what the background is about pulling 5517 – John

said the City of Battle Ground unanimously passed a resolution against 5517 – Dan said the support from the Battle Ground School Board is gone – Dan said John, Kevin and he will get together about what to do about bringing members to the board under these circumstances – Seven applications have come in

- Work Session/Retreat – Dan will start working on moving this forward
- Discussion about railroad operator – John thinks the public money has been cut off so the operator will need to use his own money
- Jim Malinowski is worried about this board taking a negative defeatist attitude – the railroad has historic and economic value – the board should be an advocate for moving forward and opposition shouldn't stop that – Jim said we should be protecting and building up the railroad system and not give up – Dan said he is not giving up but need to think about how to go forward – Dan is willing to work on ideas of promoting the railroad but not sure where the operator is going – Michael O'Connell said John and Dan are advocates of the railroad and other entities should support the railroad – one think that can be helpful is sharing points with John or Jim because if you develop those points you can have a more articulate package with range of ideas be more effective
- Dan said he and John have spent several sessions with Greater Brush Prairie Group and said they would work to resolve issues such as traffic around the golf course, uncontrolled crossings and they said the track should be taken up and put a trail in – He and John spent a lot of time talking with them but it didn't end up with anything in the long run – discussion about what is in the area, such as restaurants – Mark Daniels asked if there were any complaints on this railroad about blocked crossings and nobody is aware of any – Dan said when people hear you're going to increase cars down the track the perception is incorrect so we need to develop a program to communicate with people - John talked about Granite and hauling a million tons and have 30 cars per day – John Hansen mentioned a main line in Iowa and said it's an educational process regarding the taxes and lost revenues if they don't get businesses – does their need to be a sub-committee to put data together and get it in the paper so people understand the truth – Mark Daniels said that if the mine goes through it will be a detrimental effect to traffic – Dan is willing to put things together but would like it to be fruitful – Kevin asked if they wanted to schedule something and Dan said it's premature

#### **Public Comment – Dan Weaver**

- Kim O'Hara - Sat in on Greater Brush Prairie Neighborhood Association meetings and appreciated Dan talking about what he knew and what was going on. There was time spent talking about how to mitigate some of the concerns and there were more concerns than just railroad crossings – said many people were speaking about transparency and companies that want to relocate here but haven't had actual research shared - she talked about getting rock to the quarry and the environmental concerns of a train coming down and having issues – Said it may be cheaper to transport that way, but it's a bigger deal if you have an environmental disaster – said we need to get people to listen and also hear what the neighbor concerns are – she said there is this train sitting in our backyards and when that train goes by hers with just one car or maybe even the two cars heading up to the dairy, it shakes the ground and there's a lot of seismic activity, a lot of noise, pollution and now that the ties have been fixed on the tracks right outside her horse barn, that train does not slow down so there's even more vibration - Said the board, nor Counselors Medvigy, Bellecote or Bowerman have the train in their backyard – also have agricultural land around them – she would like you to consider all these things when you're preparing for the open house – Dan said he his goal would be to see how to mitigate some of the concerns – Kim said some of them can't be mitigated such as that you can't un-pave, stop the pollution from coming out, stop the house from shaking – this may not be fixable
- Martha Maier – New to format and one of those people that you already have to convince that we need this railroad from PVJR. Just learned about it and has been doing some research. Loves trains and thinks taking the train to Seattle is great, great way to transport goods. Not sure we need a train in northern Clark County to be transporting a lot of things because not sure we want all that industry there. Real concern about Eric

Temple. Doesn't think he's a person you want operating your train and suggests you find somebody else to operate it. Commend you for wanting to research. Thinks it's great you're getting public input and going to educate the public because it's really needed.

- Nate Boyd – Volunteers at the Oregon Rail Heritage Center and BYCX said as a younger person he'd like to be a bridge for communication – hearing the discussion he feels the toughest thing with this type of entity is pleasing everybody – sometimes you have to choose the better of two evils – try to be transparent and fact-find and do your best to answer public questions but the challenge is being able to address every question – some don't have answers – good discussion and it's happening so something can come of it – he volunteers for ORF and he said they have a lot of support throughout Oregon and he brings up as he wonders what kind of people other than the county, BYCX, or PVJR could they turn to for help that may provide experience – he doesn't feel this is a unique situation and someone else in the state may have dealt with it – Outside help is helpful for support
- Dave Rowe – Said he was attracted to Battle Ground because of the train – it brings dollars to the county and that point should be made in the presentation – also discussed the perception of car counts
- Mark Daniels – this is a unique railroad because it's owned by the county – maybe mitigation can take place but the operator is frustrating – if it's trails people want why can't the railroad work in conjunction with the people and make trails out there – should be listening to the homeowner more but can't guarantee anything
- Marvin Mathison - Lives on the railroad right-of-way and said the fact that we can move a major transformer without any permits within a short distance of any substation we've got, and we're vulnerable in our infrastructure to start with, having that mobility is one of the things that's always overlooked - some of these ideas might be presented as well
- Nate Boyd – For the public side, keep in mind that having options and discussing them is better than losing options – may need to meet in the middle and find a compromise – we've lost some railroads and once it's dead it's hard to revive – it's a lot harder to restore rail service to a public area – once the tracks are gone you've lost opportunities

#### **Good of the Order – Dan Weaver**

**5:11pm** Meeting Adjourned

Submitted by Chris Walker

#### **Upcoming Meeting:**

**Date:** May 13, 2024

**Time:** 4:00pm to 5:30pm

**Location:** Public Service Center, 1300 Franklin St., 6<sup>th</sup> Floor Training Room and virtual