

DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE

Description of proposal:

Background: The proposed **Point Defiance Bypass Project** will improve safety, reduce rail congestion, and, as a result, support more frequent and reliable Amtrak *Cascades* service.

Freight and passenger train traffic has increased on the existing main line in the Tacoma vicinity and the rail system is operating at or near its maximum capacity. By removing the passenger traffic from the existing main line and diverting that traffic to the shorter, more direct Point Defiance Bypass route, travel times for the passenger trains will be reduced. In addition, since the Point Defiance Bypass will primarily be used by passenger trains, the reliability of the train schedules will be improved. By using this alternate route, congestion on the existing main line will be reduced, thereby freeing capacity for freight trains.

Proposed Project: The Point Defiance Bypass Project consists of three major track elements: construction of a new track adjacent to the existing main line; reconstruction of the existing main line track; and rehabilitation of the existing track.

New Track Adjacent to the Existing Main Line

A new track adjacent to the existing main line will be constructed from South 66th Street (rail milepost 6.92) to one quarter mile south of Bridgeport Way SW (rail milepost 10.67). This new 2.5 mile track will be constructed parallel to and east of (with 15-foot track centers) the existing Sound Transit track. In some places, due to curves, track centers may be wider, particularly in the vicinity of Lakewood Station, Bridgeport Way and Clover Creek. Sound Transit's Sounder trains and freight trains will predominately use the eastern main track (new track, main line 2) as it operates in its service area (northern terminus of Point Defiance Bypass Project to Bridgeport Way SW).

The second main line will be built on new embankment which has already been upgraded by Sound Transit. The new second main line to be constructed in this area will require minimal grading work. There will be no in-water work as part of this new construction.

Reconstruction of the Existing Main Line

Starting at Steilacoom Boulevard SW (rail milepost 8.36), the existing track will be reconstructed to a location just north of Mounts Road SW (rail milepost 19.89). This will involve removal of the existing track and minor re-grading of the existing sub-grade to provide a slightly wider, re-graded and compacted, stable surface top on which to construct a new track. This reconstructed segment is approximately nine miles in length.

For a short segment, between rail milepost 8.88 and 9.96, the existing track and the new track will be on a new alignment. Therefore, the existing track will be removed and both main lines constructed on a new sub-grade alignment. Upon

removal of the track structure, the existing sub-grade will be graded and cleared of debris to match existing ground conditions in the general area. There will be no in-water work as part of this reconstruction.

Rehabilitation of the Existing Line

Just north of Mounts Road SW (rail milepost 19.89), for approximately two miles (to rail milepost 21.23), the existing single main line track will be rehabilitated. This work will consist of replacing existing, worn, or otherwise defective ties with new ties, and adding ballast. These activities are typical of the maintenance work regularly performed on most railroads and is accomplished without removing the track. Existing drainage paths will be cleared of blockages. Little or no new grading work will be required. There will be no in-water work as part of this rehabilitation.

Proponent:

Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

Location of proposal, including street address, if any:

The Point Defiance Project is located along Sound Transit's Lakeview Subdivision rail line in Pierce County (Township 18N through 20N, Range 1E and 2E). The project area extends approximately 18 miles from South 66th Street (in Tacoma), through Lakewood and DuPont, to just east of I-5, where it connects with the BNSF Railway Company's (BNSF) main line. (Please see the enclosed map.)

Lead agency:

Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

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The lead agency for this proposal has determined that it does not have a probable significant adverse impact on the environment. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c). This decision was made after review of a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the lead agency. This information is available to the public on request.

This DNS is issued under WAC 197-11-340(2); the lead agency will not act on this proposal for 14 days from the date below.

Comments must be submitted by **August 8, 2008**.

Please send comments to:
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Date: August 1st 2008 **Signature:** 