

# SR 432 Realignment Feasibility Study

## Stakeholder Interviews – Summary

The Washington State Department of Transportation, Southwest Region (WSDOT), in cooperation with the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (COG) hired David Evans and Associates, Inc. to provide a technical report and preliminary feasibility analysis for realignment and improvements to highway and rail facilities in the SR 432 Longview Industrial Corridor. The COG, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Longview-Kelso Urban Area, completed in 2000 a Route Development Plan for SR 432 (SR 432 RDP) for the WSDOT (Parametrix, Inc. May, 2001). A series of improvements over 20 years is outlined in the plan, including measures to separate rail and truck traffic in certain portions of the corridor.

The purpose of the SR 432 Realignment Feasibility Study is to validate the need for the improvements outlined in the SR 432 RDP, suggest other possible improvements, and to determine if they are both constructible and worthy of funding. This analysis is the first step in determining the sequence of planning, designing and implementing future transportation network improvements in the corridor.

This SR 432 Realignment Feasibility Study relies heavily on input from industrial firms in the corridor, as well as rail users and providers. Stakeholder participation is a key to the success of the future strategies. Their input and willingness to participate in planning, seeking funds, and eventual construction and operation of agreed improvements is essential.

A list of stakeholders was prepared in consultation with WSDOT and COG (see included list in Appendix A). Stakeholders chose to participate, or not, and additional stakeholders volunteered to be part of the study effort. Each of the stakeholders listed below was interviewed at least once on a one-to-one basis. Some were contacted a second or third time for more or clarifying information. All stakeholders also had the opportunity to comment as part of the stakeholder/public involvement process discussed in a later chapter.

A stakeholder questionnaire was developed in consultation with WSDOT and COG (see Appendix B). During the interviews the questionnaire was used as a guide for questions although the interviewers did not necessarily follow the questionnaire exclusively. It was most important to listen to what the stakeholders had to say and assimilate that information to validate industry growth potential and future traffic volumes, both highway and rail. Each stakeholder interviewed was encouraged to respond to the

questionnaire. Response to the questionnaire was not overwhelming, only five interviewees chose to respond.

Throughout the project the consultant along with WSDOT/COG was aware that information provided by the stakeholders may be proprietary and cannot be disclosed. Confidentiality was assured to gain the trust of the stakeholders. Even with assurances of confidentiality some still were guarded in their responses. For this reason the information in the study is not credited to any specific stakeholder. Care has been taken to eliminate any possible identification from the data and none should be assumed. The data is attributed only to the whole of the group interviewed. It is assumed those interviewed provided a reasonable cross-section of the corridor's industrial and civic community.

The following stakeholders were interviewed in their offices:

- City of Longview
- Longview Fibre Company
- Weyerhaeuser Company with participation from North Pacific Paper Corporation (NORPAC)
- Pacific Fibre Products, Inc./Lemmons Trucking
- Port of Longview
- Longview Switching Company
- Swanson Bark Wood Products, Inc.

Telephone interviews were conducted with these firms, primarily as input to the economic model discussed later in this document:

- Koppers Inc.(was Rowley Industries)
- Northwest Hardwoods
- Daybreak Dispatch
- British Petroleum (BP p.l.c.)
- Brown-Strauss Steel
- Equa-Chlor, LLC
- Chinook Ventures, Inc.
- Columbia and Cowlitz Railway Company

These firms provided information during other business or impromptu discussions on the planning effort:

- Waste Control Recycling Inc.
- Consolidated Diking Improvement District No. 1
- BNSF Railway (input to 2005 work)

## **Stakeholder Responses**

Questionnaire items General 7 and Rail 9 asked for “concerns” the stakeholders have about transportation services in the corridor. From the questionnaires received and interviews the following are typical responses. Some of these seem incomplete because many of the responses or comments were not thorough nor explained. These are more a brainstorm of stakeholder thoughts.

### **Highway Concerns**

Safety, congestion and speed.

Safety – following trucks around the corner at traffic signals

- going side-by-side around the corner, trucks veer into lane
- trucks get too close to the left turn for oncoming traffic

Lane and intersection configuration.

No speed-up or deceleration lanes.

Ease of access.

Reduce the speed limit and increase enforcement

Blocked grade crossings (either public or intra-plant) when rail service is being provided

Highway congestion.

Restrictions.

Storage space for waiting trucks.

Traffic signal timing.

Left turn movements.

### **Rail Concerns**

Derailments and accidents.

Longview Switching is not making timely switches either inbound or outbound.

Late switches, wrong switches, car shortages.

Lack of track storage is an issue

Weather conditions that delay inbound trains from out of state

Rail companies must increase operators and equipment to facilitate faster, more efficient switching times for their customers.

Blocked grade crossings (either public or intra-plant) when rail service is being provided.

Insufficient track length of switching leads or working car spots

Storage tracks for excess rail equipment

Ability to secure sufficient rail equipment, adequate car supply.

Bunching of traffic (either inbound or outbound)

Switching capabilities for peaks.

Car condition and cleanliness.

As the railroads attempt to streamline their services, customers run the risk of less frequent service and even the elimination of service based on the RR needs and their desire to build unit trains v. service to smaller customers. This has forced increasing truck traffic even more as the only remaining economical way to move products.

Increasing rail traffic at the SR 432/SR 433 intersection and ever increasing volumes on Industrial Way.

Car use cycle time for customers, service is inconsistent.

Yard capacity at Longview Switching and at Longview Junction.

-----

Questionnaire item General 9 asked, "Are there improvements to the highway or rail systems that would be a benefit to your business?" Questionnaire item Rail 6 asked about repetitive operational issues that affect rail service at the industrial facilities. From the questionnaires received and interviews the following are typical responses

### **Highway Improvement Suggestions**

Widen the road and add lanes, turn lanes and shoulders

Reconfigure the Washington Way / Industrial Way (SR432) intersection

Separate rail grade crossings on the corridor.

Construct second left turn from westbound 432 off ramp onto Third Avenue.

Synchronize signals.

Better flow of traffic.

Frontage road on north side of Industrial Way to serve business there.

Direct access to plant.

Two-way-left-turn-lane with dedicated left turns at signals.

### **Rail Improvement Suggestions**

Both BN and UP invest in additional track, equipment and personnel to handle volumes.

Reliable service by UP and BN – more predictable delivery times, more reliable switching at customer locations.

New track to meet industry and regulatory changes.

More cars available.

Organized switch schedule.

Local, intermodal loading site.

-----

### **Truck Growth**

Stakeholders indicated their existing and expected truck volumes when interviewed or submitting a questionnaire. Seven of the major industries in the corridor responded with existing volumes. 2030 projections were positive to vague in the interviews. Some

indicated a rather flat growth while others were much more positive about their company plans. Data gathered shows:

Today's volumes	3300 trucks/day
2030 volumes (est.)	5300 trucks/day

This growth calculates at about 2.1% annually.

Comment:

At this rate truck volumes will be roughly 60% greater in 2030 than today. This assumes those interviewed represent the total corridor and that other, smaller shippers will grow likewise.

In comparison, the Federal Highway Administration has projected that highway travel will grow by 2.07% annually through 2022. Trucking tonnage is expected to grow 114% between 2004 and 2022, or about 4.3% annually. (Statistics from *Transportation Invest in Our Future, Future Needs of the U.S. Surface Transportation System*, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, February 2007)

The national statistics seem to validate what we are hearing from corridor stakeholders.

-----

### **Rail Growth**

Stakeholders interviewed were asked their existing rail volumes and their projected 2030 volumes. Those interviewed have good estimates for today but are not at all sure about 2030, with some exceptions.

The rail modeling has assumed a growth in rail volumes of 1.0 to 1.5% annually. This rate can be applied to the growth in carload shipments from current and some future shippers. The existing rail infrastructure can handle this growth with some improvements out to 2030.

Stakeholders indicated they may be moving to more unit train shipments as the railroads are moving to more unit train shipment requirements. Some of the new industry planned in the corridor operates efficiently only with unit train capacity. Estimates of unit train activity in the corridor range from one to three per week to a similar number per day.

Comment:

Unit train volumes will be a significant impact to the rail infrastructure, both in the SR 432 corridor and on the BNSF/UP mainline. Neither north-south nor east-west mainline facilities can handle the unit train increase expected by existing shippers when combined with the unit train activity being planned in the corridor. Longview Junction switching capabilities will also need to be improved along with major SR 432 corridor

improvements. Grade separation of highway and rail traffic will become necessary to prevent lengthy delays on the highway system.

According to the American Association of Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) freight demand will increase by 63% by 2035. This is somewhat higher than the trend heard from stakeholders of 1.0-1.5% annually. New development in the corridor will increase the demand significantly more, especially for unit train volumes. (Statistics from *Transportation Invest in Our Future, Future Needs of the U.S. Surface Transportation System*, AASHTO, February 2007)

-----

### Mode choice

Stakeholders were asked: “Assuming similar cost structures between truck and rail, which of the following factors are most likely to influence your choice of mode? (rank in importance with 1 being highest rank and 6 being lowest)”

The chart below summarizes the response. The low response questions the value but intuitively the result is what might be expected.

#### Influence of Mode Choice

	A	B	C	D	Total	Average	Rank
<b>Fast delivery</b>	1	3	1	2	7	1.8	<b>1</b>
<b>Predictable pickup times</b>	2	2	5	3	12	3.0	<b>2</b>
<b>Hours of operation</b>	4	1	2	5	12	3.0	<b>2</b>
<b>Flexible pickup times</b>	3	5	6	4	18	4.5	<b>5</b>
<b>Additional storage time</b>	6	4	3	1	14	3.5	<b>4</b>
<b>Location of rail depot</b>	5	6	4	6	21	5.3	<b>6</b>

Stakeholders were also asked: “Would you consider changing transportation modes in the future? Why or why not?”

Example answers:

Yes, if cost and efficiency indicate otherwise.

Not likely. We’ve honed in on the best for our needs.

Would consider changing based on these factors – customer preference, cost and ease, including seasons, weather, truck availability, ship and barge schedules.

If overall transportation and operations cost is lower.

We use trucks and rail. We tried shipping by barge; however it is not a cost effective way to move our products.