# AWC's Ad Hoc Freight Rail Committee

Recently proposed economic development projects that would rely upon commodity delivery by rail have brought to the forefront the need to address rail congestion and safety impacts in local communities across the state. Washington is likely to experience an increase in freight volumes in the near future: more trains, longer trains, carrying potentially dangerous cargo through urban areas. Accommodating economic expansion and freight mobility in urbanized areas in a manner that is safe and consistent with local quality of life is a critical issue for cities.

In an effort to bring affected cities together to address these issues, AWC has formed an Ad Hoc Freight Rail Committee with members representing cities across the state impacted by increased rail traffic.

## Safety

Cities have trains carrying crude oil and other hazardous cargo passing through their communities on a daily basis. Oil shipments in particular are a new occurrence, as the first oil train passed through Washington in September 2012. With limited regulatory authority at the state and virtually no authority at the local level, cities are limited in their ability to protect their communities.  It is essential, therefore, for local emergency responders communicate and coordinate with state and federal officials.

## Freight and general mobility

Reoccurring stories from cities relate the disruption to local communities when trains pass through at-grade crossings. These stories include delaying public safety vehicles, increasing commute times, and preventing development of certain parts of cities. Increased rail traffic impacts other modes of freight delivery, especially trucks. These issues are likely to get worse with increases in the number and length of trains, and the expected increase in population in incorporated areas.

While freight mobility is important to both the state and regional economy, the state and federal governments have not provided sufficient resources to make necessary improvements. Addressing an at-grade crossing is expensive – easily costing $15 to $30 million which is more than many cities' entire public works budget. Several efforts are currently underway to map freight corridors and identify at-grade rail crossings.

As Congress works on re-authorizing Map-21, the Committee will continue to work with our federal delegation to include funding for safety and capacity improvements on rail corridors.

## Working with rail companies

Many cities have been dealing with the railroads since incorporation.  While there are numerous examples of successful partnerships and cooperation, there is also a tremendous amount of frustration. Cities are also concerned about the level of infrastructure investment by the railroad industry; both in crossings as well as general maintenance of the tracks.

The Committee will discuss strategies and learn from success stories in an effort to improve relations with rail companies.

# AWC Ad Hoc Freight Rail Committee Roster

**Co-Chairs:**
Councilmember Paul Roberts, Everett
Mayor David Condon, Spokane

**Committee members:**

Councilmember Bill Peloza, Auburn
Mayor Kelli Linville, Bellingham
Mayor Steve Sexton, Burlington
Mayor Tom Trulove, Cheney
Mayor Dave Earling, Edmonds
Councilmember Paul Ingram, Ferndale
Councilmember Pat Hulcey, Fife
Mayor Jack Durney, Hoquiam
Councilmember Dennis Higgins, Kent
Mayor Don Anderson, Lakewood
Councilmember Mike Wallin, Longview
Mayor Jon Nehring, Marysville

Councilmember Robert Wheeler, Napavine
Mayor Michael Echanove, Palouse
Councilmember Al Yenney, Pasco
Councilmember Scott Yaeger, Ritzville
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen, Seattle
Councilmember Ben Wick, Spokane Valley
Mayor Ron Lucas, Steilacoom
Mayor Dave Enslow, Sumner
Councilmember Lauren Walker, Tacoma
Mayor Jim Haggerton, Tukwila
Councilmember Bart Hansen, Vancouver
Mayor Sean Guard, Washougal
Councilmember Karen Rutherford, Wenatchee



Washington state economic rail corridors

LEGEND

Rail economic corridors:
R1 - Greater than 5 million tons
R2 - 1 million to 5 million tons
R3 - 5 hundred thousand to 1 million tons
R4 - 1 hundred thousand to 5 hundred thousand tons

County line
Major air cargo airport
IRY Intermodal rail yards

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Washington State
Department of Transportation

Source: WSDOT Freight Systems Division – 2012 Freight Rail Data.