

Get the Facts About...Train Traffic

Fact: There is plenty of capacity on regional rail systems for additional trains; in fact rail traffic remains below pre-recession levels.

Train traffic in the Northwest peaked in 2006 and, following the economic downturn, remains well below this level today. Rail companies believe there is plenty of capacity and a study by the Washington State Department of Transportation finds that the rail system "should be able to meet growing demand well into the future."¹

Fact: New port expansion projects will spur private investment in the rail system.

In anticipation of increased rail activity in the Northwest, BNSF Railway has already invested billions in capital improvements. While capacity exists for these trains already, this investment benefits all rail users in the long term, from passengers to commercial users such as farmers and manufacturers.

According to the Executive Director of Whatcom County of Governments, new terminals at regional ports are important because they could help *"focus state and federal attention on transportation system needs here. If opponents of the terminal prevail, an opportunity to upgrade the transportation network ... could be lost."*²

Fact: Transporting goods by rail reduces road congestion and benefits the environment.

Train locomotives are the most fuel efficient means of ground transportation in America, accounting for less than 1 percent of total US greenhouse emissions. Even though they burn diesel fuel just like trucks, trains account for only 8 percent of diesel combustion emissions in Washington State – trucks and other vehicles contribute about 70 percent.

Not only do trains help the environment, but they reduce traffic on roads as well. Washington State's roads have been rated as the most congested in the United States³, and Oregon faces problems as well. As the economy recovers, analysts predict road congestion will only get worse. Moving more products by train will help reduce this congestion.

Fact: Rail crossing delays are not a significant problem and more trains will not increase the risk that emergency responders will be delayed.

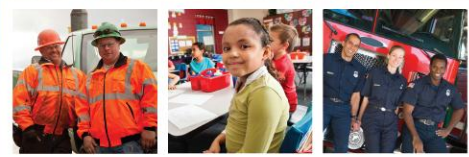
Rail crossings are often easy for commuters to avoid, and the average wait time at them is only 2-5 minutes when trains are traveling past.⁴ There have been no documented instances of emergency responders being delayed by trains, and local authorities work closely with rail companies to ensure this remains the case. Sharing information on schedules, alternative routes and posted emergency numbers near crossings are part of this effort. In addition, if needed rail companies can separate train cars to provide passage in extreme situations.

¹ BST Associates and Main Line Management/Washington State Department of Transportation – "[Pacific Northwest Marine Cargo Forecast Update and Rail Capacity Assessment](#)" December 2011

² Bellingham Herald, "[Cherry Point cargo terminal could help fund rail upgrades, planners say](#)" August 11, 2011

³ http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-02-05/local/36751062_1_traffic-congestion-tim-lomax-new-index

⁴ Gibson Traffic Consultants, [Traffic Study](#) June 21, 2012



Fact: Train traffic is going to increase in coming years, and if it benefits our regional trade and economy it is a good thing.

According to the US Chamber of Commerce, demand for freight trains will double over the next 25 years⁵. The majority of exported products in the Northwest move by train, and given projections regarding increased demand in Asia we can expect rail use to grow in the region regardless of the proposed bulk export terminals.

More trains means more trade, and that equals a growing economy and more jobs. BNSF's rail network in Washington alone employs over 3,400 men and women, who earn a combined payroll of nearly \$240 million. A recent survey indicates that over 79% of the public in both Oregon and Washington agree that trains play an important role in our region's economy and an increase in rail traffic is a sign of economic strength.

Fact: If the terminal projects are not built, coal trains will continue to pass through Whatcom County on their way to B.C. ports.

Ports in British Columbia are investing millions of dollars in increasing coal export capacity over the next few years, which means that even if the terminal is not built, coal trains will continue to pass through Western Washington on their way to B.C. ports – just that the Northwest community will miss out on the economic benefits.^{6,7,8,9}

"BNSF will ensure that we have the adequate capacity to handle current and future freight and passenger volumes. The reality is that increased freight rail volume, including coal, provides the necessary private capital to refresh BNSF's physical plant and expand capacity."

-BNSF Chairman and CEO Matt Rose⁶

⁵ Southeastern Ohio Port Authority. "[Container-On-Barge Port Concept Paper](#)," 6/2008.

⁶ Platts: [British Columbia export terminal can more than double capacity: official](#), September 19, 2011

⁷ The Vancouver Sun: [Ridley Island terminal expansion key to development](#), September 20, 2011

⁸ Neptune Terminals Press Release: [Neptune Terminals investing \\$63.5 million in North Vancouver](#), May 18, 2011

⁹ [Canada's Pacific Gateway](#)

⁶ <http://media.bellinghamherald.com/static/images/downloads/JaredPaben/Rose-to-Gregoire%20letter.pdf>