

**BEFORE THE SKAGIT COUNTY HEARING EXAMINER**

|   |   |                              |
|---|---|------------------------------|
| In the Matter of an Application for             | ) |                              |
| A Shoreline Substantial Development             | ) |                              |
| Permit  | ) |                              |
|   | ) |                              |
| <b>WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT</b>              | ) | PL14-0043                    |
| <b>OF TRANSPORTATION (WSDOT),</b>               | ) |                              |
|   | ) | <b>REMAND FOR EVALUATION</b> |
| Applicant,                                      | ) | <b>OF TRAFFIC IMPACTS</b>    |
|   | ) |                              |
| Relating to increasing the length of a railroad | ) |                              |
| siding and attendant alterations to Hickox      | ) |                              |
| Road, Stackpole Road and Dike Road, south of    | ) |                              |
| the City of Mount Vernon.                       | ) |                              |
| _____   | ) |                              |

This matter came on for hearing before the Examiner on June 25, 2014. Planning and Development Services presented its Staff Report and accompanying exhibits, recommending approval. WSDOT supported the Staff recommendation. One member of the public, Arlene Sundquist, testified. She urged that the traffic impacts of the project be further evaluated.

**FINDINGS**

1. The proposal is extend the length of the existing Mount Vernon Rail Siding, located north of Stackpole Road to the east of Dike Road. The linear extension will pass through the Hickox Road crossing which is adjacent to the South Mount Vernon park and ride lot on Old Highway 99.
2. Currently the siding has a capacity of about 6,075 feet. The proposal is to add approximately 4,700 linear feet of siding. This will involve widening the existing railroad berm to the east approximately 40 feet.
3. The project will result in the closure of the Hickox Road crossing to normal vehicular traffic. Cross-valley traffic along this corridor will be re-routed to Stackpole Road.
4. Improvements are proposed at the intersection of Stackpole and Dike Roads. The South Fork of the Skagit River across a dike approximately 130 feet west of this intersection, bringing a portion of the project within shoreline jurisdiction.
5. The Staff Report and its exhibits provide essentially no information about the traffic impacts of closing Hickox Road

6. According to the Environmental Checklist, a report entitled "Hickox Road Railway Crossing Closure Impact Analysis" was produced by Gary Struthers Associates in January of 2007. This document is not a part of the record here.

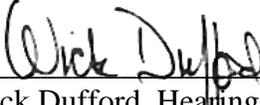
7. At the hearing a resident of the project area asked for a traffic analysis to determine the impacts of closing Hickox Road. She claimed that the road is heavily travelled and vital to farmers on the west side of the railway. She questioned the value of work done seven or eight years ago when this project was first being considered.

8. The Examiner agrees that an updated traffic analysis is needed and should be prepared. The shoreline impacts here are evidently the result of unstated conclusions about project-induced needs for traffic at the Stackpole-Dike Road intersection.

### **ORDER**

The matter is remanded to Planning and Development Services for the acquisition of current data and analysis on the traffic impacts of closing Hickox Road to normal vehicular traffic. This information shall be made available to the parties to this proceeding. The Staff is directed to re-evaluate the application in light of the analysis and to make a recommendation to the Examiner based on the new information.

**SO ORDERED**, this 9<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2014.

  
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Wick Dufford, Hearing Examiner

Transmitted to Applicant, County Staff and Parties of Record July 9, 2014