

Planning for Resilience

**Barge to Rail Mode Shift at the Lower Snake River
Reducing Harm & Increasing Benefits**

Slideck online at:

SolutionaryRail.org/lrbarge2railppt



**Report prepared by
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The following sections are the result of extensive analysis of current patterns, historic service, and future potential of rail to provide robust service to farmers, co-ops and communities near the Lower Snake River. Our slidedeck is structured slightly differently to provide background and context for the action steps outlined in below.

We urge you to check out our Planning for Resilience, Barge to Rail Mode Shift at the Lower Snake River, Reducing Harm & Increasing Benefits **slideck online at:**
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Sections:

1. Guiding Principles and Assumptions
2. Proposed Projects for Rail Capacity, in Three Phases for Palouse & Walla Walla Service Areas
3. Addressing the Nez Perce/Camas Prairie Service Area
4. Additional Opportunities on Camas Prairie and SE WA
5. Related Considerations and Work Priorities
6. Minor notes on Inslee-Murray Report regarding Transportation

1. Guiding Principles and Assumptions

- 1.1. **Shortline railroads are key** to providing reliable service, an adequate inventory of grain cars, and prices that are not as vulnerable to Class 1 railroads' competition across the larger supply chain.
- 1.2. **Properly designed, the truck-rail, and truck-rail-barge combo to serve the LSR area could reduce rather than increase truck miles**, as well as reduce the external costs and impacts mentioned in the Murray-Inslee Draft Report.
- 1.3. **Use of battery-electric or battery-electric hybrid locomotives offers the potential to dramatically or completely reduce the emissions** impact of increased rail service. In certain places such as the Camas Prairie, the phenomenon of empty trains going upslope and full trains going downslope there is actually a potential for rail to be part of the energy replacement strategy.
- 1.4. **Increasing Connectivity and Access** in the system and opportunity for competition across the WA State owned shortlines could also increase resilience and competition between shortline operators and elevators, in order to increase the options available to farmers. Where shortline railroad connection to mainline railroad (BNSF or UP) is necessary, restoring one or more short (<8miles) sections of track could increase price competition and reduce monopolistic pressures.

2. **Rail Capacity Improvement Project List**
(in order of priority):

2.1. **Phase 1**

- 2.1.1. **Repair and reopen WA State owned track on P&L Line** (operated by **SS&P**) and **Hooper Line** (operated by **PCC**) to **Pullman** (Fallon to Pullman and Colfax to Pullman). *
- 2.1.2. Build or restore truck to train facility in Pullman. *
- 2.1.3. Create/Improve truck to train loading facility at Port of Lewiston, ID and/or Wilma, WA, converting existing barge loading facilities to load trains and restore spurs and sidings where necessary.
- 2.1.4. Work out deal with UP for capacity from Ayer (or Riparia) to Wallula for x# years. Engage Surface Transportation Board (STB), if necessary on common carrier obligation of Class 1's to get reasonable service to NW ports.
- 2.1.5. Enforce Columbia Rail (CWW) trackage rights agreement with UP to get access to barge loading in Wallula, as enjoyed by previous operator Watco. *
- 2.1.6. Offer shortline operators the opportunity to replace or augment their current locomotives with battery-electric locomotives to take advantage of the potential to replace nearly 2/3 of their energy use with regenerative braking.
- 2.1.7. Make improvements to the 127 Bridge from Garfield County Port's Pomeroy Grain Growers elevator and loading facility to Central Ferry Terminal.
- 2.1.8. Add siding/spur to Lyons Ferry elevators. Columbia Pulp's access could be extended to Lyons Ferry elevator..

- 2.1.9. Make rail improvements as necessary at Central Ferry and determine feasibility at Almota.

** #1, #2, and #5 all draw traffic away from the river and reduce truck miles.*

2.2. Phase 2 (Begin ASAP but these will likely require more time to accomplish):

- 2.2.1. Build out potential rail service at Tri-City Grain in Pasco for train to barge loading - or other location.
- 2.2.2. **Return Columbia Plateau Trail to rail service from Pasco to Hooper - obtaining a short section of new or former right of way from Washtucna to Hooper to address grade issues. ***
- 2.2.3. CPT spurs and sidings:
Rebuild siding and provide support for elevator and grain loading facility at Kahlotus along CPT. Consider this for Washtucna as well, and if Windust remains a necessary elevator, use the historical branch along the river to add a spur to Windust.*
- 2.2.4. Consider extending CPT rail service north of Hooper to Bengé or Lamont.*
- 2.2.5. Consider constructing a rail bridge to BNSF-served barge loading facility in Burbank. (Converting Tri-Cities Grain facility in Pasco may be sufficient and more cost effective.)
- 2.2.6. Rebuild line from Thornton to Rosalia or Thornton to Oakesdale to give shippers on P&L and Hooper Lines access to both UP and BNSF mainlines.*

- 2.2.7. Improve PCC shortline railways to 286K pound standard
- 2.2.8. Purchase additional cars for the WA Grain Train program
- 2.2.9. Expand storage and loading capabilities at the McCoy unit loader and other unit loading sites.
- 2.2.10. Restore rail from Pullman to Genesee, ID.*
- 2.2.11. **Create a plan to implement an Open Access system on WA State owned railroads in order to allow the greatest access, service levels and competition for freight and where appropriate passenger service.**

** #2, #3, #4, #6, #7 would all draw traffic away from the river and reduce truck miles.*

2.3. Phase 3 (Post Breaching of Lower Monumental):

- 2.3.1. **WA State should rebuild the currently flooded railbed from Riparia to Lower Monumental (Devil's Canyon).**

This action connects the restored CPT line to provide contiguous shortline service From Thornton, Colfax (and potentially Pullman or beyond), to Lewiston (and potentially Camas Prairie) to Wallula. **This creates the potential for all grain transport in the LSR service area to be carried out by shortline railroads and eliminates or dramatically reduces dependence on Class 1 mainlines, their cars, crews, track or the onerous and questionable requirement to build 100+ car unit trains.**

3. **Nez Perce/Camas Prairie Service Area:**

The equivalent of approximately 14,000 trucks of wheat travel off the Camas Prairie each year. Rail service has been absent for 22 years. Returning rail service there provides multiple benefits and reduces multiple harms. That said, the Lapwai to Cottonwood line is complicated, involving multiple stakeholders with complex interests. A variety of Nez Perce Tribal interests, the current BG&CM railroad owner's questionable practices and willingness to negotiate, and whether rumored Idaho DOT aspirations for widening US-95 is negotiable - along with potential Surface Transportation Board interventions - all play a role in whether rail service can be returned to the Camas Prairie.

Best case scenario:

- 3.1. The BG&CM ceases its unauthorized abandonment of former Camas Prairie Second Subdivision milepost #1 to #52, averting injunction and complaint to STB.
- 3.2. Tribe or other entity negotiates purchase deal that avoids an STB referred conflict and potential forced sale.
- 3.3. Restore the track and return service to Reubens or Craigmont, then Cottonwood, with Tribe or third party operator.
- 3.4. Initial traction/braking energy data for the Reubens to Lapwai/Craigmont to Lewiston indicates potential for the route to generate more electricity than it uses. If full trains from Craigmont or Reubens to Lapwai or Lewiston are able to generate more power than is needed to charge battery for RT service, then a section of discontinuous electrification to return energy to the grid, or whatever method is deemed feasible, offers a unique approach to energy replacement. This, of course, is in addition to the public savings in road wear and tear and could eliminate the need to widen US-95, increase road safety, and reduce the consumption of diesel and diesel emissions by trucks whose cargo can switch back to rail.

- 3.5. Returning service beyond Cottonwood to Grangeville may also be beneficial for all of the above reasons.

- 4. **Additional opportunities:**

- 4.1. **Opportunities on former Camas Prairie railroad:**

- 4.1.1. The First Subdivision from Kooskia to Lewiston could provide multiple opportunities for electric passenger service to commuters and tourists with this scenic route along the Clearwater River.
- 4.1.2. EMU passenger service at commuter hours could service NP Tribal employees and others. An excursion train could be a draw from Lewiston, extending the tourism possibilities of the rail lines from Tri Cities.

- 4.2. **Opportunities on WA-owned track:**

- 4.2.1. **Restore limited passenger service between Pullman to Spokane on an EMU passenger train.**
- 4.2.2. **Tri Cities to Lewiston tourist train** could connect Columbia River cruises to jet boats in Hell's Canyon and other tourist opportunities, such as a ride on the "Railroad on Stilts" up to the Camas Prairie, or picturesque rides up the Clearwater River.

5. **Related work that needs further consideration:**

- 5.1. Support the expansion of storage and loading facilities in collaboration with farmers, co-ops and shortline railroads.
- 5.2. Convert dams to bridges where feasible.
- 5.3. Utilize a Benefit Cost Analysis like this one used by Kansas DOT's shortline railroad assistance program to assess the return on investment for returning rail to historically rail-served communities.
- 5.4. **Replace Columbia Plateau Trail State Park with State-managed trail, parks and river access along restored Lower Snake River.**

6. **Quotes/notes on Draft Murray-Inslee Service Replacement Report:**

*"The 2020 CRSO EIS estimates approximately 818.9 million rail ton-miles per year as the current baseline. Like trucking, stakeholders commented that availability of grain railcars and grain unit trains is a concern, given competition from other commodities transported via rail."*¹

This is why the shortline railroads are so important for capacity and reliability.

*"An increase in road and rail ton-miles will affect greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and road injuries, both of which are estimated by the FCS report, 2020 CRSO EIS and ECONorthwest report."*²

This is making assumptions that are not necessarily true. If the shortline (and possibly the mainlines) were to use battery electric locomotives, and the rail service access expanded/improved in WA to reduce truck miles, and rail service returned to the Camas Prairie where rail could potentially be a net energy producer, the external impacts could be less than the status quo.

¹ Lower Snake River Dams: Benefit Replacement Draft Report — 6-9-2022 , page 37

² Lower Snake River Dams: Benefit Replacement Draft Report — 6-9-2022 , page 37