

the columbia gorge

Why the Community Needs a Bingen Point Overpass

Safety & Economic Development

Community and business leaders have voiced their concerns over the safety of the access roads that lead to Bingen Point. For many, the issue extends beyond safety and into questions regarding how the absence of safe access routes could impede much-needed economic development in the community. Nearly two-thirds of the industrial land available at the Point remains undeveloped, presenting a viable opportunity for attracting new businesses to the site. Building an overpass would not only improve issues such as train and traffic congestion that might deter potential investors, but also provide a safe method for evacuating the Point in the event of an emergency.



SAFETY FACTS & FIGURES

Two public crossings exist for accessing Bingen Point – Maple Street and Walnut Street. Two other private crossings exist, but they are narrow and not well known to the community. Maple Street crossing is the primary access route for the 1,000+ individuals who work on Bingen Point.

- In the event of a train derailment or accident, three of the four crossings would be blocked, prohibiting access for first responders and trapping everyone on Bingen Point.
- The current response time for firefighters to engage is 10 minutes. Steel truss failure in buildings begins around 10 minutes; after 10 minutes buildings start to collapse. If a train blocked the main crossing, the damage could be immense.
- Should Maple Street be blocked by a train accident involving hazardous material, the plume of toxins would put the lives of everyone in Bingen Point in danger.
- An emergency situation at the Point could result in gridlock at the main public crossing, increasing the likelihood of a train and car collision. The congestion could also prevent emergency responders from accessing Bingen Point.

THE MAPLE STREET CROSSING BY THE NUMBERS

- The average number of daily trips over the Maple Street crossing is 5,800¹
- More than 35 trains pass through Bingen daily
- Trains blocking the Maple Street crossing while loading at the local lumber yard or changing tracks is common, causing a wait time of up to 20 minutes

AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAILY TRIPS AT THE MAPLE STREET CROSSING:

5,800

NEVER CONFUSE
MOVEMENT WITH
ACTION.

-- ERNEST HEMINGWAY



¹ Data source 2014. Estimate adapted from Intergovernmental resource center; Tenneson Engineering Co; PORT OF KLICKITAT ACCESS STUDY; Vancouver, WA, 1991.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- The industrial land supply in the Columbia River Gorge is extremely limited. Less than one third of the 360 acres of land at Bingen Point is currently developed. An overpass would strengthen the usability of this area and help to build the local economy.
- The overpass would create a more attractive entrance to Bingen Point, potentially luring more businesses to the Point (the current entrance passes the wastewater facility and a recycling center).
- At the Maple Street Crossing, a 20-minute wait can occur while a train passes or offloads at a local business. This wait directly impacts local commerce.



ABOUT BINGEN POINT

- Approximately 1,000 people at work
- More than a dozen industrial buildings, including a wastewater facility, sawmill and heavily utilized recycling station
- Two public parks



RAILWAY RISK ASSESSMENT

- Oil-by-rail shipments have increased dramatically in the U.S., rising from fewer than 5,000 carloads in 2006 to an estimated 400,000 in 2013, and this trend will continue to grow.
- Crude oil has been implicated in a string of high-profile explosions since 2013, including:
 - In April 2014, 13 cars of a train carrying crude oil from the Bakken oil fields exploded in downtown Lynchburg, VA. The fiery explosion caused a 20-block area of the city to be evacuated. Fortunately, no one was killed.
 - The most tragic oil train wreck occurred in July 2013 when a Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway broke free of its brakes and rammed into the center of Lac-Megantic, Quebec, killing 47 people.

THE WASHINGTON SIDE OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER IS THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST'S MAJOR CRUDE-BY-RAIL ARTERY, WITH 18 OIL TRAINS WEEKLY.

“PROGRESS LIES NOT IN ENHANCING WHAT IS, BUT IN ADVANCING TOWARD WHAT WILL BE.”

-- KAHILIL GIBRAN

We represent the public, private and non-profit sectors coming together to advocate for regional needs that are foundational to a strong and sustainable Gorge economy...
ONE community, ONE economy, ONE future.

