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Bowie Unified School District #1

Bruce E. Brown, Superintendent
P.O. Box 157
(520) 847-2545

Roger Studley, Business Manager
315 W. 5th Street

Robert
Bowie, AZ 85605
Fax (520) 847-2546

Bowie Elementary School
Mary G. Doyle Building
Home of the Panthers

Bowie Middle School
Eva Hall Building

Bowie High School
Sen. A. R. Spikes Building
Home of the Cougars

May 24, 2007

RR-03639A-07-0347

Ms Kristin Mayes
Arizona Corporation Commission
Commissioners Wing
1200 W. Washington
Phoenix, Az 85007-2996

Arizona Corporation Commission

DOCKETED

JUN -8 2007

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AZ CORP COMMISSION
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Dear Ms Mayes;

Thank you for your concerns and actions in the matter of the Bowie Central Avenue crossing and Union Pacific Rail Road.

I support the general concept of Union Pacific adding additional capacity through their 'double-tracking' project. I have some concerns about how it will operate and what the project will ultimately do in the community of Bowie. The additional tracks will add considerable capacity to Union Pacific and result in an increased number of trains. While the nearly constant train whistles are a nuisance now and there will undoubtedly be more with the possibility of 100+ trains a day even through the night, my main concern is blocking the crossing.

Recently, there was a derailment in town. The crossing was blocked for a considerable period of time while clean up and repairs took place. There was no traffic allowed while the crews replaced a switch and repair the rails. With the increased train traffic expected, the chances of accidents of this kind increase.

I also understand that Arizona Eastern Rail Road will be running trains soon from the Safford area with copper production from the new mine in the Safford Area. I understand those trains will be staging in Bowie to be transferred to Union Pacific for further transport. I support this activity as well. It also causes concerns about blocking the crossing during staging or switching procedures.

We hope to have SouthWestern Power Group starting construction of Bowie Power Station in the near future and that will be on the north side of the main road into Bowie. It is also on the other side of the tracks from Bowie Fire Department equipment. Operation of the power station will also require regular shipment of fuel, including coal.

All these issues cause me concern as the Superintendent of Bowie Unified School District #14. We need to run bus routes from one side of the tracks to the other up to three times a day to transport students to and from school. Other students walk across the crossing to get to and from school. The Bowie Vocational Agriculture Land Lab (school farm) is on the other side of the tracks from the school. Classes sometimes go to the farm for vocational agriculture projects we

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John Rios, Member
By _____

need during the school day. Going to the farm and getting stopped by a closed crossing does not present the issue that going to the farm and getting stopped on the return to school. We often have activity or athletic trips that come back to school late and to get those students across the tracks as well. I have teachers who live at the farm and they have experienced delays in getting to school from blocked crossings. I have heard there is often a cavalier attitude about blocking the crossing for extensive periods of time. After all, it is only Bowie they are holding up.

There is only one crossing in Bowie. I am sure the combination of community needs and train traffic only warranted the one crossing in the past. That may be about to change appreciably. The short-term and long-term future may require an additional crossing or a crossing that is never closed by train traffic. A suitable additional crossing could also require action by the Cochise County Highway Department to construct or improve the access to the road to and from the crossing depending on where the second crossing was located. Obviously a below/above grade crossing would eliminate a second crossing except perhaps during heavy rains.

Currently, it is my understanding the only way to cross if the main crossing on Central Avenue is closed is approximately 8 miles west of the Central Avenue crossing. That is a dirt crossing that is not maintained in any condition whatsoever. It is only accessible by what is referred to locally as the HYL Ranch Road which leads to Spur 191 near the Safford exit on Interstate 10, over the Safford exit at milepost 355, down to I-10 and into Bowie through I-10. The ranch road is unimproved, un-maintained dirt from Bowie all the way to the crossing and exit. As a result, it is not a viable option for access if the Central Avenue crossing is blocked. The only other option to my knowledge from the north side is to travel to Safford on a combination of dirt and poorly maintained asphalt roads, including Fan Road and the road through the Hot Wells/Dunes Recreation area to Tanque Road to Safford and go either down 191 to I-10 to Bowie or to go from Safford to San Simon through New Mexico and return via I-10 or the frontage road to Bowie if you are coming from the north or the same combination of roads and connections if you are going south to north. If there is an alternative, it must be on back roads that no one uses. No one wants to use the alternative I mentioned either.

A more suitable second crossing would seem to be on the east side of Central Avenue near the Luzena siding. An extension of San Simon Avenue could provide access from the north and the frontage road/B-10 could provide access from the south. An alternative would be to provide an over or under grade crossing as the Central Avenue crossing. A walkway must be provided in addition to the under or over grade crossing. The over/under crossing would be a major expense but the most lasting long-term solution.

I understand that the primary reasons for a second crossing or the under/over grade crossing might be only in cases of long blockages of the Central Avenue crossing either from siding and switching work, accident that damages the crossing or a siding nearby, or unforeseen delays on the line either to the east or west. Traffic now, or in the very near future, may not warrant a second crossing immediately. Traffic, either train or vehicle, may warrant a second crossing or the alternative grade Central Avenue crossing. Assuredly, traffic in the short-term future may alter the pattern considerably. Construction of Bowie Power Station is scheduled to commence in 2009 if the regulatory hurdles can be met. That is a 3-4 year project that will involve considerable traffic, according to the terms imposed on SouthWestern Power Group by the county as a result of the traffic study. It will involve major truck traffic to support the construction and major pieces of equipment need to be transported. The operation of the power plant will necessitate vehicular traffic from B-10 to the site across the Central Avenue crossing. Included in their development plan is 72 acres for housing, 1 acre for commercial, such as a

convenience store/gas station, and greenhouses and research facilities. We hope there will be an infill project to provide housing on the south side of the tracks in an existing residential area.

The School District runs a morning bus route and two afternoon bus routes now across the tracks. Students who walk or are transported by parents are sometimes late because of the crossing being closed for train traffic. It has not been as bad this year as it has in the past. It seems that Union Pacific has made a successful effort to reduce the number of times the crossing is closed for long periods of time, at least when it impacts the school. In prior years, there seemed to be many more than there were this year. I understand there are sometimes closing delays during other times of the day. With the increased activity of the power plant, the number and type of bus runs may increase, but still operate at once in the morning and twice in the afternoon. It may mean multiple vehicles or larger vehicles or both.

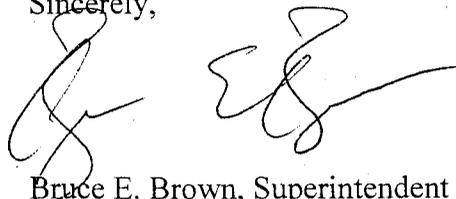
The double set of tracks may exacerbate the existing problems. It is doubtful it will solve any of them without other intervention. My interest is not to cause Union Pacific any additional problems, but to try to resolve some issues and concerns currently existing and those I see on the horizon. As I said, I support the idea of the double set of tracks and I have no problem with the increase in train traffic and ability to move trains in both directions easier without so much stopping and slowing to let other trains pass. I have no difficulty with the potential of Union Pacific to maximize their considerable investment. I simply wish to be able to co-exist with them a little easier now and easier in the future as traffic in all aspects in Bowie picks up to much higher levels.

Now, if we could only get some relief on the train whistles, maybe a couple of my teachers wouldn't come into my office bleary-eyed from time to time. I can hear them at my house and it is about a mile south from the crossing. The school farm where they live is closer. Another 50-75 train whistles may rattle their brains. Maybe they will have to move away from the tracks. Seriously, the train whistles do need to be addressed. Some have cute little ways they blow their whistles, some apparently try to comply with the requirement but not get carried away, and some seem to blast on the whistle from the time they are within earshot to way after they have passed. I understand that crossings are dangerous, trains don't stop quickly, and people sometimes don't pay attention to the crossing gates and there is a reason for the whistles. That may be another reason to consider the expense of the over/under crossing.

There are two separate issues. One is the crossing and getting through the crossing and the other is the whistles. I hope you can provide some relief from at least the first one, if not the second.

If I can answer any questions or provide further information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Bruce E. Brown', written in a cursive style.

Bruce E. Brown, Superintendent

CY: Mr. William Mundell
Mike Gleason
Jeff Hatch-Miller
Gary Pierce