Dear Joint Transportation Committee Chair, Ranking and Committee Members:

We are writing in support of HB 3339. The blocking of crossings at grade by freight trains of extreme length causes potential problems for the public and localized area(s). There are many instances that can be pointed out to provide the necessary awareness, as some are more relevant than others.

The movement of trains in and out of railyards and terminals, the doubling-together or connecting individual segments of a train, to include the disconnecting of cars from a train for set out / delivery in the aforementioned locations; and the associated airbrake tests mandated by the Federal Railroad Administration, to be sure the brake system is in proper working order after each of the processes mentioned.

Additionally, the trains length plays a major role of where a train dispatcher can or cannot properly place a train throughout its movement within a railroad's given network, in connection to meeting points and passing tracks, due to the limits of the trackage based on its length.

Another point to remember is towns and cities were built around railroad infrastructure, todays reduction of available space for expansion projects is not only limited by suitable land for use, but monies involved to acquire and establish the aforementioned. In comparison to days past, costs today can be astronomical, anywhere in the amount of $1 Million Dollars or more per mile for Centralized Traffic Control (CTC) signaled-track / main-line rail. With the railroads standard practice of states and other stakeholders carrying the burden of the associated costs, this is not always a feasible option.

More often than not Train Dispatchers are no longer as familiar with the routes they govern as they once were, based on turnover of personnel and the carrier's inability to allow for territorial familiarization.

Instead, the integration of technology in the replacement of this Craft is desired, with computer programs that route the trains based on its necessary movements, without considerations towards the delays caused by this flow of traffic at grade crossings.

Arguably, misaligned or routed trains to an impasse must be considered, as this technology is not without its imperfections or need of routine technical-fixes. Train dispatchers have been instructed by the carrier to allow these programs to operate without interruption, despite their better judgement not to do so on this basis.

Each individual delay described takes an unprecedented amount of time to remedy, or longer than anyone might expect. The removal of trucks off the roadways and placed on trains is noteworthy, though it reduces their carbon footprint, the additional lengths of trains upwards to 15, 000 ft., i.e., 3-miles long, creates in and of itself a localized safety hazard once it becomes a standard operating practice by the carrier in that specific area or locale.

These very same trains of extreme length can be divided into two separate trains not to exceed 8500 ft.

With the potential of smaller trains and less the circumstance of a loss of communication, between the Locomotive Engineer and the Conductor working the ground, to include the ability to cut the at grade crossings more readily; this improves their effective ability and allowing for less of an impact caused by extreme delays, in the bisecting of towns and municipalities, endangering both public safety and that of the train crews.

Respectfully,

Shahraim C. Allen, BLET-WA State Legislative Board

&

Herb Krohn, SMART-TD, WA State Legislative Board.