

Dear Reader,

I have been asked about the current status of the Chelatchie Railroad lines, the following is my take on this question and a call to action.

FRDU: Freight Rail Dependent Use, what this means for us the residents along the rail lines.

What does this mean for the Chelatchie Railroad lines? It means that the county has a right to use the rail lines to move freight for a profit along those lines. Since Ann Rivers, Liz Pike and Annette Cleveland were successful in getting the FRDU bill passed in 2017 the industrial world gained access to that rail line.

The issue is that the county's land use department has approved resident development along the line from Vancouver to north of Battle Ground. Some of those developments have houses within 25 feet of the rail line. Some are 50 feet away from the rail line, others are within 100 feet. There are different distances for different developments.

One would think that since the county has approved many residential developments so close to the rail lines that they would abandon the idea of moving heavy freight along those lines simply due to the seismic activity. The seismic movement of the land is gauged by the weight of the engine, the weight of the freight loads in addition the speed of the train. That does not seem to be the case with many on the county council. Many appear to be very pro rail movement. The safety of the area residents does not appear to be a major concern of theirs. Perhaps it will become a concern in the future when and if a rail accident occurs followed by lawsuits by the injured residents.

I have spoken to the Federal Railway Administration about this issue. During the call I had, the representative informed me that the owners of the rail lines have every right to use the rail lines to move freight. Rail transportation is considered by government to be a safer method of transportation of many heavy loads rather than transporting the loads via trucks on the public roads. Fewer traffic accidents, fewer windshield cracks and safer public movement on the roads.

The FRA (Federal Railway Administration) currently only has the personnel to investigate rail accidents. Due to a lack of personnel (and ???) they are not in the prevention phase at this time. Apparently, they leave that up to the rail line owners and the rail line operator. In our case the rail operator is Portland Vancouver Junction Railroad (PVJR). The rail owner is Clark County.

Eric Temple (PVJR) has been busy planning and implementing the start of the freight movement along the previously quiet railroad lines.

The promise of jobs is an attractive lure and I suppose it provides reason for some to ignore common sense when it comes to approving land use permits. So far, we have not seen the beginning of those promised jobs.

We have only seen destruction of trees, and recycled chipped glass being spilled over the rail beds in addition to being spilled on NE 99th street where residents used to walk their dogs currently not safe for dogs and human walking traffic. In addition to a lack of permits by the rail operator for the land development behind the Curtin Creek Ridge Condos.

The county is not concerned about the recycled chipped glass, as they view it as building materials. Research on google shows that recycled glass takes one million years to revert back to sand.

Not to mention many warehouses being built, with lots of unused space in those new buildings. More warehouses are currently being built alongside the existing ones. Please pay attention to the current location of land development off NE 88th street and NE 72nd Ave /Andresen.

To identify the commitment to the rail usage by the county and state, the railroad operator has received about \$9.3 million in grants for repairs and upgrades to the rail lines. In case you are unaware a grant is free money, no loans, no payback of funds. Our tax dollars at work.

The county has been doing some inspections on the rail lines to ensure safety. With all this activity, the line is still not 100% functional. Bridges still need lots of work. Reports that north of Battle Ground will take many millions and lots of time to repair.

The Rail Road Advisory Board has recommended that the area along the line for heavy industrial building is increased from 500 feet to one mile. Of course, they made reference to being aware of some current heavy residential developments along to rail line. Do you trust the county to protect the residential areas? Is one mile an overreach of the rail operator and the RRAB, and the county council? Currently, most of the area is currently zoned for light industrial, not HEAVY industrial, nor Railroad industrial.

The current big question is this: How comfortable are you with heavy freight being moved this close to your home? How safe are the rails and the loads? Are you keeping up with the changes and demands that the operator is making on the county? Is there proper oversight regarding the expenditures of the grant money, and is the county operating within the law?

How many people will be displaced in the name of progress and increased industrialization along the rail line? Are you comfortable with heavy industry being approved next to residential developments?

What can we do as a community? We can write letters to the papers. Object to the heavy industrial complexes next to residential areas. Object to heavy freight being moved on rails that were made in the late 1800's. Rails that were meant for car and freight loads of 40,000

pounds or less, certainly not 286,000 pounds per car plus the weight of the engine! In most cases the rail lines are rated for only 10 miles per hour for the engines and rail cars.

Please remember, it is the combined weight of the train and the load plus the speed that determines the seismic movement of the land. If there is enough movement of the land home can be damaged, swimming pools can be damaged. You might even be confused thinking we are having an earthquake.

Write the county permit department and the county councilors. Most importantly remember to vote in the upcoming election. Learn about the issues, decide what is the best course of action to take for the type of county you want to live in. Participate in the county process. Talk to your neighbors, contribute to organizations that fight for common sense zoning use of our buildable spaces and protects the beauty of our hills and open spaces that we all moved here for.

Make comments at the council meetings, and pay attention to what is happening at the county level in planning our community.

These comments are made by Jan Kelly, A RESIDENT of Cedar 49. Someone who is watching the county council activities, and is not happy with the current direction of their decisions.