

Highway 41-53 / BNSF Grade Separation

Rathdrum, ID

Project Location

Highway 41-53 is a north-south principal arterial in Rathdrum. It crosses over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) mainline and currently carries approximately 8,340 vehicles per day. The BNSF line carries between 30 and 50 trains per day. Highway 41-53 lies east of downtown Rathdrum. Highway 41-53 is currently a two lane roadway overpass grade separation.

Project Description

The project will widen and lengthen the existing bridge over the railroad tracks as part of the construction of additional BNSF tracks. The number of lanes will increase from 2 lanes to 4 lanes in order to accommodate future traffic growth. The additional tracks are required to move UPRR train operations from their mainline corridor into the BNSF corridor. This will allow free movement of freight and commuter vehicles across all railroad mainlines between Spokane, WA and Athol, ID.

Proposed Schedule

The Design Report, completed in December 2004, is based on guidance generated from a preliminary study done in 2001. The Design Report incorporates comments from the railroads, City of Rathdrum, Idaho Transportation Department, and the public. Environmental approval for the entire Bridging the Valley project was received in August 2006. Final design and construction will begin when funds are available.

Summary of Benefits

When completed, the Bridging the Valley (BTV) project will separate vehicle traffic from train traffic in the 42 mile corridor between Spokane, Washington and Athol, Idaho. By removing all at-grade rail crossings, Bridging the Valley will:

- Improve public safety by reducing rail / vehicle collisions;
- Improve emergency access to residents and businesses along the corridor;
- Eliminate waiting time for vehicles at rail crossings;
- Reduce noise levels—no more train whistles near crossings;
- Improve traffic flow due to separated grade crossings; and
- Enhance development opportunities with a single rail corridor served by the region's largest railroads.

