

### Final design begins in 2005

HDR submitted 22 Design Reports on crossings, grade separations, and a pedestrian crossing as of December 2004. Track plans are currently under review by both BNSF and UPRR with completion scheduled for March 2005.

The Design Reports are based on guidance generated from a preliminary study done in 2001, which determined, based on traffic analysis and other issues, which crossings should be closed and which should be grade-separated. They incorporate comments from the committee, the railroads, the Washington and Idaho Departments of Transportation and the counties and cities affected. HDR has met with local highway district officials to refine the grade separations and continue with preliminary engineering.

Upon the approval of BNSF, UPRR and the partnering government agencies, and subject to available funding, work on the final design is expected to begin in 2005. Construction would start in 2007 with rail operations commencing as early as 2009.

### Contact Information

Persons wanting general information about the project or to request to be added to the project mailing list should call the Project Information Line at 208-765-6799, or toll free: 877-BTV -1200 (877-288-1200), or visit the project web page at [www.bridgingthevalley.org](http://www.bridgingthevalley.org).

### Project Management:

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Bridging the Valley is a  
major redesign of the  
heavily traveled Burlington  
Northern Santa Fe (BNSF)  
and Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR)  
rail corridor between  
Spokane, Wash., and Athol, Idaho.

The **Bridging the Valley** project focuses on the 42-mile rail route through the Spokane Valley, a strategic rail corridor for east-west trade across the northern tier of the nation and north-south trade with Canada. Roadway safety will be *substantially enhanced with the completion of this project to reduce grade separations along a heavily traveled rail route in the Pacific Northwest.*

Bridging the Valley is a major redesign of the heavily traveled Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) rail corridor between Spokane, Wash., and Athol, Idaho. Primary project goals include:

- Motor vehicle traffic safety at grade separations,
- Economic growth,
- Improved traffic mobility, and
- Train whistle noise abatement.

### Today there are 75 crossings along 42 miles

Freight rail traffic over these routes has continued to increase with the steady expansion of North American and regional rail shipping, a scenario that is stepping up the pressure to manage local traffic congestion, train noise, safety hazards, and other issues associated with the 75 at-grade crossings on the two railroads.



### Growing public concern

Separation of the freight corridor from local vehicular traffic has become a priority for many regional agencies and community groups. Public concern has grown along with the steady increase of train traffic, prompting surrounding communities to initiate a rail consolidation project to ease congestion. This proposal was for the creation of a common rail corridor and elimination of nearly all at-grade crossings through the Spokane Valley.



The Bridging the Valley project was created in response to these concerns and to accommodate the growing rail traffic. At the heart of the design, developed by the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) and HDR Engineering, is the elimination of most of the at-grade crossings.

Background

The **Bridging the Valley** Study was conducted between August 2000 and July 2002 to analyze the potential for reducing the number of highway/rail at-grade crossings between Spokane, Washington and Athol, Idaho. The study was sponsored by the Spokane Regional Transportation Council in cooperation with:

- Washington Department of Transportation
- Idaho Department of Transportation
- Local Jurisdictions
- Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR)
- Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF)

The study area is part of the Spokane Valley rail corridor for east-west trade across the northern section of the U.S. and north-south trade with Canada. Most of the BNSF's domestic, import, and export rail freight to and from Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, and Vancouver pass through the Spokane Valley rail corridor. UPRR's main concern was the ability to maintain service to existing rail served customers.

The study outcome favored the alternative which combines the BNSF and UPRR railroad mainlines and grade-separations between railroad and roadways in the BNSF corridor. The Spokane Regional Transportation Council and Bridging the Valley (BTV) Steering Committee approved preliminary engineering on May 23, 2003 for the new and to-be modified existing grade separations.

Grade Crossing Safety

One of the best ways to address grade crossing safety is to reduce the number of at-grade crossings. The BNSF corridor handles 65 to 70 trains per day, with 19 at-grade crossings on this 42-mile stretch. Just two to six miles south is Union Pacific's Spokane International Mainline, which runs 12 to 15 trains per day and has 56 at-grade crossings.

- Virtually 100 percent the BNSF domestic import and export rail traffic to and from Seattle and Tacoma, Portland, and Vancouver, B.C., passes through the Spokane Valley. All three BNSF corridors in the Pacific Northwest — Stevens Pass, Stampede Pass and the Columbia River route — converge at Spokane.
- Nearly all of UPRR's burgeoning North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) traffic between the United States and Canada passes through the Spokane Valley. UPRR's only western U.S. connection to Canada converges at Spokane.

Consolidating the UPRR mainline operations into the BNSF corridor resulted in an immediate reduction of mainline at-grade crossings by **56**. The project identified the best BNSF crossings to be consolidated into single grade separated crossings reducing the number of mainline at-grade crossings by an additional **19**. Plans call for modifying eight existing grade separated crossings within the BNSF corridor and creating 11 additional grade-separated crossings.

Double-tracking UPRR and BNSF

The study looked beyond eliminating high exposure UPRR crossings (or equipping them with other safety devices), and examined the feasibility of elimination of the UPRR corridor by combining UPRR's operations into the BNSF corridor.

Because the current BNSF mainline consists of both single and double mainline track, additional track capacity must be constructed. The area will be expanded by generally adding one track — with occasional need for two additional tracks in some locations — to the existing mainline within the railroad right-of-way.

BNSF and UPRR currently operate together on a single viaduct through the City of Spokane. Consequently, this is in reality an extension of what already exists.

Description of Crossing Changes

**Pleasant View Road Overpass, Harvard Road Overpass, Barker Road Overpass:** construct new bridges over multiple railroad tracks and new diamond interchanges above Trent Avenue (State Route 290) with on/off ramps. In all cases, Trent Avenue is adjacent and parallel to the railroad tracks. For the Barker Road project, eliminate a nearby flyover of Wellesley Avenue at Trent by realigning Wellesley parallel to Trent and the railroad tracks.

**Sullivan Road Overpass:** rebuild bridges across existing and new tracks and Trent Avenue using staged construction to minimize closure to vehicle traffic and widen roadway to accommodate future projected traffic.

**Starr Road Underpass:** rebuild railroad bridges over existing Starr Road using staged construction to minimize closure to vehicle traffic and widen roadway to accommodate future projected traffic.

**Ramsey Road Overpass:** raise two-lane Ramsey Road over three railroad tracks and Diagonal Road. Northeast of the new bridge, a new connector road will be built between Ramsey Road and Diagonal Road. Shoulder bikeways will be provided on both sides of Ramsey Road, Diagonal Road, and the Northeast Connector Road. Private driveways will be modified to provide access.

**Park Road Overpass:** raise four-lane Park Road over the existing and new railroad tracks, realigning adjacent roads and modifying driveways for private properties to provide access. As the proposed alignment swings to the west and intersects Trent Avenue (SR 290) at Coleman Road, approximately ¼ mile west of the existing Park Road / SR 290 intersection, a pedestrian / bicycle ramp will connect the existing Park Road / SR 290 intersection with the overpass.

**Havana Street Overpass:** raise four-lane Havana Street, widened to accommodate future projected traffic, to clear the railroad yard tracks which, at present, block Havana approximately 18 hours per day. The bridge will include sidewalks on both sides and 15-ft wide outside travel lanes.

**Highway 41/53 over BNSF tracks:** staged construction to replace a 3-span Cast-In-Place concrete bridge over one track with a new bridge over 3 tracks (2 new tracks). The roadway will be widened to accommodate future projected traffic. A 10-ft wide pedestrian / bikeway will be constructed on both sides of the highway.

**Pines Road Undercrossing:** four-lane Pines Road will be depressed approximately 20 ft to cross under a concrete girder railroad bridge carrying 4 tracks. By realigning the road to the east, most construction can take place without disruption to existing traffic and the roadway will cross at a right angle to the bridge.

**Rathdrum Main Street Undercrossing:** three-lane Main Street will be extended west and will be depressed approximately 20 ft to cross under a concrete girder railroad bridge carrying 3 tracks and a raised Highway 53. Highway 53 will be widened to 4-lanes and raised 10-feet.

**Rathdrum Pedestrian Undercrossing:** replace the existing 5-ft by 8-ft box culvert undercrossing with a new 10-ft by 10-ft box culvert meeting current bicycle / pedestrian standards.

**Brunner Road Undercrossing:** four-lane Brunner Road, widened to accommodate future projected traffic and bikeways, will be depressed approximately 20 ft to cross under a concrete girder railroad bridge carrying 3 tracks. Diagonal Road and Clagstone Road will be realigned slightly to the west, and both will be lowered to match the new elevation of Brunner Road.

**Highway 54 Undercrossing:** four-lane Highway 54 will be depressed approximately 20 ft to cross under a concrete girder railroad bridge carrying 3 tracks. A 10-ft wide pedestrian/bicycle walkway will be constructed along the south side of the highway, elevated above the roadway but passing under the new bridge.

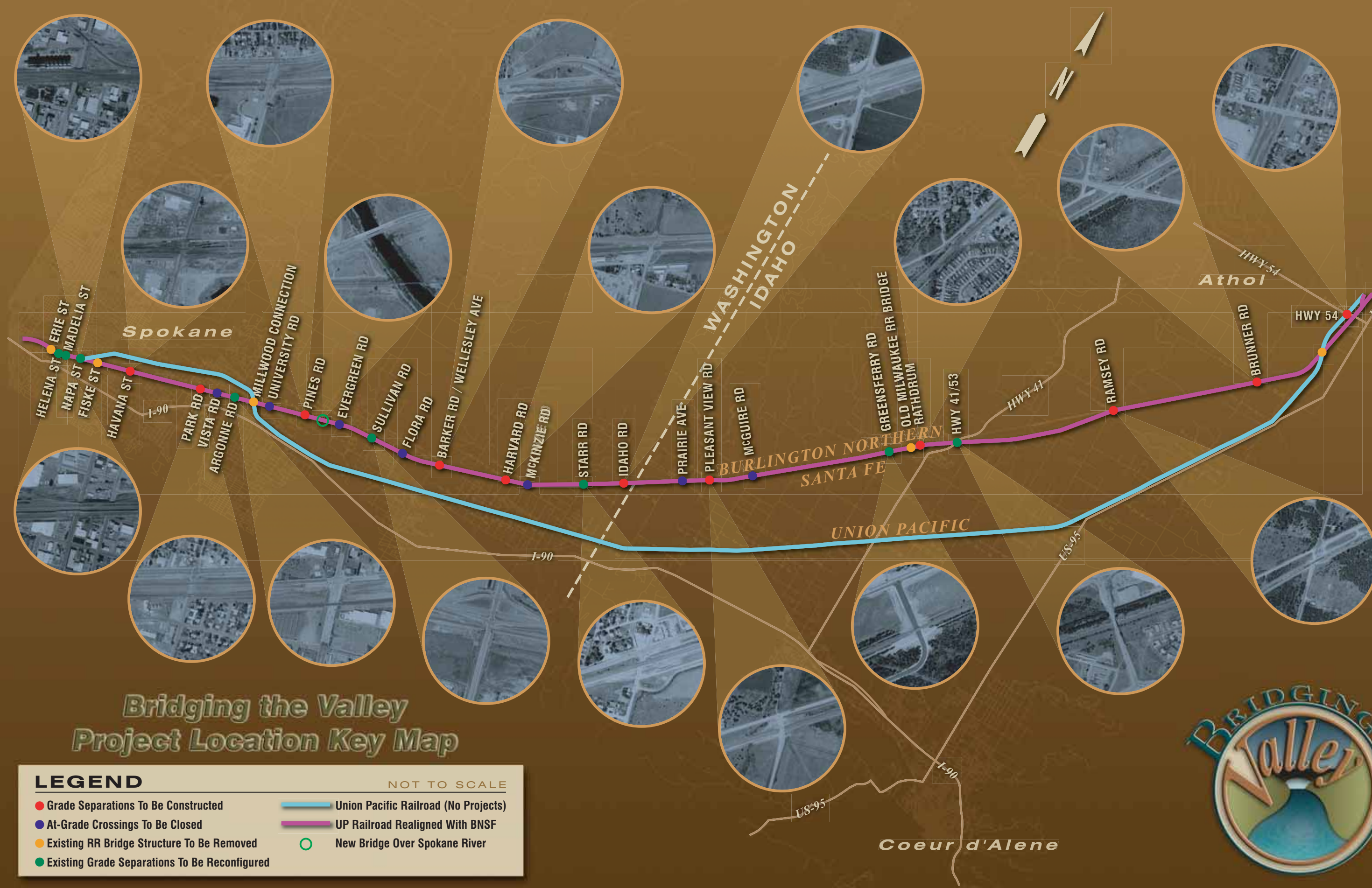
**Erie Street, Helena Street, Madelia Street, Napa Street Undercrossings:** A new bridge to carry a new track will be constructed adjacent to existing bridges at each of these downtown Spokane sites. Steel girders will support the tracks and a concrete fascia girder and piers with similar appearance to the existing bridge columns will be used.

**Argonne Road and Greensferry Road:** A new railroad bridge to carry a new track will be constructed adjacent to existing railroad bridges. No changes to the roadway is required.

**Idaho Road Undercrossing:** four-lane Idaho Road, widened to accommodate future projected traffic, will be depressed approximately 20 ft to cross under a concrete girder railroad bridge carrying 3 sets of tracks. By realigning the road to the west, most construction can take place without disruption to existing traffic and the roadway will cross at a right angle to the bridge.







# Bridging the Valley Project Location Key Map

## LEGEND

- Grade Separations To Be Constructed
- At-Grade Crossings To Be Closed
- Existing RR Bridge Structure To Be Removed
- Existing Grade Separations To Be Reconfigured

NOT TO SCALE

- Union Pacific Railroad (No Projects)
- UP Railroad Realigned With BNSF
- New Bridge Over Spokane River





Project Description

The Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) is proposing to improve traffic safety in Spokane County, Washington and Kootenai County, Idaho, through the implementation of the Bridging the Valley (BTV) project. BTV is a highway traffic safety project that eliminates 75 at-grade rail crossings in the 42-mile corridor between Spokane, Washington, and Athol, Idaho. It consists of the following major elements:

- Construction of one (in some locations, two) new railroad track(s) parallel to the existing rail line within existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) right of way to allow the transfer of UPRR traffic to the BNSF main line.
- Construction of a new rail yard for the UPRR in Spokane Valley along the BNSF corridor, between Barker Road and Flora Road, to allow UPRR to service its trains in the new location. (The current UPRR yard in Spokane does not include refueling facilities or fuel storage, and the new yard would not include these activities either.)
- Construction of separated grade crossings at 11 locations (Havana Street, Park Road, Pines Road, Barker Road, Harvard Road, Idaho Road, Pleasant View Road, Rathdrum - Main Street, Ramsey Road, Brunner Road and Highway 54).
- Improvement of existing separated grade crossings at nine locations (Erie Street, Helena Street, Madelia Street, Napa Street, Argonne Road, Sullivan Road, Starr Road, Greensferry Road, and Highway 41/53).
- Construction of a new railroad bridge over the Spokane River.
- Improvement or removal of existing railroad-only bridges at four locations (Fiske Street, Old Milwaukee Bridge, and BNSF over UPRR bridge at Athol and Millwood).
- Proposed closure of seven road crossings along the BNSF corridor (Vista Road, University, Road Evergreen Road, Flora Road, McKinzie Road, Prairie Avenue, and McGuire Road).

A description of the proposed work for each of the new and modified grade separation crossings and the new crossing of the Spokane River is included in the crossing change descriptions.

Environmental Review

Evaluation of environmental issues for the Bridging the Valley Project as a whole is presently underway. Environmental documentation, written in a Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Documented Categorical Exclusion format will evaluate the project effects.

Technical reports that support the environmental document will be completed and summarized in the environmental document. The Washington and Idaho Departments of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will review the environmental document for conformance with NEPA. The FHWA Washington Division Office will have the authority of approving the environmental document for the project as a whole.

Public Involvement

The public involvement plan for the project includes making contacts with properties and/or businesses adjacent to or potentially impacted by the project, newsletters and mailings sent, and public meetings were held. A website for the project is at [www.BridgingTheValley.org](http://www.BridgingTheValley.org).

The first building phase in the project will include complete construction of a new double track bridge over the Spokane River, double tracking of the BNSF mainline, the relocation of an isolated UPRR staging yard, and the completion of high priority grade separation such as Havana Street, Park Road, Pines Road, and Rathdrum Main Street.

The second phase will include completion of the grade separations as well as completion of triple tracking, with crossovers of the BNSF mainline.

Upon completion of the improvements, UPRR will move its traffic onto the BNSF corridor to operate between Spokane and Athol. Service on the UPRR mainline paralleling the corridor will then cease, and only the portion of that line required to serve existing customers will be retained.

Economic Benefits

In addition to creating a more efficient freight rail operating environment for UPRR, BNSF and local rail shippers, Bridging the Valley will provide widespread benefits to the surrounding communities.

The project will increase economic activity in the region in two ways, through near-term construction spending and long-term enhancement of development opportunities with a single rail corridor served by the region's largest railroads. The resulting increase in final demand for regional goods and services will result in new job creation in the directly effected businesses, plus jobs in supporting and ancillary industries. It will generate higher federal and local tax revenues through corporate taxes, income taxes from the newly created jobs, and other fiscal impacts.

The project quantified both the regional and national economic benefits to the public from consolidating the BNSF and UPRR into a single corridor and eliminating railroad-highway grade crossings between Spokane, Washington and Athol, Idaho. In addition, a wide variety of public benefits were evaluated and quantified, including reducing highway delays at grade crossings, reducing air emissions in the area, enhancing rail related economic development opportunities, and changes in land use and property values.

The health of the economy is tied to the transportation system's ability to move people and good's. Railroad crossing delays impact not just the vehicles and people waiting, but also businesses whose competitive edge depends on their ability to deliver goods and services efficiently. Railroad crossing delays lengthen travel times, increase vehicle operating costs and decrease productivity due to additional labor costs. With this project, travel time benefits to the general public will exceed \$470 million over the next 30 years.

Bi-State Cooperation Among Stakeholders

The project has been a collaborative effort between various stakeholders in Washington and Idaho.

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|---|--|--|
| ■ Idaho Transportation Department           | ■ KMP0   | ■ Post Falls School District                         |
| ■ City of Rathdrum                          | ■ Stimson Lumber                                   | ■ Lakeland School District                           |
| ■ City of Athol                             | ■ Kootenai County Perspectives                     | ■ Washington State Department of Transportation      |
| ■ City of Post Falls                        | ■ Group  | ■ Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission |
| ■ City of Hauser                            | ■ Local Emergency Planning Committee               | ■ City of Spokane                                    |
| ■ City of Coeur d'Alene                     | ■ Kootenai County Office of Emergency Management   | ■ City of Spokane Valley                             |
| ■ Idaho Public Utilities Commission         | ■ Rathdrum Transportation Committee                | ■ Spokane County                                     |
| ■ Northern Lakes Fire Protection District   | ■ Kootenai County Area Transportation Team         | ■ Irvin Water District                               |
| ■ Hauser Lake Fire District                 | ■ Kootenai County Planning and Building Department | ■ EPA  |
| ■ Coeur d'Alene Fire District               | ■ Kootenai County Air Patrol                       | ■ FHWA   |
| ■ Kootenai County Fire and Rescue           | ■ Kootenai County Commissioner Rick Currie         | ■ East Valley School District                        |
| ■ Mica Kidd Island Fire Protection District | ■ Panhandle Health District                        | ■ West Valley School District                        |
| ■ Spirit Lake Fire District                 | ■ Coeur d'Alene Police Department                  | ■ Avista   |
| ■ CDC Interagency Emergency Dispatch        | ■ Coeur d'Alene School District                    | ■ Yellowstone Pipeline                               |
| ■ Post Falls Highway District               |  | ■ Sunrise Trucking                                   |
| ■ Lakes Highway District                    |  |  |
| ■ East Side Highway District                |  |  |

