

The At-Grade Crossing Enhancement (ACE) Act of 2015

Introduced by Rep. Rick Larsen (WA-02)

Increased shipments of crude oil by rail have created new traffic and safety concerns throughout Northwest Washington and the country. The U.S. Department of Transportation recently announced stronger standards for tank cars and rail inspections, an important milestone to hold shippers and railroads accountable and ensure the highest level of safety for our communities. But the growth in crude oil shipped by rail is creating safety impacts and traffic backups near at-grade crossings, where rail incidents are mostly likely to occur and where rail lines have the highest impact on car traffic.

The At-Grade Crossing Enhancement (ACE) Act will invest in our country's infrastructure to keep our economy moving and communities near rail lines safe.

At-Grade Crossings Are Dangerous and Slowing our Economy Down

At-grade crossings are conflict zones for safety, efficiency and mobility in Washington state. According to the Association of Washington Cities, increased rail traffic is "delaying public safety vehicles, increasing commute times, and hindering development of certain parts of cities."

The Washington Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board found "\$1 billion in at-grade rail crossing needs in urban areas" in Washington state in a 2014 report. That same report found that "requests exceed funds available" for the federal Highway Safety Improvement Program that address at-grade crossings.

In Marysville, Wash., for example, the off-ramp for I-5 at State Route 529 is just in front of the BNSF's rail tracks. Traffic routinely backs up onto I-5 during rush hour, creating a critical safety issue. Meanwhile, as rail traffic slows through urban areas, trains cause agriculture and manufacturing shipment delays, increasing export costs as goods cannot get to ports on time.

The ACE Act Allows Communities to Make Investments in Safety and Efficiency

The ACE Act creates \$300 million in annual grants to upgrade at-grade crossing, improve safety, spark freight mobility, and provide training and technical assistance.

The program will be administered by the Federal Railroad Administration, which has experience in freight mobility projects and rail safety needs. State, local and tribal governments, along with Metropolitan Planning Organizations, will be eligible to apply for grants to improve rail crossings, relocate rail lines, and provide training and technical assistance for future improvements.

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