

January 21, 2013

GPT/Custer Spur EIS
c/o CH2M Hill
1100 112th Avenue NE Suite 400
Bellevue WA 98004



The Community Food Co-op is a consumer-owned natural food grocery retailer that has been a reliable source of quality products and honest information in Whatcom County since 1970. The Co-op has two locations, a 15,000 square-foot store in downtown Bellingham and a 17,000 square-foot store in the Cordata neighborhood. We are recognized for our commitment to building community and supporting a vibrant local economy.

The Co-op is the tenth largest cooperatively owned grocery retailer in the US. In 2012 our stores will have sales in excess of \$29 million from over one million transactions. The Co-op is a major employer with an annual payroll of \$4.8 million and over 200 local residents on staff.

A significant percentage of Whatcom County households are Co-op members. Our active membership numbers over 18,000 households, 15,000 of which are in Whatcom County. Co-op members live and work throughout Whatcom County; approximately 2,500 of our active Whatcom County members live outside Bellingham.

As a business that is committed to continued success and to the well-being of the community we serve, we are writing to request that you include in the Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal a study of the effect on Bellingham's and Whatcom County's role as a recreation and tourist destination and a potential place to relocate. In particular, please consider:

- Increased noise and traffic's impact on bird watching, beachcombing, and general recreational activities along the shore
- Cumulative coal loss, runoff and diesel pollution (actual and perceived by recreationists)
- Impact of increased traffic (and resulting reduced access to the Community Boating Center and other landings) to desirability of Bellingham as a kayaker and boater destination
- Impact on park access and sense of place of the potential new rail sidings that would need to be built to accommodate the increased rail traffic
- Impact on revenue-generating events, such as Ski to Sea, that rely on Bellingham's reputation for pristine air quality and unspoiled natural environment

The Community Food Coop has a substantial amount of business that is generated from visitors that have come to Bellingham as tourists and from new residents that have moved to the Whatcom County area. The focus of most of the tourism is recreational and focused on the view and recreational opportunities afforded by the Salish Sea and the Cascade Mountains. A primary motivator for relocation of new residents to the Whatcom County area is also their interest in Whatcom County's location near the Cascade Mountains and adjacent to the Salish Sea—the beauty, recreational opportunities and amenities (especially the waterfront parks).

The Co-op depends on Bellingham's appeal as a destination economy. Diminishment in the public perception of Bellingham's desirability as a tourist destination or place to relocate would have an adverse impact on our business and damage our brand image.

We would like to request an analysis of the economic, social, health and environmental costs—direct, indirect and cumulative—associated with the impact to the desirability of Bellingham and Whatcom County as a destination economy. This analysis should be done in the context of the current and likely future traffic.

We are requesting that you mitigate the risk posed to Whatcom County's appeal as a recreation and tourist destination, and a potential place to relocate, by not allowing any development or activity at the proposed site.

Sincerely,



Megan Westgate, Board Chair

On behalf of Community Food Co-op Board of Directors:

Brooks Dimmick

Rosalinda Guillen

Steven Harper

Brent Harrison

Beau Hilty-Jones

Mariah Ross

Jim Ashby, Community Food Co-op General Manager