

# Putting Longview Trains on a Faster Track

Cowlitz County needs trains. But no one needs the three at-grade crossings where trains serving the Port of Longview creep over State Route 432 at Third Avenue and Industrial Way. Fortunately, a significant improvement is in process as the Port nears completion of the Fibre Way Grade Separation project, the first phase of the Industrial Rail Corridor.

The Fibre Way Grade Separation project involves building a road overpass on Fibre Way from Columbia Boulevard to East Mill Road so trains can travel under the roadway without obstructing traffic. The overpass should be completed in early spring of 2002, and the entire rail corridor is scheduled for completion about one year later.

## New Rail Corridor to Reduce Congestion and Increase Safety

"The state highway is the main traffic corridor into the industrial area of Longview," said


*"The overpass will relieve congestion on SR 432 and improve traffic safety on Fibre Way."*  
- Norm Krehbiel, director of facilities and engineering, Port of Longview

Norm Krehbiel, director of facilities and engineering, Port of Longview. "The grade separation is the first phase of a larger project to provide a rail corridor that will relieve congestion on SR 432, improve traffic safety, and cut in half the time it takes for us to move rail cars to and from the Port."

The Port has already acquired the right-of-way for a rail corridor that will extend from Longview Switching Company's lead onto the main Burlington Northern track to the Port of Longview's Industrial Park and tie into the Port's marine terminals. By building the grade separation prior to constructing the new track, the Port ensures that vehicles will never encounter an at-grade rail crossing on Fibre Way, even while the new track is under construction.

## Building the Community

Currently, construction of the grade separation is providing jobs in Cowlitz County. "Our heavy construction business slows down in winter so we normally have a lot of layoffs," said Skip Portner, president of Ostrander Rock & Construction, general contractor for the project. "Work on the grade separation has helped us to employ more people during the slow time and to hire local sub-contractors and suppliers such as Five Rivers Construction, Renaud Electric, Mt. St. Helens Fence, Spurlock and Associates, Lakeside Industries and J.L. Storedahl & Sons.

The new rail corridor is expected to benefit the entire community by providing a safer and more efficient route for trains to access the Port's Industrial Park. "When new industries locate here because of the improved rail connection, it creates new jobs and revenue for the community," said George Cress, director of planning and development, Port of Longview. "The Port is pleased with the project. It is providing construction jobs now and job prospects for the future." 



An Ostrander Rock & Construction worker moves Geofoam blocks into place. Each 16 foot-long block weighs approximately 280 pounds.

## GEOFOAM PROVIDES FIRM FOUNDATION IN SANDY SOIL

The low-strength foundation soils at the Fibre Way overpass presented an immediate challenge for the design engineers at HNTB and Jacobs/Sverdrup Civil.

After extensive research into alternative fill materials, they recommended using lightweight plastic geofoam, which weighs only 1.5 pounds per cubic foot, compared to about 120 pounds per cubic foot for earth fill. Their recommendation was accepted by the Port, Washington State Department of Transportation and engineers from the City of Longview and Cowlitz County.

- The total cost of the project is lower using geofoam rather than earth fill.
- Impacts to neighboring landowners are greatly reduced.
- The construction season can go through wet weather, shortening disruption of traffic and providing employment in the winter months.
- Geofoam is stable in earthquakes.
- Project time is shortened by three years.

"Our company used geofoam successfully to widen Interstate 15 through downtown Salt Lake City for the Winter Olympics, so we've had experience with its value and effectiveness," said Paul DePalma, the Fibre Way Grade Separation project manager, Jacobs/Sverdrup Civil. "But this product is relatively new to our area, so I commend Ostrander Rock & Construction for their willingness to be proactive in using this innovative material."

For more information about geofoam, visit the Internet web site of the Geofoam Research Center at <http://geofoam.syr.edu>.



Fibre Way Grade Separation project under construction in November 2001. Geofoam fill can be seen at the top right.



Five Rivers Construction workers steady the first of seven pre-cast concrete girders as they are moved into place atop the Fibre Way Grade Separation project.