

ACTION ITEM MEMO

Port of Tacoma Commission



Item No: 6G
Meeting Date: 9/15/26

DATE: September 8, 2026

TO: Port of Tacoma Commission

FROM: Eric Johnson, Executive Director
Sponsor: Pat Patterson, Director, Facilities Maintenance
Project Manager: Joe Caldwell, Project Manager, Maintenance

SUBJECT: Hi Rail Excavator Purchase (Project ID 102016)

A. ACTION REQUESTED

Request project authorization in the amount of \$600,000 for a total authorized amount of \$600,000, for the purchase of a Hi Rail Excavator and Trailer, Project ID #102016.

B. BACKGROUND

We do not currently have a hi-rail excavator with a brush cutter, and none are available to rent. As a result, we maintain vegetation along the railroad right of way using hand tools. We also perform excavation on the railway right of way, which requires transporting an excavator to each site at additional cost. Purchasing a 309 mini hi-rail excavator would improve vegetation management and address track deficiencies in Bullfrog, Banana Yard, and Support Yard. Our current equipment is either too large or not designed to operate safely in the tight spaces within these three rail yards. As ditch maintenance expands, this smaller excavator would be better suited for working between fence lines and ditch assets, between rights of way and ditch assets, and near customer equipment while clearing vegetation.

The purchase of a trailer with the excavator will allow us to transport ourselves, avoiding outside hauling costs. It can operate alongside the tracks with three times the reach of our backhoe, and unlike our large John Deere tractor, it can travel on the rails. Because it runs on rail, it can be moved to whichever track requires vegetation maintenance. In the past, rail switch locations were limited to what we could cut and how far into the yards we could reach. We currently use a John Deere backhoe to dig up broken water lines, but it is not ideal for this work. Its hydraulics are imprecise, which can increase the risk of damage, the bucket does not provide the depth we often need, and the machine's overall footprint is too large for many of the areas where we work.

Using this equipment would reduce the need for employees to operate hand tools for extended periods, helping lower injury risk and exposure to train traffic. It would also improve efficiency and reduce track outage time.

Additional benefits of this equipment include:

- Carpenters can use this equipment for smaller projects such as clearing fence lines, removing fence posts, concrete preparation, demolition with a jackhammer attachment, concrete removal, material handling, site preparation, and grading.
- Electricians can use it to dig small trenches around utilities and buildings.
- Plumbers can use it to trench for new pipe installations or locate leaks in tight spaces.
- Environmental team can use it for ditch work, they rent a small CAT 310 a few times a year.

C. **SCOPE OF WORK**

The scope of work will include: Purchase a new Caterpillar Model 309 Hydraulic Excavator with hi rail and trailer.

- Define specifications
- Procure through Sourcewell Contract #011723-CAT

D. **TIMEFRAME/PROJECT SCHEDULE**

Define Specifications	8/24/2026
Obtain Quote	8/31/2026
Issue Purchase Order	9/7/2026

E. **FINANCIAL SUMMARY**

Cost: Includes the equipment and trailer purchase, preparation work upon delivery, and a contingency for potential price increases.

Source of Funds: The 2026-2030 Capital Investment Plan (CIP) allocates \$600,000 to the project.

Financial Impacts: Project costs will be capitalized and depreciated over an estimated useful life of 20 years resulting in annual depreciation of \$25,000.

F. **NEXT STEPS**

Define specifications and procure.