

Item: 6G

Date: 9/15/26

Hi Rail Excavator Purchase

Joe Caldwell

Project Manager, Maintenance

Port of Tacoma Commission Meeting

Date: September 15, 2026



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

The proposed acquisition of a CAT 309 hi-rail mini excavator and trailer is an opportunity to improve vegetation management, utility excavation, and overall efficiency across rail yard maintenance activities. The equipment directly addresses current limitations in capability, safety, and equipment availability

- We do not own a hi-rail excavator with brush cutting capability, and none are available for rent.
- Vegetation maintenance is currently performed manually using hand tools, increasing labor effort and safety exposure.
- Excavation work requires transporting standard excavators to site, adding cost and delays.
 - Too large for confined rail yard spaces
 - Not designed for precise excavation work (e.g., backhoe limitations)
 - Not capable of rail travel, restricting reach and access

Operational Improvements

- Enables mechanized vegetation control along rail right-of-way
- Provides precision excavation for utilities and ditch maintenance
- Allows work in confined or restricted areas inaccessible to current equipment
- Can travel directly on rails, improving access within rail yards

Efficiency Gains

- Eliminates reliance on external hauling contractors
- Reduces delays associated with equipment rental availability
- Enables rapid deployment across multiple work sites
- Decreases track outage durations by improving task speed

Safety Enhancements

- Reduces employee exposure to hand tool overuse and train traffic hazards
- Improves precision in excavation, lowering risk of utility damage
- Provides a safer alternative to using improperly matched equipment (e.g., tractors in sloped or confined areas)

Cross Functional Value

The equipment demonstrates strong **multi-trade utilization**, increasing overall return on investment:

- **Carpenters:** Fence line clearing, demolition, grading, material handling
- **Electricians:** Trenching around utilities and buildings
- **Plumbers:** Utility installation and leak detection in tight spaces
- **Environmental:** Ditch and storm drain work



- **Cost** - Includes the equipment 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.

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Thank You

Questions & Discussion



Joe Caldwell
Project Manager, Maintenance
jcaldwell@portoftacoma.com