



Contact Information

Scott Timmer, City Manager
stimmer@fairfield-city.org
513.867.5300

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City of Fairfield Announces Symmes Road Grade Separation Project

FAIRFIELD, Ohio – The City of Fairfield has been awarded \$3 million to improve rail crossings at Symmes Road and North Gilmore Road.

The Federal Rail Administration (FRA) announced over \$570 M for 63 projects in 32 states under the Fiscal Year 2022 Railroad Crossing Elimination Program. The City of Fairfield project is one of two in Ohio. United States Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg, had the following to say on the awards: “Given the scale of need and decades of underinvestment in America’s space, we won’t be able to reach every single crossing in the country or fix every issue, but this is a big, big piece of good news and it represents a great start.”

This project will support planning and project development activities at two adjacent crossings on CSX's Terminal Subdivision in Fairfield, OH: Symmes Road and North Gilmore Road. This project would complete development work for a proposed grade separation at the Symmes Road crossing and perform a feasibility study on the North Gilmore Road crossing for potential closure. Both crossings are skewed upon approach, limiting visibility for drivers, and average more than 40 trains a day. The Butler County Transportation Improvement District and City of Fairfield will contribute a 20 percent non-Federal match. \$240,000 of this project funding amount qualifies for the statutory set-aside for Planning projects.

This project offers the following benefits:

- **Safety:** The Symmes Road and North Gilmore Road crossings have seen a combined 16 crashes, eight fatalities and nine injuries according to the FRA Grade Crossing Inventory. Grade separation and closure of these crossings, respectively, will eliminate two conflict points while improving emergency response times both within the City and regionally.
- **Congestion:** Reduced congestion, delay, and emissions from over 40 train movements per day on roadways with annual average daily traffic of approximately 13,000 (Symmes Road) and 9,000 vehicles (North Gilmore Road). Trains frequently block one or both crossings for several hours at a time.
- **Rail Operations:** Improved reliability of rail movements along one of the most important freight corridors in the Midwest, connecting several major industrial cities along the I-75 highway corridor. Completion of this project will provide over 4.5 miles of track space without at-grade crossing interference north of the CSX Queensgate Yard, the fifth largest by volume in the CSX network.
- **Economic Development:** With more than 36,000 jobs within three miles of the Symmes Road crossing, the corridor provides critical access to the region's workforce. Several industrial properties surrounding the Symmes Road crossing present new job attraction and retention opportunities, with some served directly by rail access.

In March of this year, Councilmember Dale Paullus, City Manager Scott Timmer, and Public Works Director Ben Mann went to Washington D.C. to meet with administration officials from the FRA and CSX Executives to discuss project specifics. In addition, they met with and provided information to officials from the offices of Senator Sherrod Brown, Senator JD Vance, and Congressman Warren Davidson to advocate for project support. The City also received letters from state legislators, county partners, and local businesses and organizations in support of this project. The City is appreciative of all support and looks forward to collaborating with stakeholders to execute the grant. CSX has been very supportive of this project and the City looks forward to our continued partnership with both CSX and the Butler County Transportation Improvement District as we move the project forward.

Fairfield covers 21 square miles in Southwest Ohio just north of Cincinnati with 44,000 residents and more than 1,200 corporate, retail, service and light industrial establishments. For more information, visit www.fairfield-city.org, and like or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.