

**A report by the staff of the
Public Utilities Commission of Ohio**

In the Matter of the Request by Ashland Railway to Downgrade Warning
Devices at N. Main Street/SR 13 (DOT#152-160H) Grade Crossing in the
City of Mansfield, Richland County, Ohio.

Case Number 17-2166-RR-RCP

April 5, 2018

INTRODUCTION

Rail Division

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) works with local highway authorities and communities to provide safety for the citizens of Ohio at highway-railroad grade crossings.

The PUCO has the statutory authority to regulate and promote the welfare and safety of railroad employees and the traveling public pursuant to Ohio Revised Code (ORC) §4905.04.

The PUCO has the authority to close public at grade crossings pursuant to ORC §§4907.474 and 4907.475. These sections set forth a variety of factors to be considered by the Commission in determining whether there is a demonstrable need for any public grade crossing to exist and whether any such crossing could be closed to vehicular traffic and/or pedestrian traffic and the travel over the grade crossing diverted to other grade crossings.

The PUCO is responsible for evaluating public highway railroad grade crossings to determine the need for upgrading the warning devices and apportioning the cost thereof pursuant to ORC §4907.471.

The PUCO has the authority under ORC §4511.63(B) to declare a grade crossing exempt, whereby vehicles normally required to stop at a grade crossing, under that title and Code of Federal Regulations Title 49, §392.10, would be able to proceed through the crossing without stopping.

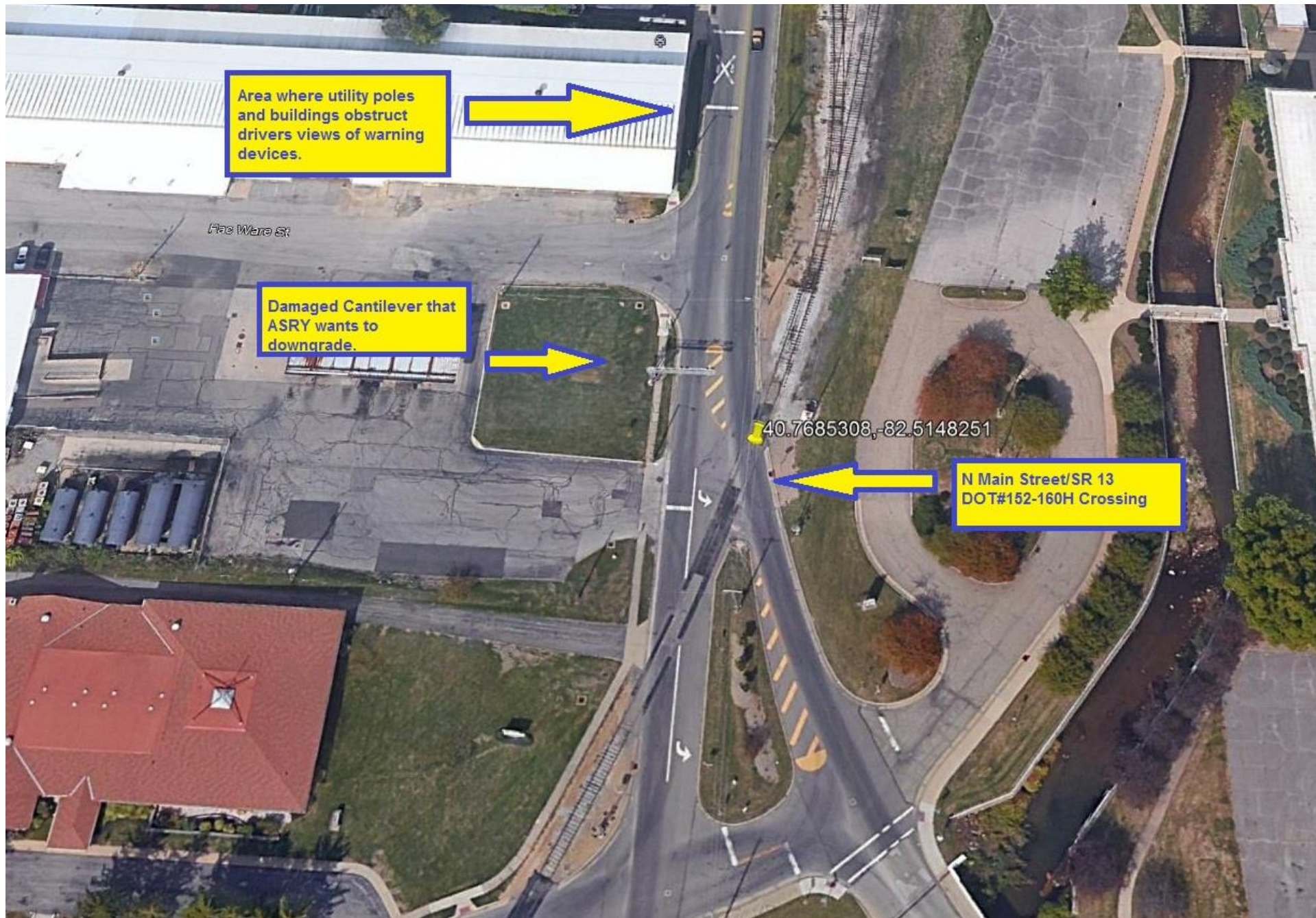
The PUCO enforces all aspects of the Federal Railroad Administration regulations through inspections and evaluations of Ohio's public highway railroad grade crossings.

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICANT

Ashland Railway (ASRY) is a short line railroad that began in 1986 and operates in Richland, Ashland, and Wayne counties. The operate 56 miles of track and have interchanges with Norfolk Southern Railway, CSX Transportation, and Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway. They provide essential rail service to the communities of Ashland, Mansfield, Willard, Shelby, Plymouth and West Salem. They also have affiliated companies, Skye Trucking and Mansfield Railport.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

On October 19, 2017, ASRY petitioned for approval to downgrade the warning devices at N. Main Street/SR 13 (DOT#152-160H) in the City of Mansfield, Richland County, Ohio. ASRY requested to remove the overhead signal cantilever in the southbound lane. The cantilever was damaged by a dump truck and has broken welds that have been deemed unsafe to repair. The main signal mast lights and the existing gates function as intended. Additionally, ASRY states that they have limited train activity at this crossing with the existing train movements at an average of 1 per month. The end of the track is ½ mile away from this crossing.



Area where utility poles and buildings obstruct drivers views of warning devices.





Damaged Cantilever that ASRY wants to downgrade.

N Main Street/SR 13
DOT#152-160H Crossing

40.7685308,-82.5148251

N Main Street/SR 13 DOT#152-160H

N Main Street/SR 13 DOT#152-160H

South Direction	West Direction
	
North Direction	East Direction
	
Site Information	
AARDOT:	152160H
AARDOT Source:	Railroad
Adj. AARDOT:	
Adj. AARDOT Source:	Field
Survey Site ID:	RIC860
Init. Agency for Change:	State
Reason for Change:	Updated Record
Effective Date:	Mar 27 2018 12:00AM
Railroad Information	
Operating RR:	Ashland Railway, Inc.
Division:	OH
Sub-Division:	LAER
Branch/Line Name:	
Milepost:	61.5
Railroad ID:	5594

Nearest Time Table Station:	MANSFIELD
Parent RR Company:	ASRY
Crossing Owner:	ASRY
Location and Classification Information	
County:	RICHLAND
(Nearest) City:	MANSFIELD
Street:	N MAIN ST
Highway and SLM:	SR13-16.36
High Speed Corridor:	
County Map Ref. Number:	70
ODOT NLF ID:	SRICSR00013**C
Latitude:	40.7685308
Longitude:	-82.5148251
Elevation (ft):	1149.824
Crossing Type:	Public
Position:	At-Grade
Emergency Contact:	
Railroad Contact:	
State Contact:	
LHA:	CITY OF MANSFIELD
LHA2:	
Dev. Type:	Commercial
Crossing Angle:	30-59 Degrees
Main Tracks:	1
Other Tracks:	0
Lanes:	1
Warning Devices	
Crossbucks, Standard:	3
Crossbucks, Buckeye:	0
Lights, Mast Mounted:	2
Lights, Cantilevered:	2
Lights, Other:	0
Gates:	2

Traffic Information	
Day Thru Trains:	0
Day Switching Trains:	0
Night Thru Trains:	0
Night Switch Trains:	0
Date of Train Count:	Mar 27 2018 12:00AM
Highway AADT:	8950
Date of AADT:	2008

Highway Information	
Distance to Nearest Intersection:	24
Type of Intersection:	Commercial Drive
Number of HW-HW Intersections:	2

Highway 1:		Highway 2:	
Traffic Light:	NO	Traffic Light:	NO
Flashing Light:	NO	Flashing Light:	NO
Stop Sign:	YES	Stop Sign:	YES
Yield Sign:	NO	Yield Sign:	NO
Distance from Tie to Center of Intersection:	169	Distance from Tie to Center of Intersection:	106
DO NOT STOP ON TRACK(S) Sign:	NO	DO NOT STOP ON TRACK(S) Sign:	NO

Site Comments
Seasonal Switch movements average < 1 per month.

N. Main Street/SR 13 Site Pictures Taken on March 16, 2018



Back view of damaged cantilever.



View of crossing when driving S. on N. Main Street/SR 13. Warning devices are hard to see due to utility poles and signage in the area.



View of crossing when driving S. on N. Main Street/SR 13. Warning devices are hard to see due to utility poles and signage in the area.

**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO
TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT
RAIL DIVISION**

Date of Assignment: March 7, 2018

Date of Inspection: March 16, 2018

Subject: 17-2166-RR-RCP, Application for possible downgrade of active warning devices, Main Street State Route 13, Mansfield, Richland County, Ashland Railway (ASRY).

DOT #: 152-160H

FINDINGS

On receipt of the present assignment, I conducted an inspection of the crossing on March 16, 2018. The railroad has petitioned the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) to downgrade the active warning device at the Main Street highway rail grade crossing. The railroad is requesting the PUCO grant them permission to remove the cantilever from northwest quadrant for the southbound lane of traffic.

On the above noted day, I inspected the highway rail grade crossing which is located in Mansfield. Upon inspection I found a two lane roadway that travels north and south and is intersected by a highway rail grade crossing owned by the Ashland Railway. The tracks intersect the roadway at M.P.61.5 and runs east and west. The crossing GPS coordinates are N 40.7685308, W -82.5148251. The crossing consists of one main track which currently has standard flashers and gates with cantilevers as an active highway rail grade crossing warning system. The posted roadway speed limit is 35 mph. The AADT is 8950 and was taken in 2008.

Upon inspection I found the cantilever in the northwest quadrant had its bridge missing and no longer had lights out over the roadway. The only remaining lights were located on the lower half of the cantilever and the gate mechanism remained in place. The devices are located ten feet from the face of the curb behind the sidewalk.

When traveling southbound on Main Street it is difficult to see the lights or crossbuck due to the buildings and poles along the edge of the roadway. It is difficult to tell a set of tracks are even there. You can actually see the Norfolk Southern crossing just south of the Ashland Railway crossing before you see the ASRY Main Street crossing.

Code Requirements/Guidance

The Ohio Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (OMUTCD) states as guidance:

“ Flashing-light signals may be installed on overhead structures or cantilevered supports as shown in Figure 8C-1 where needed for additional emphasis, or for better visibility to approaching traffic, particularly on multi-lane approaches or highways with profile restrictions.”

The Federal Highway (FHWA) Grade Crossing Handbook states the following:

Cantilevered Flashing Light Signals

Flashing light signals are generally post-mounted, but where improved visibility to approaching traffic is required, cantilevered flashing light signals are used. Cantilevered flashing lights may be appropriate when any of the following conditions exist:

- Multilane highways (two or more lanes in one direction).
- Highways with paved shoulders or a parking lane that would require a post-mounted light to be more than 10 feet from the edge of the travel lane.
- Roadside foliage obstructing the view of post-mounted flashing light signals.
- A line of roadside obstacles such as utility poles (when minor lateral adjustment of the poles would not solve the problem).
- Distracting backgrounds such as an excessive number of neon signs (conversely, cantilevered flashing lights should not distract from nearby highway traffic signals).
- Horizontal or vertical curves at locations where the extension of flashing lights over the traffic lane will provide sufficient visibility for the required stopping sight distance.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The current warning devices are located ten feet from the curb and several power poles and buildings obstruct the view of the lights. As required in the OMUTCD and FHWA grade crossing handbook a cantilever is warranted at this location to provide proper warning to the traveling public. However if the railroad were to place the gate mechanism and flashing lights at 4'-3" from the face of the curb (i.e. 2' from the face of the curb to the closest part of the signal or gate arm in its upright position OMUTCD Section 8C.01), the flashing lights would be visible and the need for a cantilever in this quadrant would no longer be warranted.

It is recommended the railroad be granted the downgrade of the active highway rail grade crossing system and the cantilever be removed from the northwest quadrant as long as the railroad agrees to meet the following exceptions and stipulations.

The gates and flashing lights must be relocated to 4'-3" from the face of the curb in order for the cantilever to be removed.

This will provide a better site view for the approaching southbound traffic and would eliminate the need for the cantilever.

Shawn Zurfley
PUCO/FRA S&TC Rail Inspector
Date: March 20, 2018

STAFF RECOMENDATIONS

PUCO Rail Staff recommends the following actions be taken:

- 1) Approve the ASRY request to downgrade the warning devices at the crossing with the following condition:
 - a. The flasher mast and gate is moved in the northwest quadrant to the required minimum of 4'-3" from the face of curb as outlined in OMUTCD Section 8C.01.
- 2) Require ASRY to notify Staff when the work is completed.
- 3) Require staff to conduct follow-up inspections to verify that the modifications have been made as approved.

OTHER INFORMATION

Ohio's Rail Grade Crossing Programs

Ohio is a national leader in terms of railroad operations. Ohio is home to nearly 40 railroads that operate thousands of trains in Ohio every day over approximately 4,900 miles of track and 5,800 public grade crossings. The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) is the state agency with regulatory authority over railroads operating in Ohio. The Commission works in partnership with the Federal Railroad Administration to ensure that rail operations and infrastructure are safe and in compliance with federal and state regulations.

In addition to central office staff and administration, the PUCO employs federally certified railroad inspectors throughout Ohio. These inspectors respond to inquiries and complaints and conduct specialized inspections of railroad tracks and equipment, rail operations, hazardous material transportation, and grade crossing signal circuitry. The inspectors also monitor railroad rights-of-way and grade crossings for: surface conditions, view obstructions, fencing and drainage concerns. Additionally, inspections are conducted on railroad equipment at rail yards and other facilities and they review safety concerns of both the PUCO and railroad employees.

Safety is our highest priority

Grade crossing safety is one of the PUCO's highest priorities, and we are proud of our accomplishments. Since 1990, motor vehicle/train crashes at grade crossings in Ohio have declined from 326 to 68 in 2017 and the number of fatalities has dropped from 59 to 8 in 2017. This dramatic improvement has been achieved during a period of steady increase in the amount of train traffic and in the number of registered motor vehicles and licensed drivers in Ohio. Over the past 15 years, the PUCO has participated in safety upgrades at more than 3,300 grade crossings across Ohio. We look forward to working with your community to help make grade crossings as safe as possible.

Questions or Concerns?

Call the Ohio Rail Hotline at (866) 814-RAIL or log on to www.PUCO.ohio.gov for answers to all of your railroad crossing needs.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
Asim Z. Haque, Chairman

180 E. Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215-3793
(800) 686-PUCO (7826)

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Summary: Staff Report Filed In the Matter of the Request by Ashland Railway to Downgrade Warning Devices at N. Main Street/SR 13 (DOT#152-160H) Grade Crossing in the City of Mansfield, Richland County, Ohio. electronically filed by Mrs. Jill A Henry on behalf of PUCO/ Rail Division