

BEFORE

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

In the Matter of the Authorization of the)
Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway to Install) Case No. 15-1658-RR-FED
Active Grade Crossing Warning Devices)
in Stark and Summit Counties.)

FINDING AND ORDER

The Commission finds:

- (1) R.C. 4905.04 provides that the Commission has statutory authority to regulate and promote the welfare and safety of railroad employees and the traveling public.
- (2) R.C. 4907.471 provides that the Commission shall survey all grade crossings and establish a priority list to determine which grade crossings are in need of additional protective devices.
- (3) R.C. 4907.476 provides that where the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) enters into contracts and agreements for grade crossing protective device projects, the Commission shall work with and through the department. Federal funding for such projects is provided through the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC), which is an independent agency of the state within ODOT, established in accordance with R.C. 4981.02.
- (4) Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway (WLE) is a railroad as defined in R.C. 4907.02 and subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission under R.C. 4905.04.
- (5) On September 22, 2015, Staff filed a memorandum stating that the ORDC has authorized funding for WLE to install mast-mounted flashing lights and roadway gates in Stark and Summit Counties, as follows:

Stark County, Sugarcreek Township, Alabama
Avenue/Township Road 314 (DOT#473157L), approved actual
cost \$243,756.09

Summit County, city of Akron, Munroe Falls Road
(DOT#002170B), approved actual cost \$254,461.88

Staff notes that both crossings were surveyed on April 21, 2015, because of their hazard ranking and were found to warrant the upgrades. The projects will be paid for with federal funds. Staff requests that the Commission issue an order directing completion within nine months.

- (6) Upon review, WLE is hereby authorized to acquire project materials and to commence construction as detailed in the letter of construction authorization. WLE shall notify Staff at least five working days before the date work is scheduled to begin at the projects so that arrangements can be made for any inspection. In addition, WLE shall timely notify Staff of any changes in the scope of work, cost overruns, materials, etc., which are not in the approved plans in order to estimate and secure approval before the work is performed.
- (7) Within 30 days of the issuance of this Finding and Order, WLE shall file notice that it has initiated discussions with Ohio Edison Company (OEC) or any other applicable utility, to ensure that electric service will be available to enable the grade crossing improvements to be constructed and placed in service within the deadline specified by the Commission. Such filing shall identify the steps WLE has taken with OEC, or any other electric utility, and the local highway authority to have electric service available during the construction and cut-in phases of the projects. WLE shall serve a copy of the notice upon OEC or any other applicable utility. To ensure that the deadline is met, OEC or any other applicable utility shall timely inform the Commission in writing of any issues regarding the availability of electric service.
- (8) The Commission will issue no further construction authorization. Further, the grade crossing improvement projects should be completed by July 28, 2016.
- (9) It is expected that all work necessary for Federal Highway Administration acceptance of the warning devices will be completed by the in-service due date and that the railroad will be responsible for this work. This work includes, but is not limited to, any ancillary work to make the warning devices function as designed and visible to the roadway user, and Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices compliance, including minor roadway work if necessary.

- (10) In order to expedite the activation of the warning devices, the Commission no longer requires railroad companies to delay such activation pending final inspection by Staff. However, WLE should notify Staff and ORDC 30 days before the projected date of completion. At the time Staff or ORDC makes its final inspection of the devices and finds that the identified installations are complete and the warning devices have been put in service, Staff should file a memorandum in this docket indicating that the installations are complete and that the warning devices have been put in service.
- (11) With the intention of promoting increased public safety during the pendency of the projects, the Commission urges the appropriate local government agency to make an immediate assessment of interim physical improvements, which would enhance driver awareness at the crossings. The Commission may provide assistance in funding improvements, such as rumble strips, illumination, signs or other safety enhancements for the projects. Applications for such funding should be made to the Commission's Transportation Department, Rail Division, which shall review any proposal. In the event the department finds the improvements appropriate, the department director is hereby authorized to execute a contract with the local government agency, and obligate up to \$5,000 from the State Grade Crossing Safety Fund for such improvements at the project locations. However, the local government agency should not initiate any improvements until a contract has been executed.

It is, therefore,

ORDERED, That by November 27, 2015, WLE file notice that it has initiated with OEC, or any applicable utility, the process to ensure that electric service will be available at the involved grade crossings as set forth in finding (7). *It is, further,*

ORDERED, That WLE follow the detailed instructions as outlined in the ORDC letter of construction authorization and proceed with and complete the projects by July 28, 2016. *It is, further,*

ORDERED, That WLE notify Staff at least five working days before the date work is scheduled to begin at the project sites so that arrangements can be made for any inspection. *It is, further,*

ORDERED, That WLE timely notify Staff of any changes in the scope of work, cost overruns, materials, etc., which are not in the approved plans and estimates, and shall secure approval before the work is performed. It is, further,

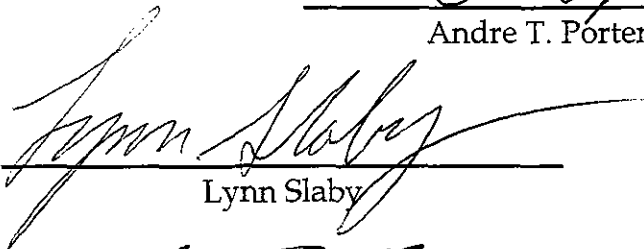
ORDERED, That WLE notify the Commission and ORDC 30 days before the projected date of completion. It is, further,

ORDERED, That, at the time Staff or ORDC makes its final inspection and finds that the installations at the grade crossings are complete and the warning devices have been put in service, Staff will file a memorandum in this docket indicating that the installations are complete and the warning devices have been put in service. It is, further,

ORDERED, That a copy of this Finding and Order be served upon ORDC, WLE, city of Akron Public Works Bureau, Sugarcreek Township Trustees, OEC, and any other interested person of record.

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO


Andre T. Porter, Chairman


Lynn Slaby


M. Beth Trombold

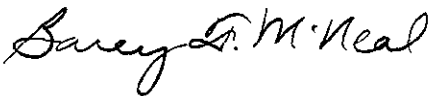

Asim Z. Haque


Thomas W. Johnson

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Entered in the Journal

OCT 28 2015



Barcy F. McNeal
Secretary