

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

IN THE MATTER OF THE AUTHORIZATION OF
CSX TRANSPORTATION AND NORFOLK
SOUTHERN RAILWAY TO INSTALL ACTIVE
GRADE CROSSING WARNING DEVICES IN
MORROW, CRAWFORD, AND TRUMBULL
COUNTIES.

CASE NO. 16-979-RR-FED

FINDING AND ORDER

Entered in the Journal on June 29, 2016

I. SUMMARY

{¶ 1} The Commission authorizes CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern Railway to install mast-mounted flashing lights and roadway gates at three grade crossings in Morrow, Crawford, and Trumbull Counties.

II. DISCUSSION

A. *Applicable Law*

{¶ 2} 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.

{¶ 3} 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.

{¶ 4} 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.

B. Procedural Background and Other Details

{¶ 5} CSX Transportation (CSX) and Norfolk Southern Railway (NS) are railroads as defined in R.C. 4907.02 and subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission under R.C. 4905.04.

{¶ 6} On May 5, 2016, Staff filed a memorandum stating that the ORDC has authorized funding for CSX and NS to install mast-mounted flashing lights and roadway gates in the following locations:

CSX: Morrow County, Washington Township, Keiffer Road/Township Road 32
(DOT#262043R)

NS: Crawford County, Liberty Township, Quaintance Road/Township Road 81
(DOT#481574R)

NS: Trumbull County, near Kinsman, Fisher-Corinth Road/County Road 248C
(DOT#503136D)

The approved actual costs, to be paid fully with federal funds, are as follows:

Railroad/County/Township or Community	Federal Funds
CSX: Morrow County, Washington Township	\$413,581.00
NS: Crawford County, Liberty Township	\$320,143.00
NS: Trumbull County, near Kinsman	\$276,907.00

Staff requests that the Commission issue an order directing completion within nine months. Staff notes that the two NS crossings were surveyed on October 1, 2015, and October 15, 2015, respectively, because of their hazard rank, while the CSX crossing was surveyed on November 3, 2015, because of hazard rank and a fatal accident on March 21, 2015.

{¶ 7} Upon review, NS and CSX are hereby authorized to acquire project materials and to commence construction as detailed in the letter of construction authorization. NS and CSX 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, NS and CSX 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.

{¶ 8} Within 30 days of the issuance of this Finding and Order, NS and CSX shall file notice that they have initiated discussions with American Electric Power (AEP) and 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 NS and CSX have taken with AEP and 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. CSX and NS shall serve a copy of the notice upon AEP, OEC, or any other applicable utility. To ensure that the deadline is met, AEP, OEC, or any other applicable utility, shall timely inform the Commission in writing of any issues regarding the availability of electric service.

{¶ 9} The Commission will issue no further construction authorization. Further, the grade crossing improvement projects should be completed by March 29, 2017.

{¶ 10} 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 railroads 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.

{¶ 11} 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, NS and CSX 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.

{¶ 12} 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.

III. ORDER

{¶ 13} It is, therefore,

{¶ 14} ORDERED, That by July 29, 2016, NS and CSX file notice that they have initiated with AEP, OEC, or any applicable utility, the process to ensure that electric service will be available at the involved grade crossings as set forth in paragraph 8. It is, further,

{¶ 15} ORDERED, That NS and CSX follow the detailed instructions as outlined in the ORDC letter of construction authorization and proceed with and complete the projects by March 29, 2017. It is, further,

{¶ 16} ORDERED, That NS and CSX 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,

{¶ 17} ORDERED, That NS and CSX 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,

{¶ 18} ORDERED, That NS and CSX notify the Commission and ORDC 30 days before the projected date of completion. It is, further,

{¶ 19} 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,

{¶ 20} ORDERED, That a copy of this Finding and Order be served upon ORDC, CSX, NS, Trumbull County Engineer, Liberty Township Trustees, Washington Township Trustees, AEP, OEC, and any other interested person of record.

Commissioners Voting: Asim Z. Haque, Chairman; Lynn Slaby; M. Beth Trombold; Thomas W. Johnson

JML/sc