OHIO
HUDSON
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 28, 2021
TO: City Council
FROM: Jane Howington, City Manager
SUBJECT: RR Crossing on Hines Hill Road

Recently, members of Council requested an update from staff on the status of the stopped train warnings. The following is a brief history on this issue along with potential options for Council consideration.

History

Approximately 2010 Representative LaTourette secured funding for the engineering study and preliminary design for a grade separation crossing on Hines Hill Road. He planned to follow that up with an ear mark for the actual final design and construction. Unfortunately, that was the same period of time that federal earmarks for local projects went away.

The issue of trains stopping and blocking the Hines Hill railroad crossing did not go away. Hudson's safety forces implemented a routine mutual aid program for the northwest area of the City whereby they send two response vehicles and request mutual aid from the neighboring communities as their stations are closer to this section of the City anyhow.

Several years ago, City Council requested staff develop a proposal to place "warning, stopped train on tracks" signs by the Walters Road intersection and the Valley View/Hines Hill intersection. Staff developed the current warning sign proposal and Council authorized for the Walters Road intersection. It is the recollection of staff that we would wait for the Valley View intersection to see if the initial sign was successful. The approach on Hines Hill from Valley View also had a bypass to Prospect should a train be stopped as a driver could see the train from the Prospect intersection (see attached photo). This bypass was not the case when driving east as there was no alternative once a car passed Walters Road.

The current sign by Walters Road uses a cell phone line to activate. A camera was placed by the railroad tracks and is directly fed to a monitor in dispatch. When a dispatcher sees a train stopped on the tracks, they manually activate the sign. The cost for this monitoring system was $12K. The system was never designed to alert drivers of a moving train on the tracks.

During this period of time, City officials met with Norfolk Southern representatives to request they stop their trains south of the Hines Hill railroad crossing. This effort was not met with cooperation though some trains have been stopping in this location.

Current Status

The City has received periodic reports of the warning sign not functioning. When reported we have sent staff out to inspect and have found Solar Panel and Battery issues which have been resolved. If Council would like to upgrade the existing warning system and/or install a second one at Valley View and Hines Hill, there are several options starting from the least costly to the most costly.

Option One

Request Norfolk/Southern to install a stop light south of Hines Hill and a second one west of the Stow Road crossing to alert trains to stop prior to Hi es Hill. This would be the least costly if the railroad covered the cost. The Ohio Rail Commission has indicated a willingness to cost share though has not provided a specific amount.

Option Two

Stay with the current system. Put out additional public information that the warning signal is only activated for stopped trains (not moving or slowly moving ones).

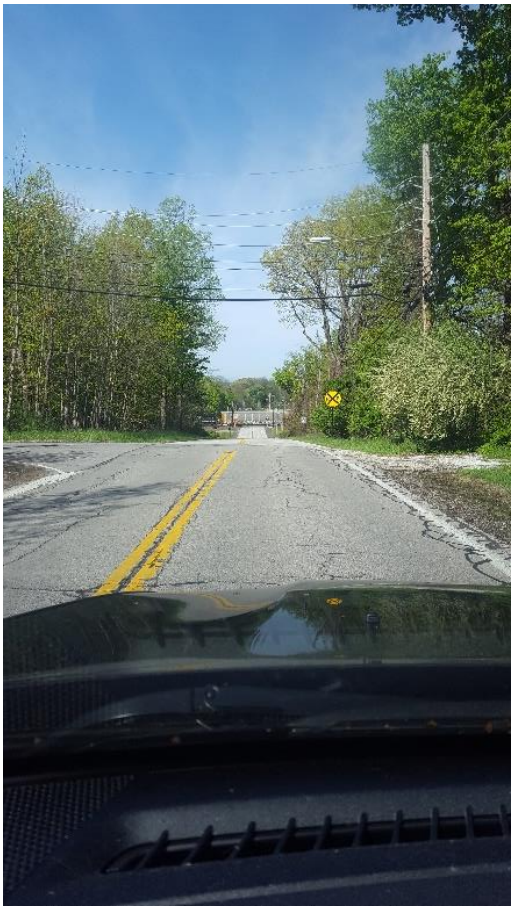
Option Three

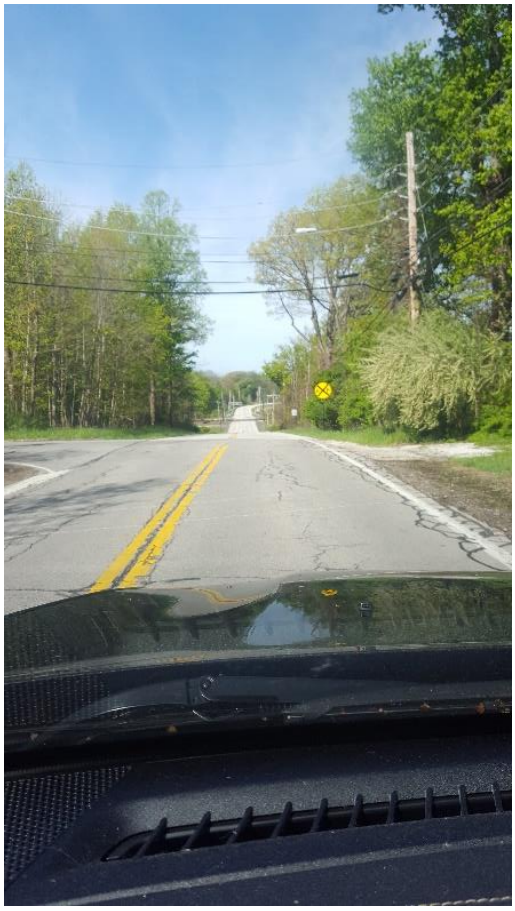
Install fiber optic cable for direct sign activation from the crossing to the warning signal. There is some difficulty with this option as some of the detection methods will lose detection if a train is stopped: Movement is necessary for a sensors to react. Once a train is stopped, the sensor may not read it unless two sensors are installed that must be able to read each other (like to a garage door opening system). The estimated costs for these options are:

1. Use the radar detection method. (Est. $14k)
2. Optical detection. This works like the garage door scenario, (Est. $5k)

These options currently do not have built-in functionality to activate the signage. To get the signal to the sign, the following options are available though we do not currently have a price estimate on them:

1. 900Mhz RF Relay
2. Fiber installed from the crossing to the sign(s).
3. Cellular





Please let me know if you have any questions on this status review and how Council would like to proceed.

Jane