

**Cuyahoga Falls City Council**  
**Minutes of the Public Affairs Committee Meeting**  
**February 8, 2016**

**Members:** Vic Pallotta, Chair  
Adam Miller  
Jerry James

Mr. Pallotta called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. All members were present.

**Legislation Discussed:**

Temp. Ord. A-11 (Sub 2/8/16)

**Discussion**

**Temp. Ord. A-11 (Sub 2/8/16)**

An ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with the State of Ohio, Ohio Rail Development Commission for implementation of a railroad safety preemption project, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Demasi thanked Mr. Pallotta and the Public Affairs Committee for agreeing to consider this ordinance tonight. He stated that they have been meeting with representatives from the Ohio Rail Development Commission, ORDC, regarding a possible preemption for the Broad Boulevard CSX rail crossing. Occasionally, Broad Boulevard eastbound traffic gets backed up from the Newberry intersection, and this backup can sometimes go onto the tracks. This is a highly-dangerous situation that can result in severe injuries and death and can cause a train derailment. ORDC studied the corridor and determined one of the contributing causes of the backup was the signal timing and the lack of queue detection for eastbound traffic.

Mr. Demasi stated the ORDC presented their recommendations to the City for mitigating these backups. These included providing vehicle detection for eastbound traffic. As traffic gets close to the railroad tracks and that queue is detected, the traffic controller can be notified to provide additional green time to clear the queue before that queue gets past the tracks. In addition, they recommended adjusting the timing, in general, at Newberry to allow for more eastbound traffic to clear the corridor. The City worked with ORDC to secure funding for this project. This ordinance will allow the City to implement these recommendations in a timely manner.

Mr. Demasi said the funding available for this project is \$80,000 and will be reimbursed from ORDC to the City at the rate of 100% of the eligible costs. There will be no share from the City up to \$80,000. Since this is a safety project, the City also worked with ORDC to include some additional improvements in the grant at the intersection. These include providing for safer pedestrian travel by eliminating the sidewalk and pedestrian access on the south side of Broad Boulevard at the rail crossing and improving the sidewalk on the north side. In addition, there will be curbs installed on the north side of Broad Boulevard in the vicinity of the rail crossing. Detail design will begin after there is a fully-executed agreement with ORDC, which should be shortly, assuming the ordinance passes in a timely manner. Construction will begin as soon as possible. The goal is to have all of these improvements completed by late spring or early summer.

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Mr. Pallotta stated that he thought it was imperative that Council jump on this so that the money is procured, but the money is already there. This is more of a safety issue to keep people safe and try to keep cars and pedestrians off the tracks before the light changes. He stated his understanding was the Railroad Commission installed cameras and watched the traffic flow and the amount of people that were stuck on the tracks and came up with \$80,000 as a very conservative estimate. Mr. Pallotta asked if the City has to procure three or more bids for the project. Mr. Demasi stated that they will go through the normal bidding process used for all projects of getting three competitive bids, and present those bids to the ORDC.

Mr. Pallotta stated that, in the past, when there was work being done on the intersection, it had to be shut down. There was some confusion when people came off the ramp going south on Route 8 could not make a left turn, because it was closed, and had to get back on Route 8. He stated that he understood that, during this project, the lanes will be closed as needed, so there won't be any interruption in flow of the traffic. Mr. Demasi stated that was correct. This is a much simpler project than was done back in October or November of last year. The work will be done at the signal box, performing modifications to the inside. That would entail a worker opening the door of the signal box and doing the modifications, so there would be no traffic disruption there. There will be a traffic loop installed for eastbound traffic that might require the curb lane to be shut down that day, but traffic will be maintained around that. When the concrete work is done on the north side, just that curb lane might be shut down for intermittent periods of time.

Mr. Pallotta asked if there was going to be signage for the pedestrians walking east on the south side of Broad Boulevard to cross at Front Street, so that they don't get down to the tunnel and have to walk all the way back or try to cut across. Mr. Demasi stated that the goal is to try to get pedestrians onto that north side as quickly as possible. That will require some additional signage, some additional pedestrian signals and some handicap ramps. Mr. Pallotta thanked Mr. Demasi.

Mrs. Pyke asked if the City initiated this project with the ORDC or if this done by ORDC after the accidents that have happened there. Mr. Demasi stated that the ORDC came to the City in 2013 and advised them of the preemption idea. ORDC has been studying it and working with the City since that time. Mrs. Pyke asked if this was a grant that was applied for by the City. Mr. Demasi stated that ORDC came to the City and offered the money, and that this legislation allows the City to accept the money. Mrs. Pyke asked if the engineering and preliminary work has been done and \$80,000 is amount to do the actual work on the project. Mr. Demasi stated that the detail design still has to be done. The plans have to be prepared to give to the contractors to bid, but ORDC has given the City all the significant parameters that are needed for the design.

Mrs. Pyke asked what would happen if the cost exceeds \$80,000. Mr. Demasi stated that is not anticipated to happen, but if the project goes over \$80,000, then be it would be at the City's cost. Mrs. Pyke stated that the project is long overdue. There have been multiple complaints about that intersection. She stated that the letter that came to Council stated this needed be done to assist with the timely marketing of the Schwebel's property for future economic development. Mrs. Pyke stated that Council members have been contacted by the press asking about what's happening with Schwebel's. She asked that since it relates to this legislation and the letter to Council specifically talked about Schwebel's, could an update be given to Council. Mr. Czetli stated Schwebel's is

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supposed to leave by February 26th. The City wanted to try to expedite this project, so that it won't be an issue in the marketing of that property. Ms. Sheridan stated that Testa Enterprises is the listing agent and has the building for sale. Mrs. Pyke asked if the City will share with Council any information they receive on that sale.

Mrs. Klinger stated there was a lot of signalization work that had already been done in this area and asked which intersection still doesn't have a loop. Mr. Demasi stated that at the Newberry, Broad and Tallmadge intersection where Schwebel's is located, there are loops immediately at the intersection to detect left-turn lanes. What this project will do is add an additional loop between that intersection and the railroad tracks that will detect when the backup reaches that point. It will then send that signal to the controller to let him know that the backup is at that point and the light needs to turn green there soon. Mrs. Klinger stated she was surprised that this project wasn't done at the time of the reconfiguration at Newberry, Broad, and throughout that whole corridor. She asked if there was a reason. Mr. Demasi stated that before he was with the Engineering Department, but that he could do some research and find out why. Mrs. Klinger stated that it didn't seem that long ago that the City did the Broad Boulevard bridge and spent a lot of money reconfiguring all the lights there. Mr. Demasi stated the bridge was done in 2004. Mrs. Klinger stated that those intersections were done with grant money. Mr. Demasi stated that the project was done by the IT Department, IS Department, and not by the Engineering Department.

Mr. Pallotta stated he thought the loop was going to be camera-activated. Mr. Demasi stated that loop is a generic term for any type of device used to monitor vehicles. Metal or copper wire used to be used, and then loops and cameras. Now, radar units are used, because they are more effective. Mayor Walters stated that he didn't know if it was by design, but with Schwebel's there, if that queue turned green and a car is turning right, it's gridlock. Once Schwebel's vacates, if the light signal is green to clear the tracks, cars would actually be able to go straight or right, whereas, now, they can't. He stated right now, a camera would do no good, but very soon it will. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that she was excited that Article 30, which says Buy Ohio Buy American, applies to this project, so the materials need to be locally purchased or used as possible. She stated she noticed that the ordinance mentions that the City will advertise for local bidding or it is performed by the City. She asked if the City was going to do part of the work or contractors. Mr. Demasi said it might be a combination of both. The City may use their own forces to do signal adjustments and timing. If that is done, the City can ask for reimbursement for those costs. A contractor may be used to do some of the major installations. The City will ask for reimbursement for whatever money is spent.

Mrs. Pyke asked if there was any chance that a left-turn signal eastbound on Broad Boulevard at Newberry could be installed. Mr. Demasi stated that any time another phase is introduced, the other three phases are impacted negatively. He stated there was a balance that needs to happen, but the City could look into that. Mrs. Pyke asked if the City is still looking at opening Front Street. Mr. Demasi said that wasn't part of the ORDC study.

Mr. Miller moved to bring out Temp. Ord. A-11 (Sub 2/8/16) with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. James. Motion passed (3-0).

The meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m.