

Staff Report

Subject: DeWitt Road Railroad crossing closure
Author: Eric Larson, Asst. County Manager
Department: Development Services
Meeting Date: March 15, 2022
Item Description: Approve a railroad crossing closure at DeWitt Road.

Summary Recommendation:

The County desires to create a new railroad crossing of the Norfolk Southern railroad to promote growth in the County. NSRR requires the commitment of the community to close an existing crossing per requirements of the Federal Railway Administration. This program aims to identify crossing locations that are considered to provide redundant access by vehicles where the crossing has lower traffic volumes. DeWitt Road crossing is skewed and lacks active warning systems. Alternative access via Shawnee Road is less than ½ mile away and has active warning devices. Therefore, the railroad crossing at DeWitt Road is recommended for consideration for closure.

Staff review following the February 15, 2022 public meeting concluded the emergency route to/from the nearest medical facility increased by a maximum of 1.3 miles. The Fire Chief and EMS Director reviewed the travel time and deemed it acceptable given the proposed improvements in the area. Improvements to Old Dixie Highway are currently being bid for construction. Work orders for patching, new chip seal surface, and spot improvements to DeWitt Road have been issued to Public Works.

Upon approval of the railroad crossing closure, the following work will be contracted a completed by the Effingham County Industrial Authority:

- 1) Signage and Barriers
- 2) Grading, Earthworks, Erosion Control
- 3) Paving – End treatment near crossing
 - a. Changes to drainage and earth works inside NS ROW by NS
- 4) Miscellaneous – Mobilization / Demobilization, Clean-up, etc.
- 5) DeWitt Road Improvements via Public Works Work Order (\$40,000 commitment from ECIDA)
 - a. 2,500 feet of chip seal resurfacing – 20 feet wide minimum
 - b. 2,500 feet of clearing ROW – 25 feet wide (Driveway improvements as needed)
 - c. Old Dixie Highway and DeWitt Intersection Improvements – Increase radii to 50ft

Executive Summary/Background:

- The County desired to consider closing the crossing on DeWitt Road and publicly announced on January 4th the intent to close.
- The County Board of Commissioners conducted a public comment period from January 4, 2022 to February 3, 2022. No comments were received.
- The County Board of Commissioners conducted a public hearing at the February 15, 2022 regularly scheduled Commission meeting. The item was tabled for 1 month for staff to prepare a plan for needed improvements to the roads.

- The County Board of Commissioners will conduct a public hearing and consider a motion to close the crossing at the March 15, 2022 regularly scheduled Commission meeting.

Alternatives for Commission to Consider

Alternate #1 – Approve the closure of the railroad crossing on DeWitt Road.

Alternate #2 – No Action; request additional information or revision.

Alternate #3 – Reject the proposal to close the railroad crossing on DeWitt Road.

Recommended Alternative: Alternate #1

Other Alternatives: Alternate #2.

Department Review: County Engineering; County Attorney

Funding Source: N/A

Attachments:

1. Project Narrative and location map.
2. Letter to public, adjacent properties.
3. Emergency Response Map