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January 12, 2022

To: Resident of the Dewitt Road area, North Effingham County

RE: Consideration of a railroad crossing closure on Dewitt Road

The County recently engaged with the Norfolk Southern Railroad to determine what needs are required in order to create a new crossing access in the County for improved east-west vehicular access and continued long-term growth benefits for the County. During these discussions, the County was made aware that there has been a directive from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Railway Administration over the last two decades to improve the safety of citizens nationally where we access railroad crossings. This program aims to identify crossing locations that are considered to provide redundant access by vehicles where the crossing has lower traffic volumes. The type of warning devices located at the crossings are also considered as the GDOT Section 130 Program uses the crossing inventory information for every public crossing in the state to determine what crossings will qualify to be programmed for crossing safety improvements annually.

As part of this review, Dewitt Road (Crossing Number: 620060V) has been identified as a redundant, low volume crossing with alternate access provided by Shawnee (Crossing Number: 620057M) which is located approximately a half mile to the southeast of this crossing and has been recommended to be closed. While we do understand closure of any roadway segment can provide some inconvenience, this location is provided reasonable alternative access to the south for while not increasing emergency response times or access in the event of an emergency. Additionally, the alternate crossing is treated with active warning devices that include flashers and gates which provides a safer access point to cross the track which is currently seeing ten trains a day at speeds up to 49 MPH. The crossing proposed to be closed is skewed and has limited sight distance on the approaches which further increases the risk to drivers who use this crossing. The potential of this crossing qualifying under the State's crossing safety program are unlikely due to the low volume of the road unless a collision occurred at the crossing.

With the above issues in mind, the recommendation to the County Board of Commissioners is to close the road to through traffic at the railroad crossing location on Dewitt Road. On the east side, the gravel shoulder area near the railroad communications tower would remain accessible as an area for vehicles to turn around and on the west side, the road would be abandoned toward the west to the private road accesses on the north and south side of the road and leave enough of a road section just past this point to allow for a three point turnaround using the road shoulders for vehicles to turn around. A exhibit is attached that explains the closure location.

As with any roadway closure, the County Board of Commissioners will be holding a public meeting on February 15, 2022 at 5pm at the NEW Effingham County Administration Building at 804 S. Laurel St., Springfield, GA 31329 to listen to any concerns regarding this proposal before voting on the proposal. Thank your time and consideration of this safety improvement.

If you have any questions, contact Tim Callanan, County Manager, at (912) 754-2123 or tcallanan@effinghamcounty.org.

Sincerely,
Timothy J. Callanan
County Manager

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