



Marion County Board of County Commissioners

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January 29, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing regarding the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant application for the proposed Railroad Crossing Safety Improvements and Monitoring System project. This project aims to enhance safety and operations for critical at-grade railroad crossings in Central Florida by improving maintenance response time to railroad gate infrastructure, automating notifications to operators and the motoring public, preparing incident traffic leveraging plans, and reducing instances of vehicles queuing on railroad tracks.

The Railroad Crossings Safety Improvements and Monitoring System project was informed by a comprehensive study of more than 800 at-grade railroad crossings in Central Florida, which identified locations that were most affected by malfunctioning railroad gate infrastructure. Twenty-six (26) critically located crossings were selected for the proposed improvements. Additionally, a Railroad Preemption Study recommended established traffic infrastructure solutions to minimize track vehicle queuing.

Currently, the average response times to malfunctioning railroad crossing signals can exceed four (4) hours, which does not include the repair time. This can lead to excessive delays throughout the surrounding transportation network. Additionally, vehicle queuing has been observed on railroad crossings in Central Florida. Given the operations of existing freight and commuter rail in urban areas and the introduction of high-speed rail in the region, it is highly recommended to minimize presence of stopped vehicles on the tracks and to minimize maintenance response times for railroad crossings.

In conclusion, we anticipate this project will improve safety and mobility for the traveling public. We look forward to working with FDOT and the USDOT to implement the improvements proposed under the Railroad Crossing Safety Improvements and Monitoring System project.

Sincerely,


Michelle Stone, Chair