

**I. Cover Page**

Project Title:	Hilliard Rome Road Grade Separation Project
Applicant Name	City of Columbus
Amount of CRISI Program Funding Requested under this NOFO	\$30,626,727.00
Amount of Proposed Non-Federal Match:	\$7,656,683.00
Other Sources of Federal funding, if applicable	Provide funding source and amount. \$:
Source(s) of Proposed Non-Federal Match	Ohio Rail Development Commission: \$3,329,924.00 City of Columbus: \$4,326,759.00
Total Project Cost	\$38,283,410.00
Was a Federal Grant Application Previously Submitted for this Project?	No
City(ies), County(ies), State(s) Where the Project is Located	City of Columbus, Franklin County, Ohio
Is the Project Located in a Rural Area?	No
Congressional District(s) Where the Project is Located	OH-015
Application Track(s) proposed to be funded by this NOFO?	Tracks 1-3
Lifecycle Stage(s) proposed to be funded by this NOFO?	Project Planning, Project Development, Final Design, & Construction
Current Lifecycle Stage and Anticipated completion of current Lifecycle Stage?	Project Planning has not yet commenced, but Columbus anticipates completing the Project Planning Lifecycle Stage by 2/27/2026
Is the Project located on real property owned by someone other than the applicant?	Yes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Norfolk Southern has ownership interests in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 240-000045, which is the parcel where that the current at-grade crossing is located, and</li> <li>○ 010-243993, which is the parcel with the rail corridor that will be crossed by the proposed separated crossing.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Host Railroad/Infrastructure Owner(s) of Project Assets;	Norfolk Southern
Other impacted Railroad(s)	NA
Tenant Railroad(s), if applicable	NA
If applicable, is a <a href="#">49 U.S.C. 22905</a> -compliant Railroad Agreement executed or pending?	No <sup>1</sup>
Is the project currently programmed in ANY medium- or long-range planning document: <i>For example, State rail plan, or interregional</i>	Yes, this project is programmed in the:

<sup>1</sup> Please see **Appendix 4 - Status of 49 USC 22905 Agreement**

<i>intercity passenger rail systems planning study, State Freight Plan, TIP, STIP, MPO Long Range Transportation Plan, State Long Range Transportation Plan, etc. ?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Rail Plan.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• MPO long range transportation plan.<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
Is the project located on a potential corridor selected for the Corridor Identification and Development Program? <sup>22</sup>	Yes, it is located on the potential 3C+D corridor. <sup>4</sup>
Is this a project eligible under <a href="#">49 U.S.C. 22907(c)(2)</a> that supports the development of new intercity passenger rail service routes including alignments for existing routes?	Yes, it is a capital project that is currently on the proposed 3C+D corridor.
Is this a project eligible under <a href="#">49 U.S.C. 22907(c)(11)</a> that supports the development and implementation of measures to prevent trespassing and reduce associated injuries and fatalities?	No
If YES to the previous question, is this project located in a county identified in FRA's National Strategy to Prevent Trespassing on Railroad Property?	NA
Is the application seeking consideration for funding under the Maglev Grants Program?	No

<sup>2</sup> This project was added to Appendix C of the State Rail Plan during the March 21, 2024 Ohio Rail Development Commission meeting. State Rail Plan Amendments are available at <https://rail.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/or dc/home/ohio-rail-publications/approved-amendments-03-23-23>. A copy of the ORDC resolution adding this project to State Rail Plan is also included as **Narrative Attachment 01 - ORDC Resolution and State Rail Plan Amendment**

<sup>3</sup> This project is the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's 2024-2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Its MTP ID is 18. An interactive map of the 2024-2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan is available at <https://morpc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/interactivelegend/index.html?appid=9105e12ca07549c288ff0548caa80010>

<sup>4</sup> Additional information about the 3C+D corridor is available online at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/fa4cdfd1602e4d8da043a539a4c3627c>

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**Application materials, including letters of support, are available online at:**

**<https://www.morpc.org/Hilliard-Rome-Road-Grade-Separation-Project>**

## II. Project Summary

This project addresses growth and safety challenges in the City of Columbus' Far West Side. The project will construct a new separated crossing and close an existing at-grade crossing (513244C). The project has broad support, and it has already received a \$3.3 million grant from the Ohio Rail Development Commission through the Ohio Grade Crossing Elimination Program.<sup>5</sup>

The project's primary objective is to construct a new separated crossing to replace an existing crossing (513244C) at Hilliard Rome Road. The new separated crossing will be made possible by extending Galloway Road from its current terminus south of the railroad line, to a new terminus with Hillard Rome Rd to the north. Separating this crossing is expected to significantly benefit all current users including local emergency services, which includes a fire station and a major hospital less than a mile from the crossing.



Figure 1-Aerial view of existing at grade crossing (513244C) looking north.

A second project objective is to close the existing at grade crossing at Hillard Rome Road by installing cul-de-sacs on either side of the existing crossing. The existing at-grade crossing is well travelled by both motor vehicles (approximately 26,575 ADT) and trains (approximately 19 per day). Closing this crossing will reduce vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, and train conflict points in the area allowing for safer and more efficient travel by both forms of transportation.

A third project objective is providing protected facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists along Galloway Road and across the railroad line. Installing these proposed facilities will provide significant safety benefits by addressing safety concerns created by reports of pedestrians attempting to walk on/through train cars stopped at the at-grade crossing by filling a significant pedestrian and bicycle gap between existing infrastructure on Hillard Rome Road and W Broad Street. These facilities will also provide a significant benefit by providing direct pedestrian and bicycle access to the LinkUS West Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridor. Improving network connectivity and safety will help address transportation instability in the census tracts surrounding the project, including two identified as disadvantaged by the Justice40 Rail Explorer: 39049008165, & 39049008171.<sup>6</sup>

## III. Grant Funds, Sources and Uses of Project Funds:

Task # <sup>7</sup>	Task name/project component	Cost	Percentage of total cost	Source of funds and citation, as applicable
1	Project Administration and Management	\$0	0%	NA
2	Design (Subtasks 2.1-2.4)	\$2,443,338.000	6.38%	CRISI, ORDC, Local City Funds

<sup>5</sup> Please see **Narrative Attachment 02 - ORDC Commitment Letter**

<sup>6</sup> Please see **Narrative Attachment 03 - Justice40 Rail Explorer**

<sup>7</sup> Please see **Appendix 1 - Statement of Work Draft** for additional information regarding tasks and subtasks.

2	ROW Acquisition (Subtask 2.4)	\$105,000.00	0.27%	CRISI, ORDC, Local City Funds
3	Construction & Construction Inspection	\$35,735,072.00	93.34%	CRISI, ORDC, Local City Funds

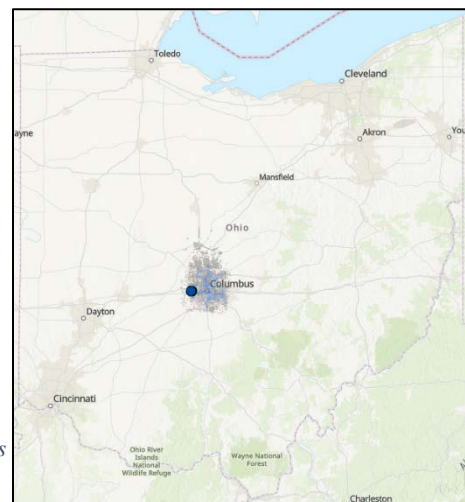
Total Project Cost \$38,283,410.00

Federal Funding Requested in this Application (CRISI Program Request)	\$30,626,727.00	80.00%	
Non-Federal Funding (State) Cash:	\$3,329,924.00	8.70%	ORDC <sup>8</sup>
Non-Federal Funding (Private Sector) Cash:	\$0	0%	
Non-Federal Federal Funding (Local) Cash:	\$4,326,759	11.30%	City of Columbus <sup>9</sup>
Other Committed Federal Funding (e.g., Federal Highway Administration, congressionally directed/earmark, other FRA grant program funds—including previous CRISI grants, etc.)	\$0	0%	NA
Other Pending Federal Funding Requests	\$0	0%	NA
Amount (if any) of funding request eligible for set-aside funds as described in section B(1)	\$0	0%	NA
Portion of Total Project Costs Spent in a Rural Area, if applicable	\$0	0%	NA

#### IV. Applicant Eligibility Criteria

The applicant, the City of Columbus, is a political subdivision of the State of Ohio. It is a municipal corporation with the powers of local self-government under the Ohio Constitution. The Charter of the City of Columbus is available online.<sup>10</sup> As a political subdivision of the State of Ohio, it is an eligible applicant as defined by the current Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the FY 2023-FY 2024 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program.

*Figure 2-Map showing the City of Columbus and the project location.*



<sup>8</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 01 - ORDC Resolution and State Rail Plan Amendment** and **Narrative Attachment 02 - ORDC Commitment Letter**

<sup>9</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 04 - Columbus Commitment Letter**

<sup>10</sup> The Charter of the City of Columbus is available online at [https://library.municode.com/oh/columbus/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=CHTR\\_THECICOOH](https://library.municode.com/oh/columbus/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CHTR_THECICOOH).

## V. Project Eligibility Criteria:

As described in the current NOFO, the CRISI program's purpose "is to invest in a wide range of projects within the United States to improve railroad safety, efficiency, and reliability; mitigate congestion at both intercity passenger rail and freight rail chokepoints to support more efficient travel and goods movement; enhance multi-modal connections; and lead to new or substantially improved Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation corridors."

The Hilliard Rome Road Grade Separation Project is a Track 1, 2, & Track 3 project that will improve railroad safety by installing a grade separation immediately west of the existing at-grade crossing (513244C), which meets the eligibility criteria in Section C(3)(v) of the current NOFO, and then closing the existing at-grade crossing on Hilliard Rome Road. The project is also located along a potential corridor selected for the Corridor Identification and Development Program – the 3C+D corridor.

## VI. Detailed Project Description:

The project consists of constructing a new separated crossing just west of the existing at-grade crossing (513244C) on Hilliard-Rome Road; and closing the existing at-grade crossing on Hilliard-Rome Road once the new crossing is constructed by constructing cul du sacs on Hilliard-Rome Road, on either side of the railroad tracks.

A new separated crossing will be created by extending Galloway Road from its current terminus, approximately 2,000 feet south of the railroad line, to a new terminus, approximately 2,500 feet north of the railroad line. This extension is illustrated by the yellow line in **Figure 3**. This extension will include constructing a bridge to carry the new roadway over the railroad tracks, and a roundabout where Galloway intersects Summerlin Way. This project will also improve the existing portion of Galloway Road, from Broad Street to its current terminus, as needed to ensure consistent facilities for people travelling the new separated crossing. The improvements on Galloway Road will include sidewalk, shared-use path, curb ramps, and street lighting, as well as curb and sewer as needed.



*Figure 3-Looking west, the current crossing on Hilliard Rome Road is in the foreground.*

This section is broken down into a series of subsections intended to describe (A) the current grade crossing information and railroad operations, (B) current challenges addressed by this project; (C) project components, project outcomes, and performance measures; (E) the expected beneficiaries and users of the project; and (F) workforce development and training information.

### A. Current grade crossing information and railroad operations

The current at-grade crossing on Hilliard Rome Road is heavily travelled by trains and motor vehicles. According to 2020 data provided to the Ohio Railroad Information System (ORIS), there are approximately 19 trains per day: 7 day through trains, 7 night through trains, and 5

switching trains.<sup>11</sup> ORIS' average daily traffic information for Hilliard Rome Road is more dated, however, with a reported Annual Average Daily Traffic count of 11,755 in 2004.<sup>12</sup> Central Ohio has grown significantly since 2004, and current Annual Average Daily Traffic County has more than doubled to 26,575, according to 2023 data from the Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT's) Traffic Monitoring Management System (TMMS).<sup>13</sup>

*Table 1. Crossing Information:*

<b>US DOT grade crossing inventory #</b>	<b>Proposed improvement</b>	<b>Rail operator(s)</b>	<b>Property Owner / Infrastructure Owner</b>	<b>Latitude coordinates</b>	<b>Longitude coordinates</b>
513244C	Closed	Norfolk Southern	Norfolk Southern & City of Columbus	+39.9622056	-83.1465318
TBD	New separated crossing	Norfolk Southern	Norfolk Southern & City of Columbus	+39.962072	-83.150429

The current Ohio Highway-Rail Grade Crossing is available online,<sup>14</sup> which provides a general framework of prioritizing short term and long terms strategies – including grade separation projects – for improving crossing safety. The proposed grade separation project was added to Appendix C of the State Rail Plan during the March 21, 2024 Ohio Rail Development Commission meeting.<sup>15</sup> As indicated in Table 1, this project will result in the elimination of one at grade crossing (513244C).

## **B. Current challenges addressed by this project**

This project addresses current challenges that are created by (1) by the current at-grade crossing (513244C), and (2) lack of modern roadway safety countermeasures for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists at the at-grade crossing and the roadway leading to/from it.

### **I. Challenges created by the at-grade crossing itself**

The current challenges created by the at-grade crossing itself are best summarized by the Ohio Rail Development Commission's Rail Crossing Community Impact Index (RCII).<sup>16</sup> This index was developed by the ORDC to evaluate the relative impact of occupied public, at-grade rail crossings in Ohio. The RCII creates a composite score based on four criteria: (1) Public Importance, which is a measure of how a community may be affected due to an occupied crossing; (2) Redundancy, which is a measure of proximity to other locations where roadway users can cross the tracks unimpeded; (3) Delay to Road Users, which is a measure of the expected magnitude of delay to road users due to an occupied crossing; and (4) Safety, which is a ranking of hazard risk

<sup>11</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 05 - PUCO ORIS Crossing Details 2638**

<sup>12</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 05 - PUCO ORIS Crossing Details 2638**

<sup>13</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 05 - PUCO ORIS Crossing Details 2638**

<sup>14</sup> See "Ohio Highway-Rail Grade Crossing State Action Plan" available at [https://rail.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/5c7b3f40-3dd1-4368-85a7-c6b57b1af077/220214\\_OH\\_SAP\\_Final.pdf?MOD=AJPERES](https://rail.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/5c7b3f40-3dd1-4368-85a7-c6b57b1af077/220214_OH_SAP_Final.pdf?MOD=AJPERES)

<sup>15</sup> State Rail Plan Amendments are available at <https://rail.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ordc/home/ohio-rail-publications/approved-amendments-03-23-23>. Please see **Narrative Attachment 01 - ORDC Resolution and State Rail Plan Amendment** for a copy of the ORDC resolution adding this project to State Rail Plan.

<sup>16</sup> The Rail Crossing Community Impact Index (RCII) is available at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/3c5e4ef80a004abda94ef76ee54bcfb7>



at the crossing. Each criteria is rated on a scale of 0 to 5, with 5 indicating the greatest impact in that criterion. The average RCII score for motorized (non-truck) traffic at a grade crossing in Ohio is 2.63, which is significantly lower than the current at grade crossing RCII score of 3.83. This overall score is based on scores of 2.23 in Public Importance, in 4.42 Redundancy, 5.00 in Delay to Road Users, and 3.68 in Safety. The Redundancy and Delay scores are particularly high because of a lack of separated crossings in this area of Columbus: I-270 (approximately 1.45 miles east of Hilliard Rome Road) and Wilson Road (approximately 2.77 miles east of Hilliard Rome Road) are the nearest north-south roadways with separated crossings over this railroad line.

This delay and lack of redundancy significantly also impacts the ability of first responders operating from Columbus Fire Station 26 (less than 1 mile from the crossing, and shown in both **Figure 4** and, in greater detail, **Map Attachments - Additional Points of Interest**) to respond quickly to medical and fire emergencies; while also encouraging

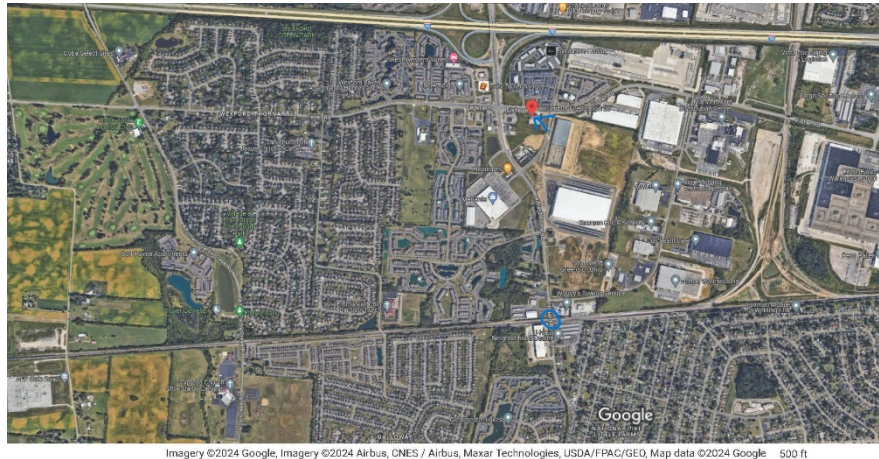


Figure 4-Fire Station 26 in relation to the at-grade crossing on Hilliard Rome Road

pedestrians to trespass and attempt to walk on and through stopped train cars, in an effort to reach their destination. Since January 1, 2021, 5 out of the 36 blocked crossing reports submitted to FRA (or greater than 13%) mentioned first responders observed unable to cross the tracks, and 5 out of the 36 blocked crossing reports submitted to FRA (or greater than 13%) mentioned pedestrians were climbing on, over, or through the train cars.<sup>17</sup>

As shown by the RCII and the FRA Blocked Crossing Reports, the current crossing creates significant travel time delay, negatively impacts response times for fire and medical emergencies, and encourages pedestrians to take unnecessary risks. The current delays also makes it difficult for the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) to reliability operate its Line 21 along the Hilliard Rome Road corridor. This corridor supports an area of significant growth in Central Ohio, and COTA noted Line 21's service would directly benefit from separating bus and rail traffic at this location.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. Challenges created by the lack of modern roadway safety countermeasures and separated facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians.

In addition to the at-grade crossing, the lack of modern roadway safety countermeasures also create safety challenges at the crossing and along the corridor that will be addressed by this project. Hilliard Rome Road is a two lane road, with no street lighting, sidewalks, or bicycle facilities. It was originally constructed to handle a significantly lower volume of vehicles than it currently handles. The significantly higher traffic volume have created safety issues for vehicles, as well as pedestrians and bicyclist. It is on the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's

<sup>17</sup> See Narrative Attachment 06 - FRA Blocked Crossing Reports

<sup>18</sup> See Narrative Attachment 07 - COTA Letter of Support

(MORPC's) Central Ohio High Injury Network.<sup>19</sup> The lack of lighting creates a significant safety concern, especially for motorcycles approaching the at-grade. Columbus police responded to a suspected serious injury motorcycle crash just north of the crossing in September 2023.<sup>20</sup> It is unclear exactly what caused the motorcyclist to lose control, but a well-lit, separated crossing would have made it easier for the rider to maintain control.

The lack dedicated facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists makes it difficult to travel the corridor without a motor vehicle. When first constructed, Hilliard Rome Road passed through farm fields in Franklin County; but the surrounding areas have since been developed, with multiple multifamily developments on and near Hilliard Rome Road. More residents and employees want to be able to walk or bicycle to employment, points of interest, and transit connections but are unable to do so safely on Hilliard Rome Road because there is no space for them on the road, and no lighting to help illuminate them at night. This lack of facilities create safety challenges for people attempting to walk or bike.

### **C. Project components, project outcomes, and performance measures;**

#### **1. Project components**

The project consists of constructing a new separated crossing just west of the existing at-grade crossing (513244C) on Hilliard-Rome Road; and closing the existing at-grade crossing on Hilliard-Rome Road once the new crossing is constructed by constructing cul du sacs on Hilliard-Rome Road, on either side of the railroad tracks.

A new separated crossing will be created by extending Galloway Road from its current terminus, approximately 2,000 feet south of the railroad line, to a new terminus, approximately 2,500 feet north of the railroad line. This extension will include constructing a bridge to carry the new roadway over the railroad tracks, and a roundabout where Galloway intersects Summerlin Way. This project will also improve the existing portion of Galloway Road, from Broad Street to its current terminus, as needed to ensure consistent facilities for people travelling the new separated crossing. The improvements on Galloway Road, from Broad Street to Hilliard Rome Road, will include sidewalk, shared-use path, curb ramps, and street lighting, as well as curb and sewer as needed.

In addition to providing facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians, the new separated crossing will have sufficient clearance for double stack containers. Please see **Appendix 6 - Conceptual Design** for an aerial view of the preliminary concept for this grade separation project, and typical sections of the new bridge and roadway.

#### **2. Project outcomes**

Once the project is complete, the current at-grade crossing (513244C) on Hilliard Rome Road will be closed, and a new separated crossing will carry Galloway Road over the railroad line. The new facility will provide separated, dedicated facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. Rail operators using the railroad line will have sufficient clearance for double stack containers and bi-level passenger rail cars.

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<sup>19</sup> See "Central Ohio Transportation Safety Plan 2019," Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, available online at <https://morpc.org/2023/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Central-Ohio-Transportation-Safety-Plan-2019-web.pdf> at pg. 31.

<sup>20</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 08 - Crash Report 20233171191.pdf**

### 3. Performance Measures

Columbus proposes the primary performance measure for this project be the number of automobile crossings that are eliminated at an at-grade crossing as a result of a new grade separation. This performance measure is suggested in the Section F(3) of the current NOFO.

#### D. Expected beneficiaries and users of the project

This project is expected to benefit the rail operators using the railroad line, as well as first responders, residents, employees, and businesses that currently rely upon Hilliard Rome Road. Norfolk Southern owns the rail corridor, and it is the primary rail operator. Amtrak may also benefit from this improvement, should the proposed 3C+D Amtrak corridor continue to advance.

People who live and/or work along the Hilliard Rome Road Corridor will also benefit from this project, and are expected to be significant users of the new roadway facilities along Galloway Road. Once completed, the new pedestrian and bicycle improvements will provide an essential connection to the LinkUS West Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridor, which is currently in design and will ultimately run from its western terminus at Doherty Road and Broad Street (approximately 1,000 feet from the intersection of Galloway

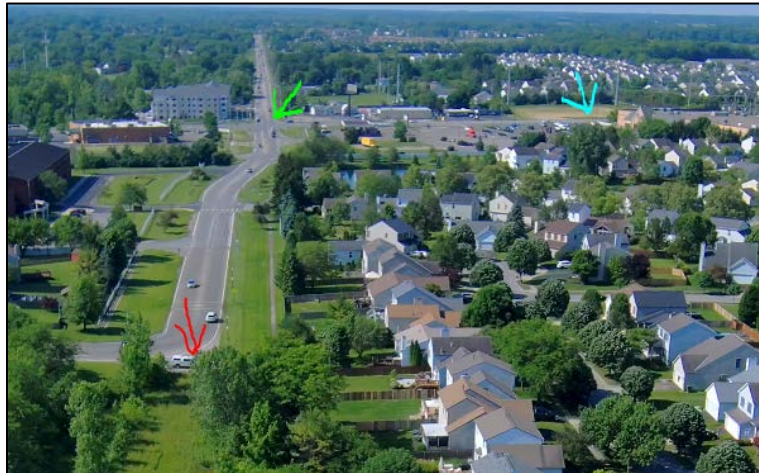


Figure 5-Aerial view of looking south from Galloway Road's current terminus (red arrow) towards Broad Street (green arrow) and the proposed western terminus (blue arrow) for the West Broad Street BRT corridor.

Road and Broad Street) to Downtown Columbus. In addition to providing a direct connection to Downtown Columbus, the BRT will also connect with two other LinkUS BRT corridors currently in design: the Northwest Corridor BRT and the East Main Street BRT Corridor.<sup>21</sup> USDOT recently awarded a \$41.9 million Neighborhood Access and Equity Capital Construction grant to the Central Ohio Transit Authority for the West Broad BRT Corridor.

This project will help extend the federal and regional investments being made in the West Broad BRT corridor north on Galloway Road to residents living two census tracts that the Justice40 Rail Explorer show are disadvantaged: 39049008165, and 39049008171. The Justice40 Rail Explorer indicates transportation insecurity in both of these census tracts, and this project will help address that insecurity by providing separated facilities for the pedestrians and bicyclists and filling a significant network connectivity so that people can reach transit and rapid transit facilities along West Broad Street.

#### E. Workforce development and training information

Columbus is committed to ensuring meaningful opportunities for Minority-Owned and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MBE/WBEs) and Small Local Business Enterprises (SLBEs) to participate in its construction, professional services, and goods and services contracts. In administering this Supplier Diversity Policy, Columbus takes all necessary and reasonable steps to ensure business enterprises certified as MBE/WBEs have an equal opportunity to participate in

<sup>21</sup> More information on the LinkUS initiative, please visit <https://linkuscolumbus.com/>

city contracts. It is Columbus' policy to create contracting opportunities for MBE/WBEs and SLBEs in its construction, professional services, and goods and services contracts.

The MBE/WBE and SLBE Programs ensure contracts are awarded in a manner that promote economic inclusion. Administration of the MBE/WBE Program is afforded the same priority as compliance with all other legal obligations. Free gender and race-based certification is offered to make it easier to identify those ready, willing, and able to perform on contracts.<sup>22</sup>

## VII. Project Location

This project is located in the City of Columbus,<sup>23</sup> in the federally designated Columbus, Ohio Urbanized Area. Columbus' corporate limits fall within four congressional districts: OH-003, OH-004, OH-012, OH-015; and this project is located in OH-015.<sup>24</sup> The geographical coordinates for the existing at-grade crossing (513244C) are: +39.9622056, -83.1465318. The geographical coordinates for the proposed separated crossing over the railroad are: +39.962072, -83.150429.<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 6** provides a map of the project location, and a larger version is available in **Map Attachments 03 - Detailed Location**. Site pictures are included in **Appendix 5 - Site Pictures**,<sup>26</sup> and a map highlighting additional points of interest is included in **Map Attachments 04 - Additional Points of Interest**.

### I. Existing At-Grade Crossing Location

The existing at-grade crossing of Hilliard Rome Road is located approximately 400 feet south of the intersection of Manor Park Drive in Columbus Ohio. This area lies within the limits of the Columbus Corporate Bount. The grade crossing is identified by the FRA as crossing 513244C and is located at milepost NS 145.980. The GPS coordinates are listed as +39.9622056, -83.1465318. This crossing sits at the intersection of three census tracts in Franklin County: 39049008165, 39049008171, and 39049008172.<sup>27</sup>



Figure 6-Detailed Project Location.

<sup>22</sup> "Minority, Women, and Veteran Business Enterprise Certification Policy," City of Columbus, <https://www.columbus.gov/odi/supplier-diversity/Business-Certifications/>.

<sup>23</sup> Please see **Map Attachments 01 – Regional Location**

<sup>24</sup> Please see **Map Attachments 02 – Project Location and Congressional District**

<sup>25</sup> Geospatial data for the current at grade crossing and the proposed separated crossing are included in **Narrative Attachment 09 - Geospatial Data**.

<sup>26</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Two of these census tracts are identified as disadvantaged by the Justice40 Rail Explorer: 39049008165, and 39049008171. See **Narrative Attachment 03 - Justice40 Rail Explorer**

Hilliard Rome Road is a minor arterial north-south corridor with industrial, commercial and residential developments in the immediate project area. This corridor also supports public transit routes (COTA line 21), Columbus Fire Station 26, and an interstate highway interchange at I-70. Hilliard Rome Road terminates to the south at West Broad Street (SR 40) which is an east-west principal arterial road supporting significant development, including a major hospital (Ohio Health Doctors Hospital) and public transit infrastructure.

## 2. Proposed Grade Separated Crossing Location

The grade separation proposed as part of this project is located 1050 feet west of the existing crossing. This area is within the Columbus Corporate Bounty and adjacent to property owned by the City of Columbus. The approximate milepost along the rail line is NS 146.190. GPS coordinates for the location are +39.962072, -83.150429. The new grade separation and Galloway Road extension is also in/borders three Franklin County census tracts: 39049008165, 39049008166, and 39049008171.<sup>28</sup>

Galloway Road is a local road with residential, and commercial development as well as a public middle school in the immediate area. Galloway Road currently terminates 2,000 feet south of the proposed crossing location. This project would extend Galloway Road to the north, over the railroad tracks at the proposed grade separated crossing location, to a new terminus at Hilliard Rome Road. This project also improve the existing portion of Galloway Road, from its Broad Street to its current terminus, as needed to ensure consistent facilities for people travelling the new separated crossing.

The intersection of Galloway Road at West Broad Street is approximately 1,400 feet from Prairie Township Community Center; 1,100 feet from Westland High School; and 1,000 ft from the proposed western terminus of the West Broad Street BRT Corridor, which was recently awarded a USDOT Neighborhood Access and Equity Capital Construction Grant.

## VIII. Evaluation and Selection Criteria

### A. Project Readiness:

#### 1. The Hilliard Rome Road Grade Separation Project has a strong project readiness.

This project has been on the city's thoroughfare plan for many years, and Columbus has been able to use right of way dedications during the private development process to acquire almost all of the right of way required for this project.<sup>29</sup> This requirement is found in Columbus City Code § 4309.17.<sup>30</sup> This should help prevent schedule delays due to right of way acquisition difficulties. Columbus also does not anticipate significant delays due to the NEPA process. It requested its consultant OHM Advisors complete a cursory review for potential red flags that might cause unusual delays in the NEPA process, and no concerns were raised in its memorandum.<sup>31</sup>

#### 2. The status and timeline of agreements necessary for the legal, financial, and technical capacity to complete the project as proposed are sufficiently developed.

Columbus believes the status and timeline of agreements are sufficient to complete the project as proposed. The Ohio Rail Development Commission contribution has already been

<sup>28</sup> This grade separation improvement benefits the same two disadvantaged census tracts that are impacted by the existing at-grade crossing: 39049008165, and 39049008171.

<sup>29</sup> See **Map Attachments 05 - Existing Right of Way**.

<sup>30</sup> This section of code is available online at [https://library.municode.com/oh/columbus/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=TIT43PLENCO\\_CH4309TRSTCO\\_4309.17RI-WRE](https://library.municode.com/oh/columbus/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT43PLENCO_CH4309TRSTCO_4309.17RI-WRE).

<sup>31</sup> A copy of this memorandum is provided in **Appendix 3 - NEPA Statement**

approved,<sup>32</sup> and Columbus is ready to be working with Norfolk Southern to complete all necessary agreements upon a successful funding award from FRA. Columbus' general timeline for completing the project milestones will provide sufficient time to complete any additional agreements necessary. It has already met with Norfolk Southern staff when it requested a letter of support for the project – which Columbus has received<sup>33</sup> – and Norfolk Southern has provided the necessary contact information for Columbus to begin collaborating with the necessary Norfolk Southern staff to complete the agreements in a timely manner. The current status of right of way acquisition will also provide a sufficient timeline to complete the right of way process in a timely manner.

3. The application identifies the appropriate Lifecycle Stages, and the project is able to complete all requirements of the identified Lifecycle Stages.

Columbus will need to start the proposed project in the project planning stage, as outlined in the draft Statement of Work that has been submitted with this application.<sup>34</sup> It anticipates being able to complete the initial project planning stage within 6 months of initially authorizing the consultant to begin work. Columbus typically follows ODOT's Project Development Process (PDP) on federally funded roadway projects, and the ODOT PDP is very similar to FRA's Project Lifecycle.<sup>35</sup> The similarity between the two processes will allow Columbus to complete all Lifecycle Stage Requirements. Based on its familiarity with the ODOT PDP, Columbus has provided a breakdown of anticipated tasks and deliverables for this project in the draft Statement of Work, Article 4, Section 4.3; and a project schedule has been provided in the draft Statement of Work, Article 5, Section 5.2.<sup>36</sup> Columbus is confident in its ability to deliver this project based on the schedule provided, and it is willing to adjust elements within the statement of work based on FRA feedback to ensure it completes all project lifecycle requirements to FRA's satisfaction.

4. Project partner coordination and commitments, including letters of support, agreements, and funding, are secured or able to be secured without undue delay.

Columbus is confident it can secure partner coordination and commitments in a timely manner. Columbus has already secured its commitment from the Ohio Rail Development Commission,<sup>37</sup> received authorization from Columbus City Council to pursue this application,<sup>38</sup> and received a letter of support from Norfolk Southern.<sup>39</sup> A letter from Columbus Mayor Andrew J. Ginther also demonstrates Columbus' financial commitment to this project.<sup>40</sup> Columbus has also received letters of support from Congressman Mike Carey (OH-015), who is the representative for the congressional district where the project is located;<sup>41</sup> Prairie Township, which is the local land use authority for the parcels that are immediately northwest and southeast of the existing at-grade crossing;<sup>42</sup> and from the Franklin County Engineer's Office, which has maintenance for portions of Hilliard Rome Road that are south and north of the existing at-grade crossing.<sup>43</sup> Columbus has also

<sup>32</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 01 - ORDC Resolution and State Rail Plan Amendment**

<sup>33</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 10 - Norfolk Southern Letter of Support**

<sup>34</sup> See Article 4, Task 2 in **Appendix 1 – Statement of Work draft**

<sup>35</sup> See, e.g. **Narrative Attachment 11 - Lifecycle and PDP Comparison**

<sup>36</sup> See **Appendix 1 – Statement of Work draft**.

<sup>37</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 02 - ORDC Commitment Letter and Narrative Attachment 01 - ORDC Resolution and State Rail Plan Amendment**

<sup>38</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 12 - Columbus CRISI Legislation**

<sup>39</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 10 - Norfolk Southern Letter of Support**

<sup>40</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 04 - Columbus Commitment Letter**

<sup>41</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 13 - Congressman Mike Carey Letter of Support**

<sup>42</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 14 - Prairie Township Letter of Support**

<sup>43</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 15 - FCEO Letter of Support**

received other letters of support for this project,<sup>44</sup> and it is confident that any additional necessary partner coordination and commitments can be secured without undue delay.

## B. Technical Merit:

1. The tasks and subtasks outlined in the statement of work (SOW) are appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes of the proposed project;

There are two expected outcomes of this proposed project: (1) a new separated crossing will be opened to vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists; and (2) the existing at-grade crossing will be closed. Columbus typically follows ODOT's Project Development Process (PDP) on federally funded roadway projects, and the ODOT PDP is very similar to FRA's Project Lifecycle.<sup>45</sup> The tasks outlined in the draft Statement of Work, Article 4, Section 4.3, Task 2 provide a breakdown of anticipated tasks and deliverables for this project; and a project schedule has been provided in the draft Statement of Work, Article 5, Section 5.2. The tasks, subtasks, and are appropriate to achieve these expected outcomes and based on ODOT PDP guidance and Columbus' experience planning, designing, and constructing large scale federal projects.

2. Columbus staff have the key skills and expertise necessary to lead fully and successfully execute the proposed project within the proposed time frame and budget;

Columbus is the municipality in which the current at-grade crossing and the proposed separated crossing and new roadway are situated. The Department of Public Service (DPS) is responsible for maintaining the Minor Collectors, Major Collectors, and Arterials within its corporate limits. DPS staff also have extensive experience coordinating planning studies – including corridor plans – and managing federal aid projects. Columbus has significant experience coordinating projects with ODOT, FCEO, and MORPC. ODOT named Columbus LPA of the Year in 2022.<sup>46</sup> In 2019, it completed its Hayden Run Improvements project, which extended Hayden Run Road and constructed a new separated crossing (938363M); and it recently completed its FRA Lazelle Road Phase B project (ODOT PID 90406) which included the replacement of NS and CSX bridges.



Figure 7-Completed Hayden Run Road bridge over railroad.

3. This project has benefited significantly through the right of way donations from the private sector, pursuant Columbus City Code § 4309.17

There has already been significant private sector participation in the proposed project. This participation has occurred primarily through the right of way process that is built into Columbus' private development process, which is found in Columbus City Code § 4309.17. Because the Galloway Road extension has been on Columbus' thoroughfare plan for a significant number of years, developers have been required to donate the right of way necessary for the identified thoroughfare project to pass through the proposed development. The donation of right of way as part of the construction of Menards on Hilliard Rome Road marked the final donation necessary to extend Galloway Road all the way to Hilliard Rome Road. This has resulted in a significant

<sup>44</sup> Please see generally **Appendix 7 - Letters of Support**

<sup>45</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 11 - Lifecycle and PDP Comparison**

<sup>46</sup> See **Narrative Attachment 16 - LPA of the Year**

savings for Columbus, and a significant contribution by the private sector to the proposed project.<sup>47</sup> However, the future nature of the project does not lend itself to significant future private sector participation beyond statutory requirements for railroad participation and contribution to a project closing an at-grade closing.

4. Columbus has the legal, financial, and technical capacity to carry out the proposed project; satisfactory continuing control over the use of the equipment or facilities; and the capability and willingness to maintain the equipment or facilities.

Columbus has the legal, financial, and technical capacity to carry out the proposed project and maintain the infrastructure in a state of good repair. As already discussed, it has significant experience planning, designing, and construction significant capital investments in its transportation infrastructure. It has the capacity to maintain these investments in a state of good repair. It has sufficient funding for maintenance and preservation needs, and Columbus can draw on multiple funding sources, including its Street and Highways Bond Fund. Columbus has also developed an asset management program that allows city staff to manage the whole life of the infrastructure with considerations for preservation strategies which are predictable, and will keep the roadway in a state of good repair.

For this project in particular, taking time to improve the existing facilities on Galloway Road as needed north of Broad Street will renew the life cycle of this portion of existing pavement section and allow it to have normal life cycle (including preventive and corrective maintenance schedules) that can be managed jointly with the life cycle of the new roadway and separated crossing. Not adequately rehabilitating the roadway will ensure a shorter life cycle costing more money, disrupting vehicle flow, and exponentially increasing the cost to fully rehabilitate the roadway. Columbus will manage this life cycle with the asset management program it developed that allows city staff to manage the whole life of the infrastructure with considerations for preservation strategies which are predictable, and will keep the roadway in a state of good repair.

5. Columbus will use innovative project delivery and innovative financing in the ultimate delivery of this project, including new state funding to help eliminate grade crossings.

The Hilliard Rome Road Grade Separation project will benefit from one innovative approach to project delivery and long-term operations and maintenance: Columbus' Asset Information Management System (AIMS). Asset management is an area of innovative project delivery that Columbus is developing. Its Asset Information Management System (AIMS) provides access to foundational data and analytics needed to perform asset life cycle planning to support decision making. AIMS provides cross asset planning supporting trade-off analysis needed to determine what mix of infrastructure investments will provide the greatest return on the life of the assets. It is being developed by Assistant Director Andrew Williams, who helped develop and manage ODOT's asset management program. This system is expected to significantly improve Columbus' ability to manage its assets; and it will be used to maintain the new separated crossing once it is ultimately constructed.

State and local governments have been working diligently to implement innovative funding and financing for future projects in Ohio, including gas tax increases and dedicated state funding for projects seeking federal discretionary grants to eliminate grade crossings. Increased gas tax revenues are helping Columbus raise significant new revenue for transportation investment and infrastructure maintenance. Ohio has prioritized raising additional non-federal revenue for transportation infrastructure investment. Governor DeWine was instrumental in guiding a significant fuel tax increase through the state legislature in 2019. The increase was projected

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<sup>47</sup> See Maps: Existing Right of Way



to generate an additional \$865 million in gas tax revenue, with 55% of the funds going to the state and 45% going to local government entities.<sup>48</sup> Columbus anticipates some of its increased gas tax share will directly support either the initial construction of the separated or its subsequent maintenance.

An additional, new state funding for grade crossing elimination projects is the Ohio Grade Crossing Elimination Program. Governor DeWine created the Ohio Grade Crossing Elimination Program for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025 via Ohio House Bill 33 (Operating Budget). The program provides \$100 million to assist Ohio communities in competing for grade crossing elimination grant funding from the Federal Railroad Administration by providing state funding towards the required non-federal contribution.<sup>49</sup> The non-federal funding committed by the ORDC comes from this new state funding source.

6. The proposed project is consistent with planning guidance and documents set forth by DOT, including those required by law or State rail plans developed under title 49, United State Code, chapter 227.

This project is consistent with the planning guidance and documents set forth by USDOT, including those required by 49 USC 227. ORDC has already added this project to the State Rail Plan, and, if this project is awarded CRISI funding, it will continue to work closely with ORDC and FRA to ensure project is executed smoothly and in a manner consistent with all applicable laws, regulations, and other guidance.

### **C. Administration Priorities:**

1. **Safety:** This project will foster a safe transportation system for the movement of goods and people, and the project has a positive BCA and does not negatively impact safety for all users.

This project will foster a safe transportation system by addressing the challenges discussed in the Detailed Project Description. It should be noted that the inclusion of separated bicycle and transportation facilities will ensure that all users, regardless of mode, age, or ability, can comfortably and more safely travel the new corridor created by this project. Removing the conflict point at the current at grade crossing by separating it will also allow freight to pass through this crossing more smoothly and without interruption from users of Hilliard Rome Road. The BCA from this project documents a significant safety benefit derived from the modern countermeasures incorporated in this project, including roundabouts, and separated facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. The BCA memorandum can be found in **Appendix 2.a - Benefit-Cost Analysis Memorandum**, and the unlocked Excel spreadsheet is provided in **Appendix 2.b - Benefit-Cost Analysis**. Over the 20-year analysis period the total safety and travel time benefits equates to \$30,251,195.20 in 2022 dollars.

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<sup>48</sup> Jim Siegel, “10.5 cent gas-tax increase, 19 cents for diesel,” *The Columbus Dispatch*, last updated Apr. 3, 2019, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/politics/state/2019/04/02/10-5-cent-gas-tax/5542926007/>.

<sup>49</sup> “Governor DeWine Announces \$100 Million to Help Eliminate Dangerous Railroad Crossings,” Office of Governor Mike DeWine, Press Release, Sept. 5, 2023. <https://governor.ohio.gov/media/news-and-media/governor-dewine-announces-100-million-to-help-eliminate-dangerous-railroad-crossings>

2. *Climate Change and Sustainability*: This project will reduce greenhouse gas emissions due to idling while trains are using the at-grade crossing and encourage mode shift by providing separated facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians to use to access transit and rapid transit corridors.

As previously mentioned, this project will positively impact travel times in the corridor. This benefit is achieved by separating the crossing. As a result, vehicles will no longer need to wait at a crossing while a train passes through it. This will result in an overall reduction in the greenhouse gas emissions due to idling at a crossing. This project will also help encourage mode shift by helping fill a large gap in the Far West Side's active transportation network. The project will tie in to existing sidewalks on Hilliard Rome Road, and users will be able to use these existing sidewalks to access the new facilities on the separated crossing/Galloway Road. This, in turn, will allow them to connect with the transit and rapid transit lines on Broad Street. This is particularly important because this will make it easier for residents in two disadvantaged census tracts<sup>50</sup> to reach regional travel options.

3. *Equity and Justice*<sup>40</sup>: This project will positively impact disadvantaged communities in two census tracts.

As previously mentioned, the Justice40 Rail Explorer shows two disadvantaged census tracts within/adjacent to the immediate project area: 39049008165, and 39049008171.<sup>51</sup> The data also shows both census tracts have a transportation insecurity level greater than 0.7. This project will help address that insecurity by providing separated facilities for the pedestrians and bicyclists, and it will fill a significant network connectivity so that people can reach transit and rapid transit facilities along West Broad Street. This connection will help extend the significant federal and regional investments being made in the West Broad BRT.

4. *Workforce Development, Job Quality, and Wealth Creation*: Columbus is committed to promoting local inclusive economic and entrepreneurship programs.

Columbus is committed to ensuring meaningful opportunities for Minority-Owned and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MBE/WBEs) and Small Local Business Enterprises (SLBEs) to participate in its construction, professional services, and goods and services contracts. In administering this Supplier Diversity Policy, Columbus takes all necessary and reasonable steps to ensure business enterprises certified as MBE/WBEs have an equal opportunity to participate in city contracts. It is Columbus' policy to create contracting opportunities for MBE/WBEs and SLBEs in its construction, professional services, and goods and services contracts.

The MBE/WBE and SLBE Programs ensure contracts are awarded in a manner that promote economic inclusion. Administration of the MBE/WBE Program is afforded the same priority as compliance with all other legal obligations. Free gender and race-based certification is offered to make it easier to identify those ready, willing, and able to perform on contracts.<sup>52</sup>

## **IX. Project Implementation and Management**

Columbus anticipates an agreement outlining the various responsibilities of the parties and stakeholders. ORDC will serve as the lead agency and coordinate all activities with any external entities, including FRA. Columbus has extensive federal grant experience administering federal

<sup>50</sup> See Narrative Attachment 03 - Justice40 Rail Explorer

<sup>51</sup> See Narrative Attachment 03 - Justice40 Rail Explorer

<sup>52</sup> "Minority, Women, and Veteran Business Enterprise Certification Policy," City of Columbus, <https://www.columbus.gov/odi/supplier-diversity/Business-Certifications/>.

projects, and it intends to work closely with ORDC and FRA to identify areas where it will need to adjust its project implementation and management process when necessary.

Columbus anticipates selecting a design consultant in conformance with applicable federal regulations. Once selected, the consultant will work closely with Columbus and other stakeholders as needed, including Norfolk Southern, ORDC, and FRA, to deliver the project according to the deliverables and project milestones outlined in the Statement of Work. Throughout the process, Columbus will hold the contract with the consultant and perform day-to-day monitoring and payment activities while ensuring compliance with applicable federal requirements, including reporting requirements.