

NEWS

OHIO RAIL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ORDC Seeking Public Input On Possible Grade Crossing Closures Along Mt. Vernon-Newark Rail Line

(Columbus) – As part of an overall rehabilitation of the rail line between Mount Vernon and Newark, the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) will be seeking public input on the project and about the possible closing of four grade crossings along the line: three in St. Louisville in one in Utica.

A public meeting is scheduled for:

**7:00 PM
Wednesday
February 28th
At the Utica Village Council Chambers**

ORDC Acting Director Matt Dietrich says ORDC staff did a detailed inspection of the entire rail line in advance of the rehabilitation project. The project will upgrade the rail line with new ties, ballast and crossing surfaces. During the course of that inspection it was discovered that four grade crossings could possibly be eliminated.

Closing them, Dietrich explains, will make the overall rehabilitation project more cost effective. It will also, he says, eliminate the safety hazard from a car-train collision; reduce the noise from trains that are otherwise required to blow their horns approaching the crossings.

“We want to emphasize that closing grade crossings is entirely a local decision”, Dietrich. “If the public and their local officials feel strongly either way, ORDC will proceed with their wishes.”

At their January meeting, ORDC Commissioners agreed to have ORDC manage a \$1.7-Million dollar Ohio Department of Development grant for repairs to 44 grade crossing surfaces on the Newark to Mount Vernon rail line. The line is currently owned and operated by the Ohio Central Railroad.

Late last year, the Commission also approved a \$200,000 grant for materials to begin rehabilitation of the rail line. The railroad will invest over \$207,000 of its own funds as well for installation of new railroad ties along the 25.9-mile branch line, which serves two growing businesses who employ a total of 200 people Mount Vernon: Weyerhaeuser (paper products) and Central Ohio Farmers Grain Elevator.

(The Ohio Rail Development Commission is an independent agency operating within the Ohio Department of Transportation. ORDC is responsible for economic development through the improvement and expansion of passenger and freight rail service, railroad grade crossing safety and rail travel & tourism issues. For more information about what ORDC does for Ohio, visit our website at <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/ohiorail/>)