

**City of Fairfield Minutes
Regular Meeting of City Council
February 9, 2026**

Council-Manager Briefing

Vice Mayor Meyers called the briefing to order at 6:30 PM. Councilmembers present: Leslie Besl, Dale Paullus, Debbie Pennington, Adam Kraft and Tim Meyers. Staff members present: Scott Timmer, Ben Mann, Adam Sackenheim, Laurie Murphy, Diana Davenport, Tom Lakamp, Steve Maynard, Steve Wolterman, Tami Moore, Jason Hunold, Mandi Brock and Greg Kathman.

Public Works Director Mann presented an update of the Symmes Road Overpass project. See attached slides.

Business Meeting Call to Order

Vice Mayor Meyers called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Prayer/Pledge of Allegiance

Councilmember Adam Kraft led in prayer and Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Councilmembers present included:

Councilmember, 1st Ward Leslie Besl
Councilmember, 2nd Ward Dale Paullus
Councilmember, 3rd Ward Debbie Pennington
Councilmember, 4th Ward Adam Kraft
Councilmember, At-Large Tim Meyers

Councilmembers excused included:

Councilmember, At-Large Gwen Brill
Councilmember, At-Large Matt Davidson

Councilmember Besl, seconded by Councilmember Paullus, moved to excuse Councilmembers Brill and Davidson. Motion carried 5-0.

Agenda Modifications

None.

Executive Session Requests

None.

Special Presentations

None.

Citizen Comments

Jeremy Hill, Cleveland Heights, Ohio - Mr. Hill addressed Council regarding EZUtility, an app he developed for utility customers. The app connects to InvoiceCloud and is free to set up and use. He requested a meeting with staff to present a demo. Vice Mayor Meyers referred him to Public Utilities Director Jason Hunold.

Joe Sparto, 5500 Southgate Blvd. - Mr. Sparto stated that his wife presented a tax issue to Council last month and now they have received another notice from tax office. He commented that they are still worried about professional ramifications of second notices and credit issues related to the tax office. He also notified that a tax return was lost and they are concerned about their personal information being lost. He stated that he thinks a state audit may need to be requested. He also said he is concerned with speeding and reckless driving in front of his house and would like to propose speed bumps to deter behavior. Vice Mayor Meyers referred him to Finance Director Davenport for the tax office concerns and Police Chief Maynard for the speeding concerns.

Council Reports

Vice Mayor Meyers noted the article about the Sustainability program in the Journal News and commented that it was a great article to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the program implementation. He also commented that he attended a ribbon cutting for 2BCleaned, a small business in Fairfield that embraces the American dream.

Public Hearing(s)

None.

Approval of Minutes

1. Special Meeting Minutes - January 24, 2026
Minutes approved as written and submitted.
2. Regular Meeting Minutes - January 26, 2026
Minutes approved as written and submitted.

Old Business

1. Public Works - Councilmember Debbie Pennington

a. Resolution declaring necessity of repairing sidewalks (including aprons).

Councilmember Pennington presented the third reading of this resolution. Councilmember Debbie Pennington, seconded by Adam Kraft, moved to adopt. Motion carried Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0.

RESOLUTION NO. 4-25. APPROVED 5-0.

New Business - Motion to Read All New Business by Title Only

Councilmember Besl, seconded by Councilmember Paullus, moved to read all New Business by title only. Motion carried 5-0.

1. Development Services - Councilmember Gwen Brill

- a. Ordinance to authorize the City Manager to execute a Funding and Development Agreement with Mitchell Development & Construction LLC to provide economic development assistance for the Whispering Hill housing development on South Gilmore Road, and declaring an emergency.

Mitchell Development & Construction (“Mitchell”) plans to acquire an approximately 18-acre site located on South Gilmore Road, just north of Mack Road and adjacent to Mercy Health – Fairfield Hospital. This property has previously been rezoned as Planned Unit Development (PUD) known as Whispering Hill, a 68-unit paired villa residential housing project. Multiple developers have attempted to advance a low-density residential project on this site without success, largely due to the significant costs of grading and preparing the hillside location.

Mitchell plans to prepare the site for residential development, including grading the site to create building pads and a pond for stormwater detention, construction of public streets and sidewalks, and installation of underground utilities. Mitchell then plans to sell the residential lots to M/I Homes to construct the housing units.

The paired villa housing units will be located on smaller lots with a homeowner’s association that is responsible for exterior maintenance. This type of housing is anticipated to be appealing for empty nesters looking to downsize and/or young professionals seeking a lower maintenance lifestyle in proximity to large employers like Cincinnati Financial Corporation and Mercy Health. Past planning efforts and community feedback have identified an unmet demand for this type of housing in Fairfield.

Recognizing the desire to bring this type of housing product to the Fairfield market and the real economic challenges of residential construction at the proposed density on this challenged development site, the proposed Funding and Development Agreement (“Agreement”) proposes to leverage new property tax dollars to be collected as a result of the project to assist with upfront development costs. The Agreement would provide \$1.2 million towards acquisition and limited infrastructure investment for the project. Mitchell currently estimates the total costs of acquisition, site preparation, and infrastructure to exceed \$5.6 million.

In order to recapture the city investment in the project, future legislation will be proposed to create a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District across the entire development site. The TIF District will allow for a portion of property taxes generated by the new development to be set-aside to repay the city. The TIF is estimated to generate between \$3.5-4.5 million over its 30 year term, providing additional funds for the city to maintain internal and adjacent public infrastructure.

Economic Development Manager Nathaniel Kaelin presented the proposed project details. See attached.

Vice Mayor Meyers presented the first reading of this ordinance.

2. Public Safety - Councilmember Dale Paullus

- a. Simple Motion: Motion to not request a hearing regarding a liquor permit application in the name of Palazzo Event Venue & Lounge LLC, 74 Donald Drive, Fairfield, OH 45014 (Permit Class D5).

Councilmember Paullus, seconded by Councilmember Pennington, moved to not request a hearing regarding this liquor permit application. Motion carried 5-0.

SIMPLE MOTION NO. 7-26. APPROVED 5-0.

3. Public Works - Councilmember Debbie Pennington

- a. Ordinance to authorize the City Manager to enter into a contract with Ohio Heavy Equipment Leasing, LLC dba Loveland Excavating for the Marsh Park Interior Paved Trails and declaring an emergency.

The Marsh Park master plan calls for 11 foot and 8 foot wide paved trail connecting the northerly side of Marsh Lake. This project includes approximately 1150 feet of 11 foot path and 2850 feet of 8 foot path to connect to the future Great Miami River Trail (to begin in late 2026 early 2027).

This will be the first major project to implement the master plan and will kick off what will be several exciting projects that will enhance the existing beauty of Marsh Park and making it accessible and inviting to every segment of the City's population.

Planning goals for Marsh Park that are aligned with this project are: to enhance the environment as a natural destination, promote connection between users and the park, and encourage recreation with thoughtful improvements.

Plans and specifications were advertised for bid on January 9 and 16. A public bid opening was held on January 26, 2026. Eight (8) bids were received, opened and read in Council Chambers. The lowest and best bidder was Ohio Heavy Equipment Leasing, LLC dba Loveland Excavating.

Councilmember Pennington presented the first reading of this ordinance. Councilmember Debbie Pennington, seconded by Dale Paullus, moved to suspend second and third readings. Motion carried Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0. Councilmember Debbie Pennington, seconded by Adam Kraft, moved to adopt. Motion carried Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0.

ORDINANCE NO. 14-26. APPROVED 5-0.

- b. Ordinance to authorize the City Manager to enter into a contract with Donnellon McCarthy Enterprises of Sharonville, Ohio for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations for multiple public locations.

The City of Fairfield was awarded two grants for the installation of Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Stations within the City.

ODOT combined the two separate grants to the City from OKI for charging stations.

Locations approved were Waterworks Park for 4 charging ports (with the infrastructure to expand to 20), the Library for 2 charging ports, the Justice Center for 4 charging ports (with the infrastructure to expand to 20), the Community Arts Center for 4 charging ports (with the infrastructure to expand to 10), and Harbin Park for 2 charging ports. OKI is supplying the match to the federal money for these locations, so the project will be advanced with 100% outside City funding.

This project is programmed in the 2025-2029 Capital Improvement Program under 5PW44 – EV Charging Stations and in the proposed 2026-2030 CIP under 6PW66.

OKI is supplying Carbon Reduction Grant funding with no local match required. Our application considered the electric infrastructure at those locations that would allow for future expansion of the charging network to include more public chargers, charging stations for City EV's, or a combination of both. CMTA consultants were engaged by Public Works and provided preliminary engineering with future needs considered. CMTA has previously analyzed the needs and capabilities of our existing facilities as part of Fairfield Sustains.

Currently the City has two Level 2 Charging Ports at the Community Arts Center. This location was selected as it met the criteria for which the previous application was scored by the OEPA. It is a well-lit, safe location near the heavily travelled Pleasant Avenue (US 127). It is on City property which made the installation 100% eligible for funding. The previous project was a 20% match as will be this project.

It will be the City's intent to implement a fee for use like that of surrounding jurisdictions once additional chargers are brought on-line.

This project falls in line with the goals of the Fairfield Forward Comprehensive Plan and our Fairfield Sustains plan to promote environmental sustainability. The plan specifically mentions investigating electric vehicle charging stations.

Plans and specifications were advertised for bid on January 9 and 16. A public bid opening was held on January 26, 2026. Three (3) bids were received, opened and read in Council Chambers. The best bidder was Donnellon McCarthy Enterprises of Sharonville, Ohio. They were considered the lowest bidder that met the Buy America Build America requirements of the federal funding for this project.

Councilmember Pennington presented the first reading of this ordinance. Councilmember Debbie Pennington, seconded by Adam Kraft, moved to suspend second and third readings. Motion carried Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0. Councilmember Debbie Pennington, seconded by Dale Paullus, moved to adopt. Motion carried Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0.

ORDINANCE NO. 15-26. APPROVED 5-0.

4. Finance & Budget - Councilmember Leslie Besl

- a. Ordinance to amend Ordinance No. 148-25 entitled “An Ordinance to make estimated appropriations for the expenses and other expenditures of the City of Fairfield, Ohio, during a period beginning January 1, 2026, and ending December 31, 2026.”
- Contractual Appropriations: \$2,595,000 total (\$1,200,000 for Development Agreement (Development Services); \$845,000 for Marsh Lake Interior Paved Trails (Public Works); \$550,000 for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (Public Works))

Councilmember Besl presented the first reading of this ordinance. Councilmember Leslie Besl, seconded by Dale Paullus, moved to suspend second and third readings. Motion carried Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0. Councilmember Leslie Besl, seconded by Adam Kraft, moved to adopt. Motion carried Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0.

ORDINANCE NO. 16-26. APPROVED 5-0.

- b. Ordinance to amend Ordinance No. 148-25 entitled “An Ordinance to make estimated appropriations for the expenses and other expenditures of the City of Fairfield, Ohio, during a period beginning January 1, 2026, and ending December 31, 2026.”
- Non-Contractual Appropriations: \$53,000 total (\$35,000 for Development Agreement; see below for additional description)

- Legislation - First Reading
- Motion - Suspend Second and Third Readings
- Motion - Adoption

Councilmember Besl presented the first reading of this ordinance. Councilmember Leslie Besl, seconded by Adam Kraft, moved to suspend second and third readings. Motion carried Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0. Councilmember Leslie Besl, seconded by Dale Paullus, moved to adopt. Motion carried Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0.

ORDINANCE NO. 17-26. APPROVED 5-0.

\$18,000.00 - Water Division - Water Treatment Plant Flooring (Public Utilities)

Meeting Schedule

Monday, February 23: Council-Manager Briefing, 5:30 PM; Regular Meeting, 7:00 PM

Monday, March 9: Council-Manager Briefing, 6:00 PM; Regular Meeting, 7:00 PM

Monday, March 23: Council-Manager Briefing, 6:00 PM; Regular Meeting, 7:00 PM

Clerk Wilson read the meeting schedule.

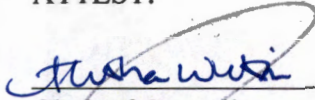
Executive Session of Council (if Needed)

None.

Adjournment

The Regular Meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

ATTEST:


Clerk of Council

Mayor's Approval

- Date Approved: 2/23/26



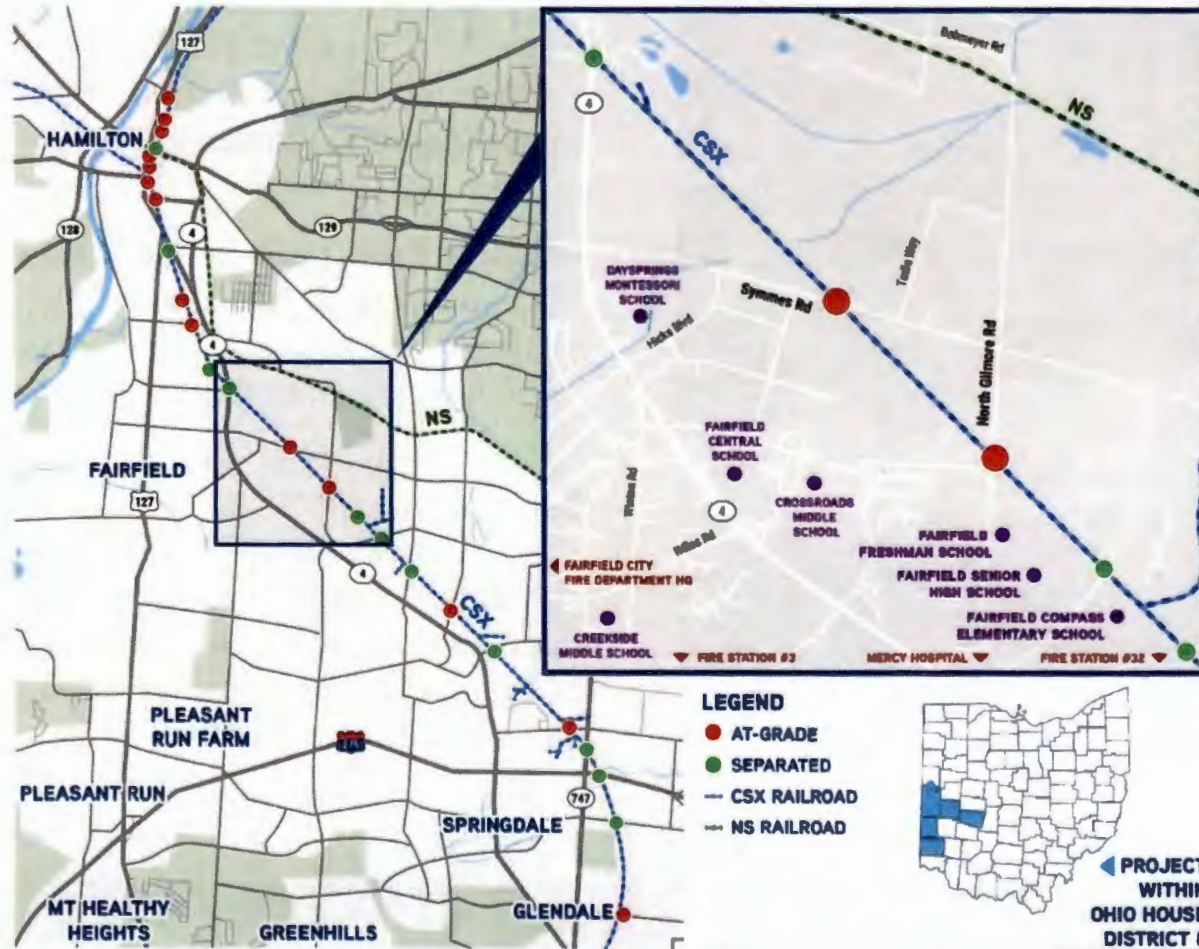
Symmes Road Overpass Project Funding Update

Public Works Department

Ben Mann, Public Works Director



Location Map

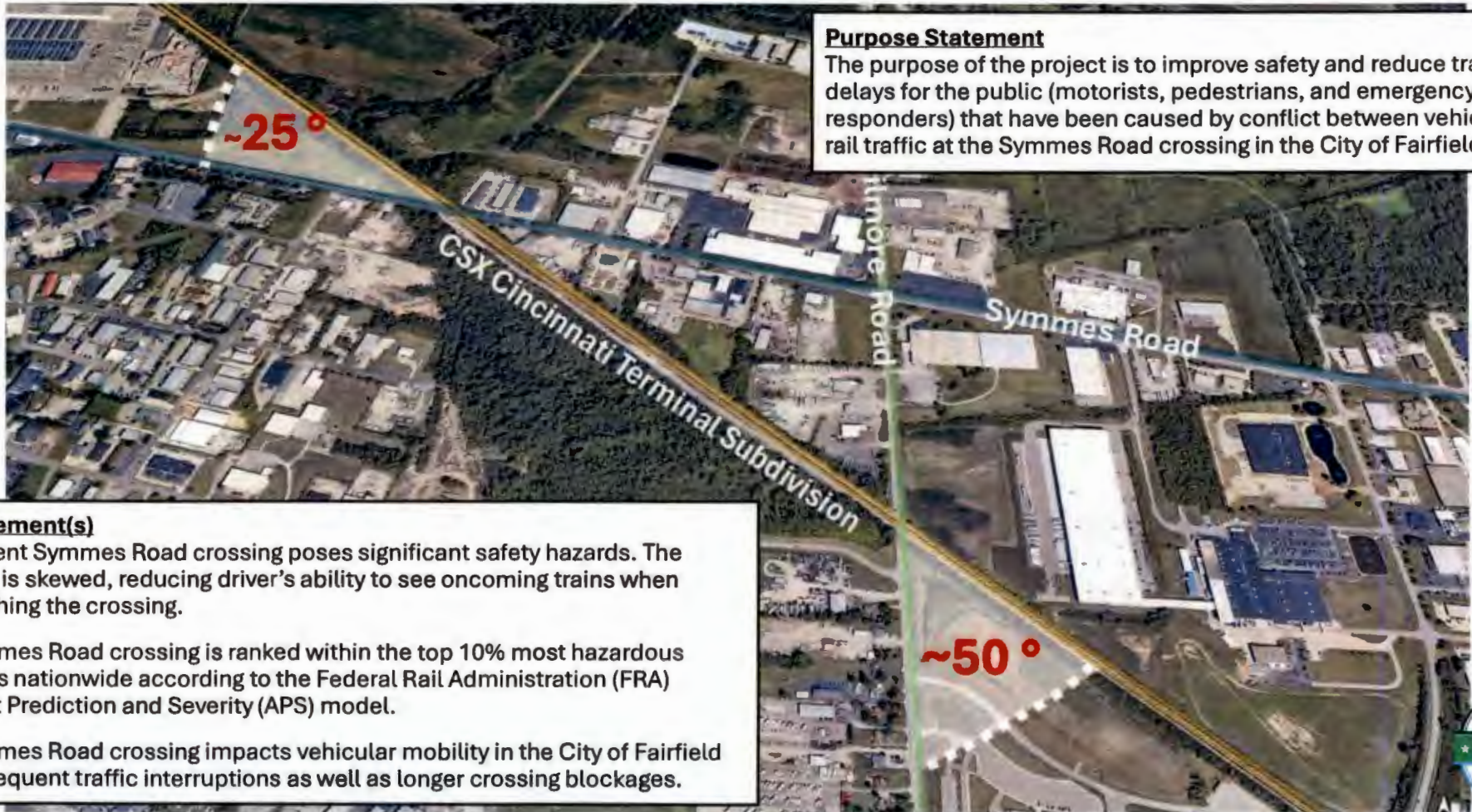


Introduction

- The Butler County Transportation Improvement District (BCTID) was awarded a Rail Crossing Elimination (RCE) grant for \$3 M from the Federal Rail Administration (FRA), a significant step forward to making **safety** and **mobility improvements** at two existing railroad crossings - Symmes Road and North Gilmore Road.
- The grant agreement and associated Project Planning and Project Development tasks will require the BCTID and the City of Fairfield to commit to following established FRA processes and procedures.
- The Symmes Road Grade Separation Project, as scoped per the Agreement, is a \$3,750,000 planning and design phase contract, includes a 20% non-federal local match provided by BCTID/City of Fairfield.



Purpose & Need



Purpose Statement

The purpose of the project is to improve safety and reduce traffic delays for the public (motorists, pedestrians, and emergency responders) that have been caused by conflict between vehicle and rail traffic at the Symmes Road crossing in the City of Fairfield.

Need Element(s)

The current Symmes Road crossing poses significant safety hazards. The crossing is skewed, reducing driver's ability to see oncoming trains when approaching the crossing.

The Symmes Road crossing is ranked within the top 10% most hazardous crossings nationwide according to the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) Accident Prediction and Severity (APS) model.

The Symmes Road crossing impacts vehicular mobility in the City of Fairfield due to frequent traffic interruptions as well as longer crossing blockages.



Rail Operations



Rail Crossing Crash Data

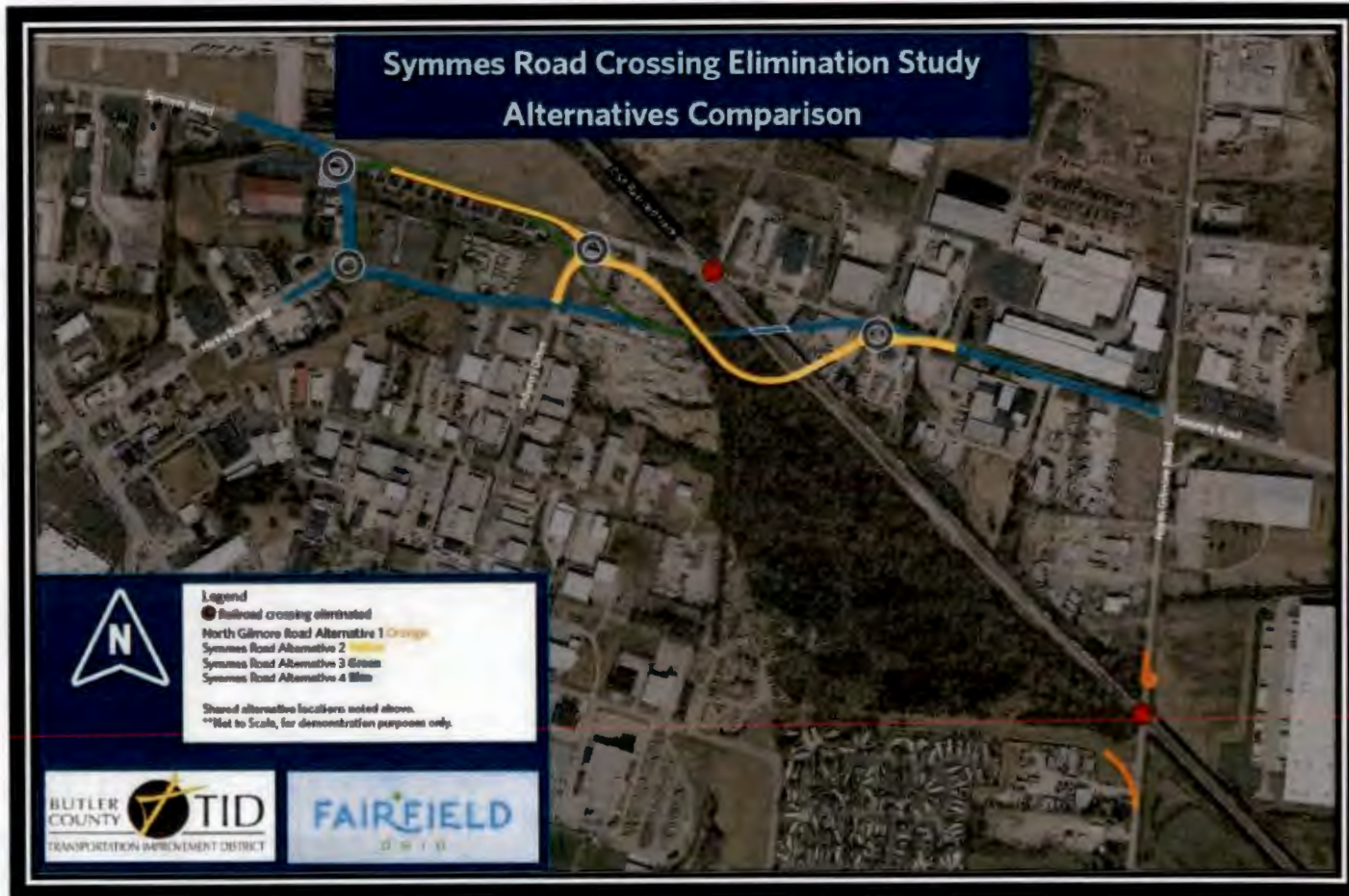


Table 9. Rail crossing crash data, 1975 - 2025

Date	Visibility	Highway User Action/Position	Crossing Users Killed	Crossing Users Injured
Symmes Road Crossing Incidents				
1/25/1975	Dark	Did not stop	2	3
3/21/1978	Dark	Went around the gate	0	0
9/29/1981	Dark	Stalled or stuck on crossing	0	0
2/18/1984	Dark	Did not stop	0	1
5/20/2011	Dark	Trapped on crossing by traffic	0	1
North Gilmore Road Crossing Incidents				
6/21/1975	Day	Did not stop	0	0
6/25/1976	Dark	Did not stop	0	0
3/14/1982	Dark	Did not stop	0	0
9/26/1982	Dark	Did not stop	0	1
7/6/1984	Day	Did not stop	0	0
1/3/1986	Dusk	Did not stop	0	0
3/23/1988	Day	Did not stop	2	0
2/10/1989	Dark	Did not stop	0	1
4/24/2001	Day	Went around the gate	0	1
8/3/2005	Dusk	Went around the gate	3	1
10/3/2016	Dawn	Stopped on crossing	1	1
3/24/2025	Dawn	Went around the gate	0	1



Alternatives Considered



Preferred Alternative



Preferred Alternative

Amount of FSP Program funding requested under this NOFO	\$40,000,000
Amount of proposed non-Federal share	\$10,000,000
Source(s) of proposed non-Federal share	ORDC, Butler County Transportation Improvement District (BCTID), CSXT



Key Issue	Symmes Road	North Gilmore Road
Fulfills Purpose and Need	Yes	Yes
Traffic movements during construction	Need for construction phases and longer duration to maintain traffic during construction	Traffic maintained during construction.
Right-of-Way Requirements	Impacts 48 properties, will require relocation of 1 residential and 4 commercial properties	Impacts 1 commercial property, no relocations
Utilities	Significant impact to overhead utilities; 700 feet of Waterline relocations; 200 feet of Gas line relocations	Impacts to overhead utilities on North Gilmore Road
Wetland/Streams	375 feet of stream impacted. 1.30 acres of wetlands impacted	No impact
Ecological T&E Species	Potential impact to bat habitat	No impact
Cultural and Historical Resources	No Resources affected	No impact



Next Steps for Developing the Preferred Alternative

- Class of Action Approval for Categorical Exclusion – Spring 2026
- Borings and additional survey – Spring 2026
- Stage 1 Plans - July 2026
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Approval – Fall 2026
- Right of Way Plans – Early 2027



Letters of Support

October 21, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590



Fairfield City Schools
Business Operations
4641 Bush Lane • Fairfield, Ohio 45014
Phone (513) 629-6200

Director:
Loren Perry
Administrative Assistant:
The Escobar



The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Committee:
Ames and Veterans Affairs
House Health Protection Services
Joint Military Overweight Committee
State and Local Government
Technology and Innovation



Contact Information:
Office: 614-467-0211
Email: representative@ohio.gov
775 High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43261-4411

Representative Jennifer Green
The Ohio House of Representatives

The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: National Railroad Partnership Program / Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant Program Project Support - Symmes Road, Fairfield, Ohio

Dear Secretary Duffy:



The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: National Railroad Partnership Program / Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant Program Project Support - Symmes Road, Fairfield, Ohio



The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: National Railroad Partnership Program / Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant Program Project Support - Symmes Road, Fairfield, Ohio



November 4, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

MEMORANDUM FOR
The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: National Railroad Partnership Program / Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant Program Project Support - Symmes Road, Fairfield, Ohio

MEMORANDUM FOR

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20540

November 20, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Duffy,

Thank you for your dedication to promoting and funding improvements that enable the safe, reliable, and efficient movement of people and goods for a strong America—now and in the future. I write today to urge your full and fair consideration of the City of Fairfield's Symmes Road Grade Separation project proposed for the National Railroad Partnership Program / Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant Program.

This critical infrastructure project in Fairfield, Butler County, Ohio, will eliminate two at-grade rail crossings—Symmes Road, which carries over 12,000 vehicles daily, and Gilmore Road—by constructing a new overpass. The upgrade will enhance public safety, ease traffic congestion, and improve emergency response and school transportation, while also creating over four miles of uninterrupted rail corridor along a busy Cincinnati line used by CSX, Norfolk Southern, and Amtrak, which sees nearly 50 trains daily. With millions of square feet of Class A logistics and distribution centers under construction—and the potential for millions more in adjacent areas—the project supports regional economic growth. Recognized in the FRA's CRISI planning grant to the Ohio Rail Development Commission, this grade separation is a key first step toward improving rail fluidity for both freight and passenger traffic in the Cincinnati region.

The Symmes Road Grade Separation project aligns with FRA priorities by improving public safety, reducing emergency response delays, and enhancing rail fluidity.

I again urge your full and fair consideration of this proposal. Thank you for your work to support the rail infrastructure of our nation.

Sincerely,

Jim Husted
Jim Husted
United States Senator



The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: National Railroad Partnership Program / Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant Program Project Support - Symmes Road, Fairfield, Ohio

2 East Fourth Street
Suite 800
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
910.563.6400
www.READYCINCINNATI.com



Mike Bohlke, Governor
Jim Tate, Lt. Governor
Patrick Spitzer, Director

November 17, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Subject: City of Fairfield's Symmes Road Grade Separation Application

Dear Secretary Duffy:

The Ohio Department of Transportation is pleased to support the City of Fairfield's Symmes Road Grade Separation application for the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program.

This important safety and traffic congestion project will eliminate the at-grade rail crossing on Symmes Road within the city of Fairfield, Ohio, and create a new overpass, while also enhancing the adjacent at-grade rail crossing on North Gilmore Road.

The at-grade rail is a major north-south corridor used by both freight (CSX and Norfolk Southern) as well as the national passenger railroad, Amtrak, with nearly 50 total trains per day over three crossings. Despite the numerous local safety and quality-of-life benefits of this project, the elimination of these two at-grade crossings will create over four miles of uninterrupted rail corridor by eliminating traffic, north of the heavily congested rail corridor. This rail corridor is currently used by both freight and passenger rail.

The FRA has already recognized the significant negative benefits to the City of Fairfield with its CRISI planning grant award to the Ohio Rail Development Commission. This grade separation, which was already identified as a potential project in the CRISI application, is a transformational project that will take the first step towards improving overall rail fluidity for all rail traffic, freight and passenger, in the area.

STEFAN BARBERO
President

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

November 5, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy,

I am writing to express my support for the Symmes Road Grade Separation project, which is being prepared for funding through the National Railroad Partnership Program and the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant Program. This critical infrastructure initiative aims to eliminate two at-grade rail crossings in the City of Fairfield, Butler County, Ohio—on Symmes Road within the CSX national right-of-way and the other on adjacent local rail corridors—by constructing an overpass. This project will significantly enhance public safety and reduce traffic congestion in a rapidly growing region north of Cincinnati, while the FRA's goal to reduce the rate of grade rail crossings and improve performance.

Symmes Road carries a key north-south corridor in Butler County, situated between State Route 4 and the Symmes Road Bypass. It connects the City of Fairfield and Hamilton to Interstate 75, accommodating over 12,000 vehicles daily and supporting a diverse mix of businesses. The area surrounding the crossing is undergoing substantial development, with millions of square feet of Class A logistics and distribution facilities currently under construction and more anticipated in the near future.

The line is considered a vital north-south route utilized by both major freight carriers—CSX and Norfolk Southern—as well as Amtrak's passenger service. Nearly 50 trains arrive each day, and the frequency of freight trains to and from the area is increasing. Despite ongoing construction, the City of Fairfield and CSX have at-grade crossings that are a safety and traffic congestion project, while also eliminating the at-grade rail crossing on North Gilmore Road. The grade separation project is a guaranteed way to eliminate crossing impacts to the public in a fast-growing area north of Cincinnati.

George F. Long
School of Leadership
601 Clinton

November 17, 2025

Ohio Senate
Senate Building
5 Capital Square
Columbus, Ohio 43215
(614) 465-0073
long@ohiosenate.gov

Committee:
Agriculture
Auto and Aerospace
2020
Financial Institutions, Insurance and Technology
Energy
Joint Rail/Infrastructure/Transportation Opportunity
Workforce Development

2051 Timberman Road, Hamilton, OH 45013 • YourMetroParks.net • (513) 867-5835

The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: National Railroad Partnership Program / Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant Program Project Support - Symmes Road, Fairfield, Ohio

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I am writing to express my strong support for the Symmes Road Grade Separation project to be submitted to the National Railroad Partnership Program / Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant Program to eliminate two at-grade rail crossings in the City of Fairfield, Butler County, Ohio. This important safety and traffic congestion project will eliminate the at-grade rail crossing on Symmes Road within the CSX national right-of-way by providing an overpass, while also eliminating the adjacent at-grade rail crossing on North Gilmore Road. The grade separation project is a guaranteed way to eliminate crossing impacts to the public in a fast-growing area north of Cincinnati.

Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) Support

SYMMES ROAD, FAIRFIELD, OHIO

GRADE SEPARATION PROJECT

Appendix B - Letters of Funding Commitment



RESOLUTION 25-31 RE: FEDERAL GRANT APPLICATION WITH BUTLER COUNTY TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE OHIO RAIL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION'S CONTINUED PARTNERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL RAILROAD PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM / FEDERAL-STATE PARTNERSHIP FOR INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL ("FSP") APPLICATION TO BE SUBMITTED BEFORE THE 2026 DEADLINE AND DETERMINING THE APPROPRIATENESS OF ASSISTANCE PROPOSED TO BE PROVIDED TO BUTLER COUNTY TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT ("BCTID") AND THE CITY OF FAIRFIELD UNDER CHAPTER 4981 OF THE OHIO REVISED CODE.

EXHIBIT A

A grant to the Community pursuant to Section 4981.032 of the Ohio Revised Code in the amount of up to Ten Million Seven Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$10,750,000) (the "ORDC Grant") for a grade separation project at Symmes Road in Fairfield, Butler County (the "Project").

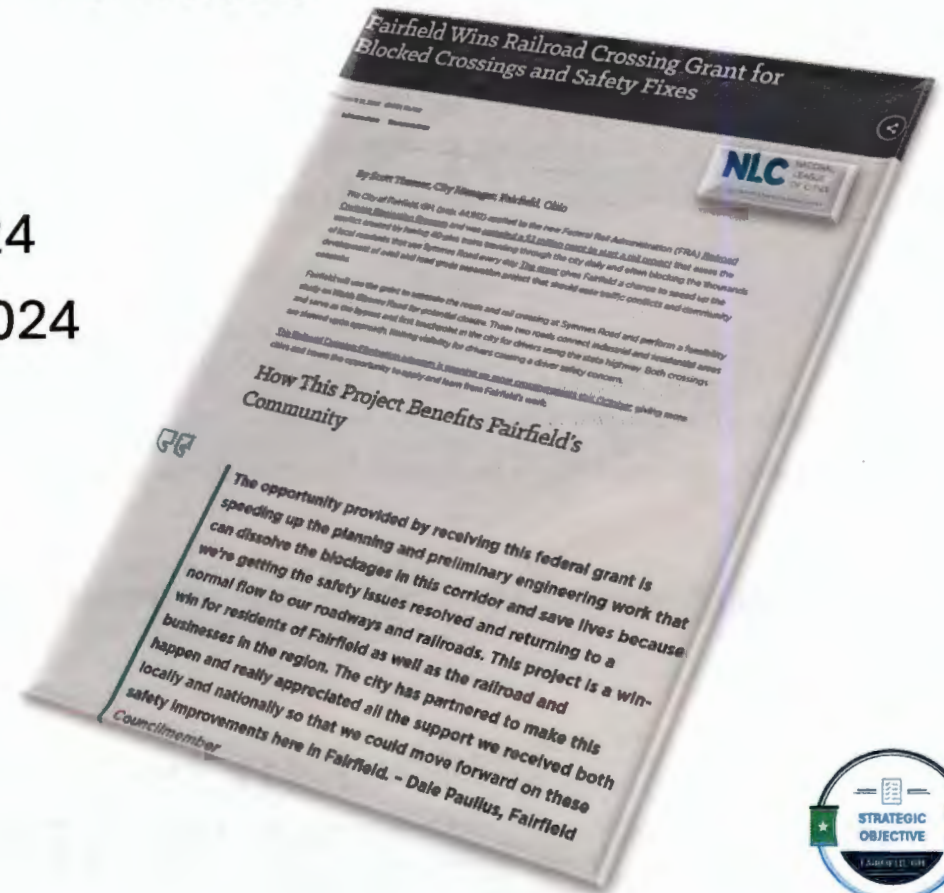
The ORDC Grant is subject to the following conditions:

1. The Community must meet all standard ORDC program requirements, including any applicable prevailing wage provisions, in expending the ORDC Grant.
2. The Community shall be responsible for a local share of at least Four Million Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$4,250,000).
3. The Community shall be responsible for any and all costs in excess of the ORDC Grant.
4. This funding approval is contingent upon the award of a federal FSP grant for the Project and subject to the availability of appropriations.



FY 2022 Rail Crossing Elimination (RCE) Grant

- RCE Grant Application Submitted – 10/7/2022
- RCE Grant Awarded – 6/5/2023
- Pre-Award Authority – 3/1/2024
- Consultant Agreement – 3/25/2024
- Grant Agreement Signed – 8/19/2024



FY 2022 RCE Grant Tasks and Status

Task and Subtask	Status
Task 1 - Project Management Plan and Final Report	
1.1 Project Management Plan	Completed
1.2 Final Performance Report	Expected completion by January 2027
Task 2 - Symmes Road Project Development	
2.1 Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement	Completed
2.2 Stakeholder Coordination Plan	All public involvement activities necessary for Project Development have been completed.
2.3 Symmes Road Environmental Review	In Process
NEPA Alternatives Analysis	Completed (In the process of addressing final comments)
Class of Action Recommendation Memo	Submitted 1/13/2026. Categorical Exclusion Class of Action Determination confirmed February 2, 2026
Symmes Road Draft Environmental Decision Document	Expected submission March 27, 2026
Final Environmental Decision Document	Expected submission September 11, 2026
2.4 Symmes Road Preliminary Engineering	March 27, 2026
Basis of Design	Completed
Preliminary Engineering Package	Expected submission July 1, 2026
Task 3 - North Gilmore Road Planning	
3.1 Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement	Completed
Alternatives Analysis Methodology Memo	Expected submission February 2026
3.2 Existing Conditions Report	Expected submission March 2026
3.3, 3.4, 3.6 Alternatives Analysis	Completed
3.5 Capital Cost Estimates	May 2026
3.7 Alternatives Analysis Report	Expected DRAFT submission May 2026. Expected FINAL submission October 2026.



Schedule Based on 2026 FSP Award

Task Name	Start	End	Duration (Months)	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Grant Award	10/1/2026		1	█						
NEPA Completed	1/1/2026	12/31/2026	12	█						
Project Admin & Mgmt	2/1/2027	6/30/2032	65		█	█	█	█	█	█
Final Design	3/1/2027	7/31/2028	16		█	█				
Right of Way Acquisition	5/1/2027	12/31/2028	20		█	█	█			
Procurement	12/1/2028	2/28/2029	3				█			
Construction	2/1/2029	8/30/2031	30				█	█	█	
Project Closeout	9/1/2031	2/28/2032	6						█	



Budget Based on 2026 FSP Award

Funding Source	Total Amount	Percentage of Total Project Cost
Federal Share	\$ 40,000,000	80%
Agreement Federal Funds	\$ 40,000,000	80%
FSP-National	\$ 40,000,000	80%
Agreement Non-Federal Funds	\$10,000,000	20%
Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC)	\$ 5,650,000	11.3%
Butler County Transportation Improvement District (BCTID)	\$ 4,250,000	8.5%
CSX	\$ 100,000	.2%



Federal Grants – Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO)

- FSP NOFO Submitted February 5, 2026 approx. **\$5B**:
 - ✓ FY 2024-2025: National Railroad Partnership Program / Federal State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grant Program
- CRISI Last NOFO was due May 28, 2024 approx. **\$2.5B**:
 - ✓ FY 2025-2026: Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program
 - ✓ Expectation that CRISI will be released soon (~90 Day Window to submit once it is advertised)
- RCE Last NOFO was due September 23, 2024 **\$1.1B**:
 - ✓ FY 2024: Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program
 - ✓ Expectation that RCE will be released after CRISI closes later in 2026
- All 3 applications will likely be submitted before any awards are announced



Discussion / Questions





**Whispering Hill
Development Agreement
February 9, 2026**

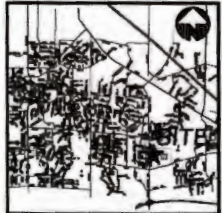
FAIRFIELD
OHIO



CONCEPT PLAN WHISPERING HILL

SECTION 20, TOWN 2, RANGE 2
CITY OF FAIRFIELD
BUTLER COUNTY, OHIO
OCTOBER, 2024

■ PAVED WALKING PATH ■ EXISTING VEGETATION TO REMAIN
 ■ OPEN SPACE ■ CONCRETE SIDEWALK



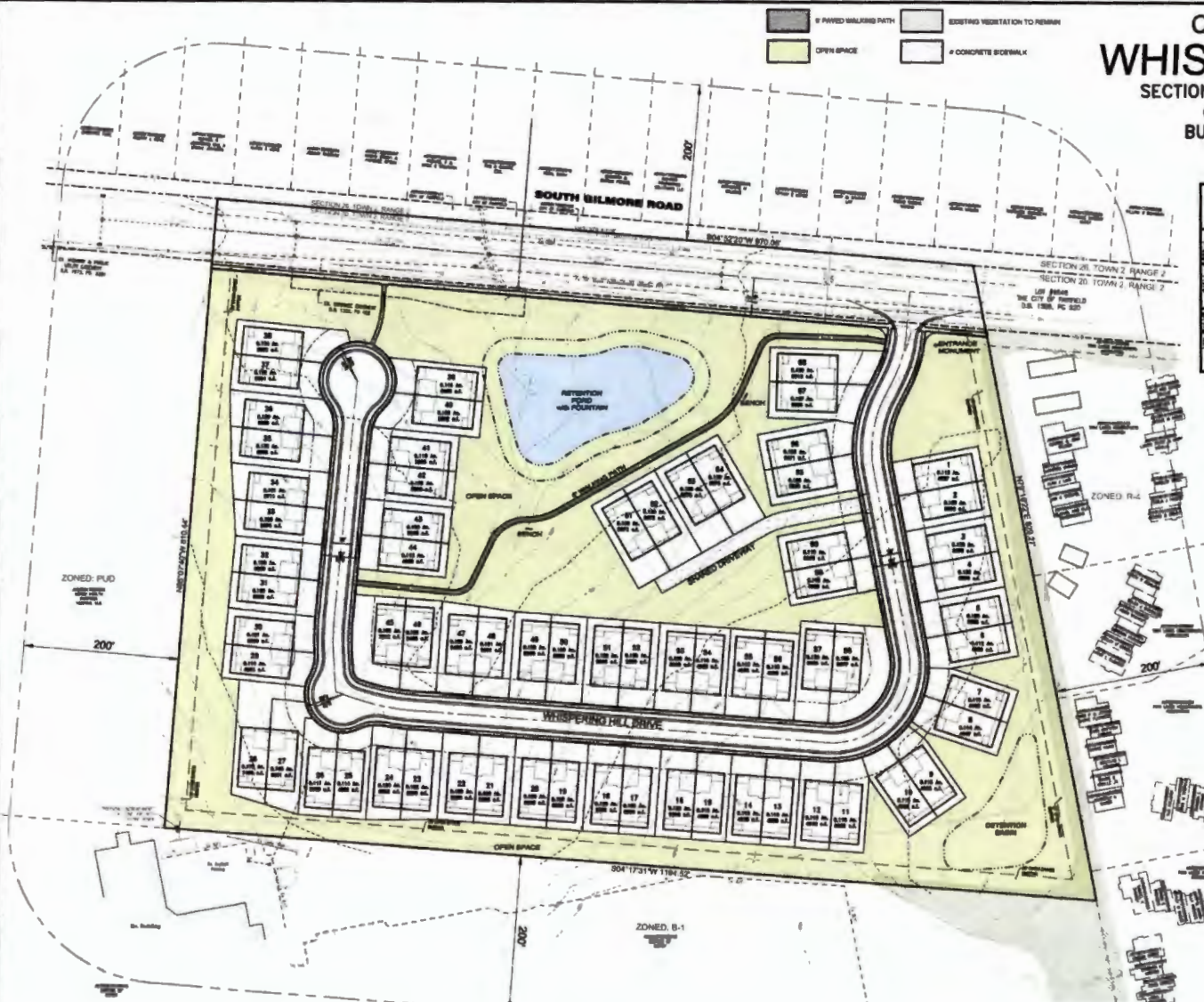
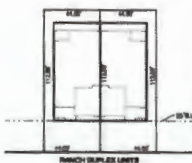
VICINITY MAP
NOT TO SCALE

PROJECT DATA

RANCH DUPLEX
 LOT FRONTAGE (at Front Building Line) 44'
 SQUARE FOOTAGE (MIN) 4800 s.f.
 FRONT SETBACK (MIN) 20'
 SIDE SETBACK (MIN) 0", 7.5'
 REAR SETBACK (TOTAL) 10'
 REAR SETBACK 10'
 # OF BUILDINGS 34 (88 Lots)
 * 8 REAR YARD SETBACK APPLIES TO SHARED DUPLEX LOT LINE ONLY
 TOTAL # OF RESIDENTIAL LOTS = 88
 # OF OPEN SPACE LOTS = 1
 OPEN SPACE PROVIDED = 7.1 Acres (28%)
 TOTAL ACRES = 17.8708 Acres
 OVER-ALL DENSITY = 2.78/ac

GENERAL NOTES

1. Sanitary to be tied into City of Fairfield System.
2. Water to be installed and connected to City of Fairfield System.
3. Electric to be supplied by Duke Energy.
4. All utilities shall be underground.
5. Descender street signs shall be provided.
6. All public streets to be constructed according to City of Fairfield standards and specifications.
7. Contours furnished from aerial photography based on U.S.G.S. data.
8. A topographic survey shall be established to provide measurements for the development.
9. A minimum 20' open space buffer has been provided around the entire development boundary.
10. Existing Zoning: PUD





WHISPERING HILL
SECTION 20, TOWN 2, RANGE 2
CITY OF FAIRFIELD, BUTLER COUNTY, OHIO

CONCEPT PLAN



BOWER BECKER
ENGINEERING & SURVEYING
1000 N. STATE ST., SUITE 100
FAIRFIELD, OHIO 45024
PHONE: 513.233.8800
FAX: 513.233.8801
WWW.BOWERBECKER.COM

Whispering Hill Sample Elevations

