

ST. JOSEPH AND ELKHART COUNTY, INDIANA RAIL CORRIDOR OVERPASS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Rail Crossing Elimination Grant

Michiana Area Council of Governments
September 2024



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I. Cover Page

Project Title	St. Joseph and Elkhart County, Indiana Rail Corridor Overpass and Improvements
Applicant	Michiana Area Council of Governments
Federal Funding Requested Under the Rail Cross Elimination Grant NOFO	\$1,000,000
Proposed Non-Federal Match	\$250,000
Does some or all the proposed Non-Federal Match for the total project cost consist of preliminary engineering costs incurred before project selection?	N/A
Other Sources of Federal Funding	N/A
Source of Proposed Non-Federal Match	Local Funds, Redevelopment Commission
Are set-aside funds requested?	Yes, Planning Projects Set-Aside
Amount of Set-Aside Cost Requested	\$1,250,000
Total Project Cost	\$1,250,000
Was a Federal Grant Application previously submitted for this project?	Yes, RAISE FY 23
Counties, State Where Project is Located	St. Joseph and Elkhart Counties, Indiana
Is the Project Located in a Rural Area or on Tribal Land?	No
If the Project is located in a Rural Area or Tribal, is the Project Located in a county with 20 or fewer residents per square mile, according to the most recent decennial census?	No
Congressional District Where the Project is Located	IN-002
Application Track(s) proposed to be funded by this NOFO?	Track 1: Planning Project
Lifecycle(s) proposed to be funded by this NOFO?	Lifecycle: Planning Project
Current Lifecycle Stage and Anticipated completion of current Lifecycle Stage?	Planning Project - Some components of the Planning Project stage took place in 2022 - 2024 through a locally funded Hazard Elimination and Mobility Study. Components of this stage will be completed dependent on funding award.
Is the project located on real property owned by someone other than the applicant?	Yes, Norfolk Southern Railway Company and Indiana Department of Transportation. Coordination with both departments will take place during this study.
Host Railroad/Infrastructure Owner(s)	Norfolk Southern Railway Company, Indiana Department of Transportation, St. Joseph County, Indiana and Elkhart County, Indiana
If applicable, is a 49 U.S.C 22905-compliant Railroad Agreement executed or pending?	N/A - Planning Grant
Is the project currently programmed in ANY medium- or long-range planning document?	YES, Metropolitan Transportation Plan - " Michiana on the Move: 2050 Transportation Plan " (Pg. 117)
Is the project located on a potential corridor selected for the Corridor Identification and Development Program?	No

II. Project Summary

This planning project will include a corridor study and environmental work to enhance the safety of four (4) at-grade crossings, with Ash Road being grade-separated. By upgrading at-grade crossings and planning for a grade separation, the project will reduce collisions, increase reliability for emergency responders, improve accessibility for non-motorized travelers, enhance livability for residents through the development of a Quiet Zone, support the safe and reliable movement of workers to high-quality jobs, and facilitate the efficient movement of freight.

III. Grant Funds, Sources and Uses of Project Funds

Funding Source	Total	Percentage
RCE Grant Request	\$1,000,000	80%
Non-Federal (Local Funding)	\$250,000	20%
Other Federal	\$0	0%
Total	\$1,250,000	100%

No additional federal funding is proposed at this time. The project original sought funding through the FY 23 RAISE Grant Program, however was not selected for an award. The scope of work remains the same, and the application and eligibility criteria has been updated to reflect the Rail Crossing Elimination Funding Program.

The following table itemized by project funding by LifeCycle Stage and by project Activity:

Lifecycle Stage	Task Name Project Component	Cost	Percentage of Total Cost
Project Planning	1. Project Administration and Management	\$75,000	6%
	2. Purpose and Need and Stakeholder Coordination Plan	\$62,500	5%
	3. Alternatives Analysis	\$662,500	53%
	4. Environmental	\$450,000	36%
Amount of funding request eligible for set-aside funds?		\$1,250,000	100%

St. Joseph County commits to matching 20%, or \$250,000, towards the project's estimated cost of \$1.25 million. The county's share of funds will come from the AM General Economic Development Area Tax Increment Financing (TIF) fund, and currently has the funds available. (Please see Financial Commitments Attachment)

IV. Applicant Eligibility Criteria

The Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) is a metropolitan planning organization (under [23 CFR 450.310](#)) which is explicitly listed as a eligible applicant in C.1.f of the NOFO. Further MACOG is established under the authority of the Interlocal Cooperation Act, being Acts 1957 of the Indiana General Assembly, Chapter 118 (more commonly known as Section 53-1101 to 53-1107, Burns Indiana Statutes annotated, 1964 replacement).

V. Project Eligibility Criteria

This application includes the study of a grade separation and a series of crossing improvements such as protective devices, signals, or signs, focused on improving the safety and mobility of people and goods, thus making this eligible for funding under [49 U.S.C 22909\(d\)](#). This meets the project eligibility requirements of C.3.a.i. This study is under Track 1- Project Planning.

VI. Detailed Project Description



Robert Young Classification Yard near Lincolnway and Ash Rd.

Northern Indiana's proximity to Chicago, the nation's largest rail hub, means that rail lines regularly bisect the region. Norfolk Southern's Line between Chicago and Cleveland is busiest in the Michiana Area Council of Governments Region, handling nearly 100 trains per day. The rail line is part of Norfolk Southern's corridor linking Chicago and the Midwest with the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions of the eastern United States.

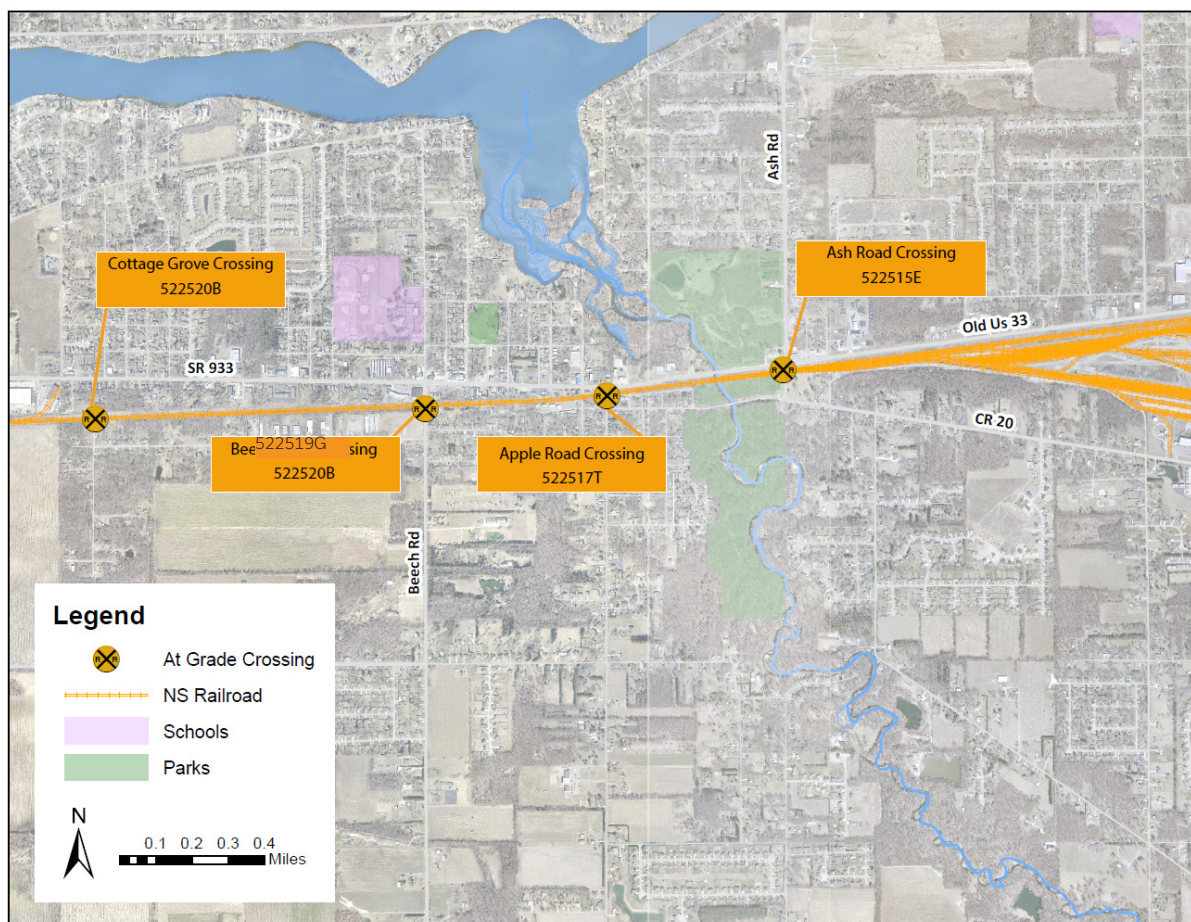
The second-largest freight classification yard on the Norfolk Southern network is

the Robert Young Classification Yard located in Elkhart, Indiana right near Ash Road. Featuring 72 classification tracks, the yard sorts carloads of agricultural, steel, chemical, ethanol, and automotive products. The terminal also contains a locomotive shop and functions as a crew change point for freight trains.

The Norfolk Southern Railway corridor parallels Lincolnway, a significant Other Principal Arterial, which has approximately 14,000 daily vehicles on average. Additionally, Ash Road carries over 5,200 vehicles a day connecting residents to many manufacturing jobs in Elkhart County. The high volume of train traffic combined with the railway's proximity to a major vehicular thoroughfare creates significant delays, increases congestion, limits mobility, and poses safety risks for both vehicular, non-motorized and train traffic.

Ash Road is also the entrance to the town of Osceola, which is home to over 2,500 residents. Based on all the land uses, train traffic and vehicle traffic, these crossings are one of the region's and the State's highest profile traffic areas.

"This project will address one of the State's highest profile traffic areas where both vehicle and train traffic meet on a daily basis." - Rick Crawford, Director of Public Projects & Government Relations, Norfolk Southern Corporation



Project Location Map

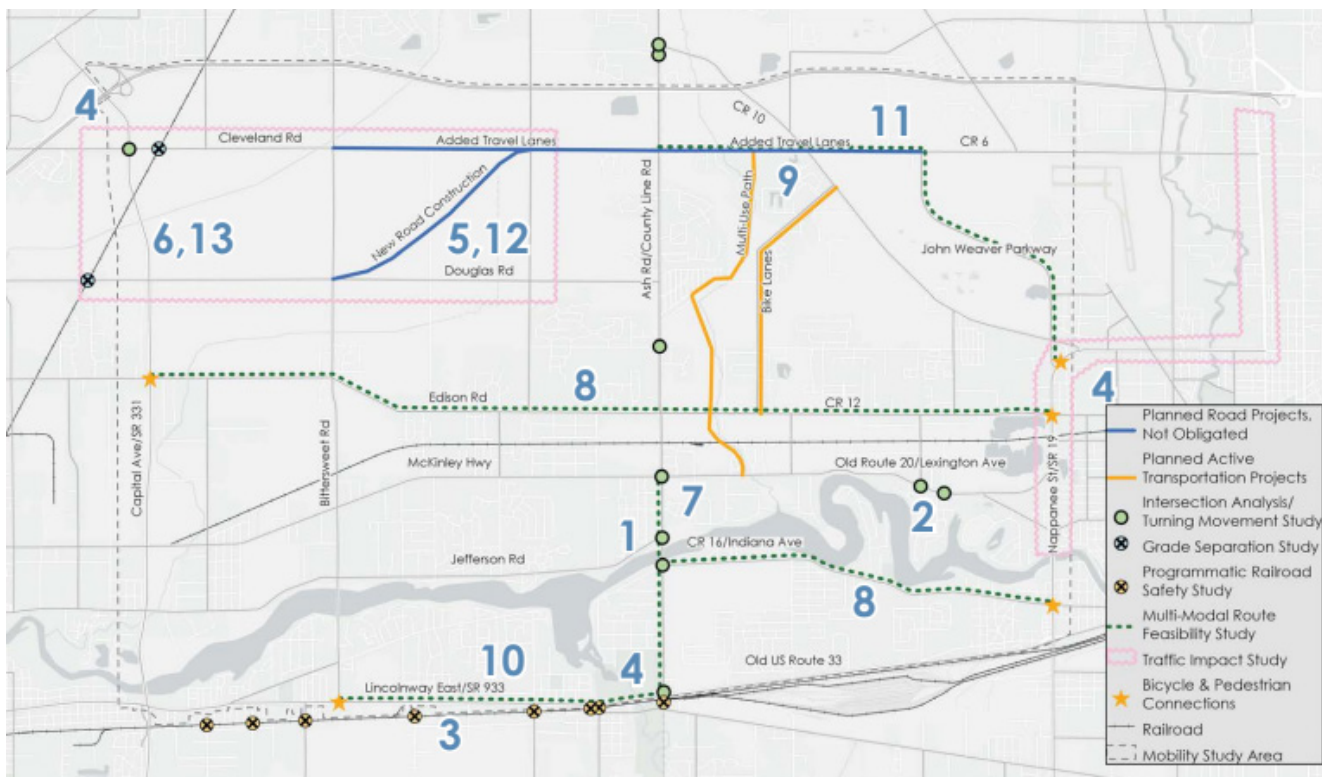
Core goals:

- **Improve Safety** - By eliminating and improving at-grade crossings along the Norfolk Southern Railway the safety risk that is created by more than 60 trains and 12,432 vehicles coming into conflict each day, will be minimized. Crash data from 2019 to 2023 reveals three train collisions, including a pedestrian fatality and one vehicle injury. Crash data from 2014 to present reveals 7 collisions that have resulted in three fatalities and one injury. This project will allow for safer travel by transit, vehicle, bicycle, or walking, and will facilitate the safer movement of freight.
- **Access to Economic Opportunity** - This project will create a safe and reliable transportation corridor to high-quality jobs. Elkhart County is known as the RV manufacturing capital of the world, responsible for 80 percent of our nation's RV production. The Ash Road corridor connects workers to these industries, with a concentration of manufacturing facilities along County Road (CR) 20/ Mishawaka Road, McKinley Hwy/Old US 20, and Lincolnway, employing close to 20,000 workers.
- **Enhance Mobility and County Connectivity** - This project will incorporate Complete Streets principles, ensuring all users of the roadway are considered and designed for, including school buses, first responders, pedestrians, bicycles, and commuters. Furthermore, this corridor currently has no reliable grade-separated rail crossing for seven miles, between Capital Ave/SR 331 and SR 19. This project looks to enhance County connectivity by addressing this issue with a centrally located grade separation along Ash Road, the county line.
- **Improve Quality of Life and Environment** - The development of a Quiet Zone will enhance the lives of over 9,000 residents residing within one (1) mile of this corridor. Additionally, the grade separation will reduce the number of idling vehicles which will decrease greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality.
- **Expedited Project Delivery** - There are a number of environmental and land use challenges that need to be carefully considered including wetlands, the Ferrettie/ Baugo Creek County Park, and the proximity of the rail corridor to Lincolnway Highway. Funding a planning and environmental study, will lead to a more efficient and expedient delivery of the project's implementation.

Regional Priority

For decades, MACOG, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Rural Planning Organization (RPO) for the region, has been working to improve vehicle-rail safety. This has included numerous grade separations and other safety improvements. This project is a top priority for our region's vehicle-rail safety.

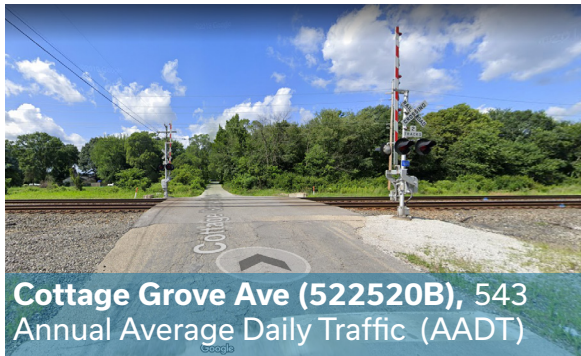
This project is supported by many different regional stakeholders including Congressman Rudy Yakym, U.S. Senator Mike Braun, and U.S. Senator Todd Young, local elected officials, the RV and business community, first responders, public schools and Norfolk Southern. It is also important to note that this project stems from extensive coordination between St. Joseph and Elkhart Counties. In 2021, the two counties finalized [The County Connections Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Study](#), focused on better understanding transportation challenges and opportunities between the two counties and promoting coordination of future transportation investments on key corridors connecting them.



County Connections Study Recommendations

This is still a macro level analysis which provides the opportunity to pinpoint recommendations where additional analysis is warranted and where to better concentrate Elkhart's and St. Joseph County's future efforts.

Crossings included in this study:



Note: Chestnut Road crossing (522518A) which falls between Beech Road and Apple Road was permanently closed in Fall of 2022.

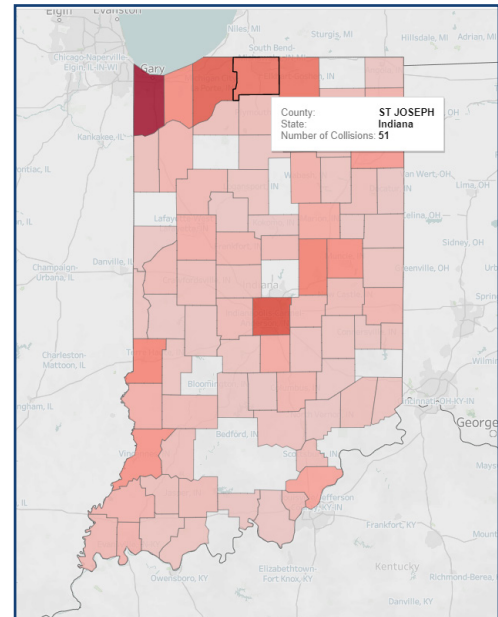
At a minimum, the project will result in at least one grade crossing through a grade separation project, with consideration of additional crossings based on the planning study.

VII. Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety Information and Education Programs

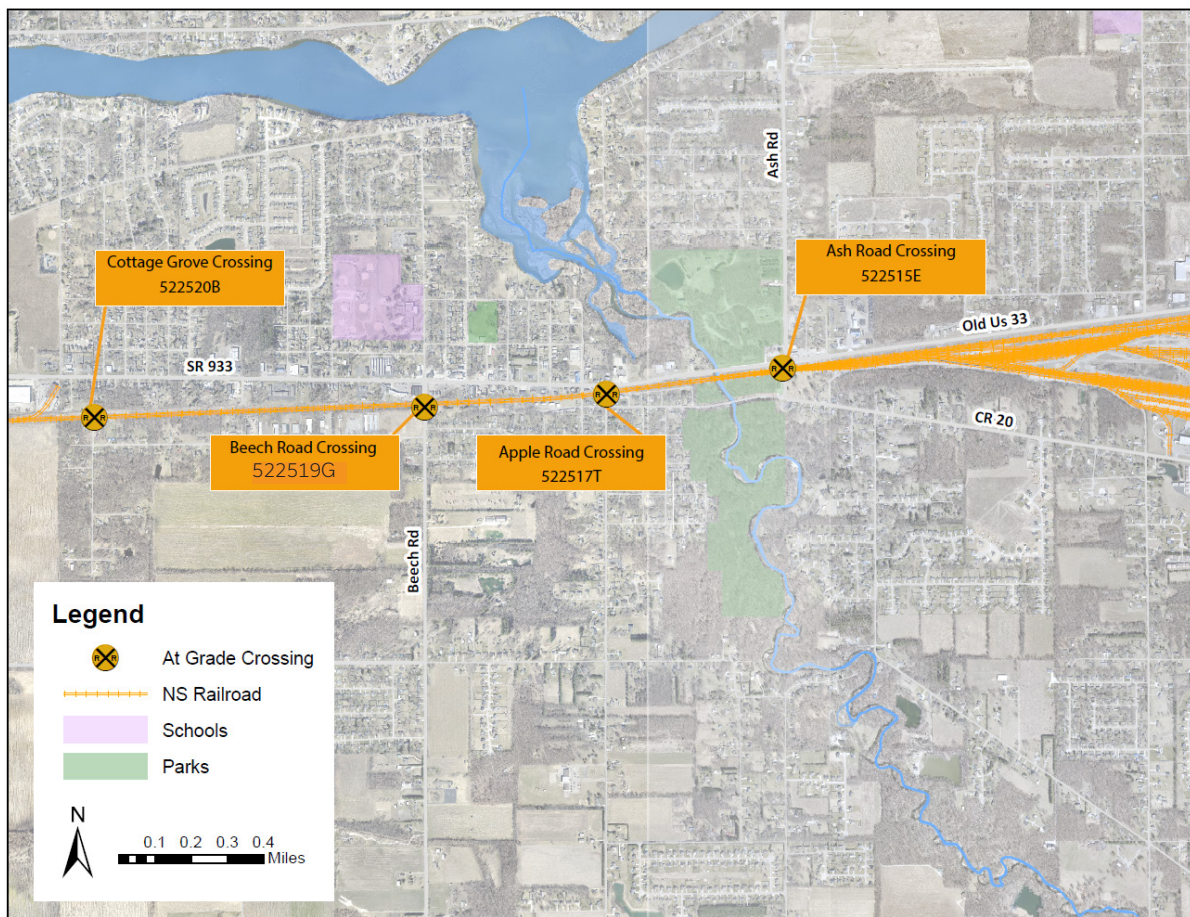
MACOG is seeking funding for a Track 1 - Planning project and not requesting funding for an education program.

VIII. Project Location

The project location falls within and surrounding the Town of Osceola, incorporating Cottage Grove Avenue, Beech Road, Apple Road, and Ash Road crossings in eastern St. Joseph County, Indiana. These crossings fall just west of Norfolk Southern's 2nd largest freight classification yard, in Elkhart County, Indiana. Both Counties are located within IN - 002 Congressional District. The area is predominantly residential or commercial, with a few industrial and mixed uses. Additionally, the project crosses through Ferrettie/Baugo Creek County Park. The arterial roads, such as Lincolnway, Ash Road, and CR 20 provide access to a significant number of jobs, particularly manufacturing. Geospatial data is included below within the Grade Crossing information.



FRA Rail Collisions in Indiana

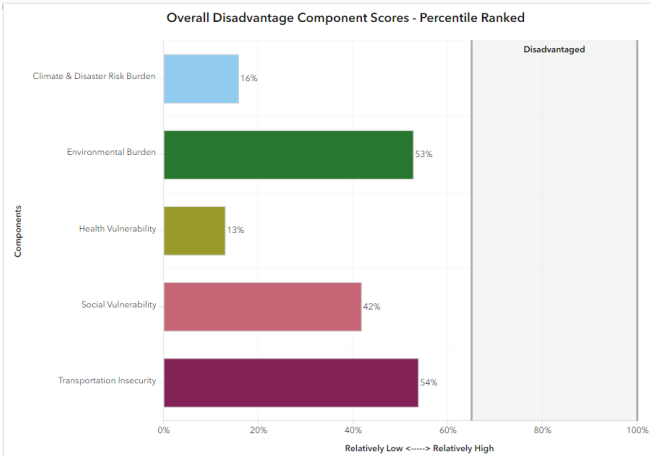
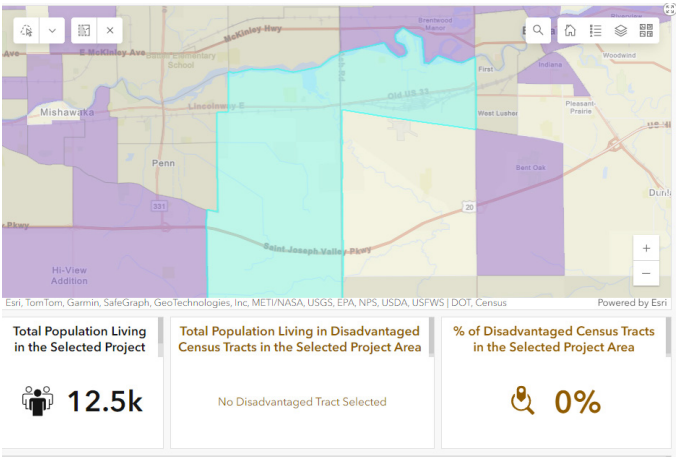


Project Location Map

Equity and Justice

While these existing at-grade crossings are not located directly in a Historically Disadvantaged Area or Area of Persistent Poverty, the project will have direct benefit to those that reside in Elkhart County Census Tract 15.01 (1.25 miles to the north) and Elkhart County Census Tracts 22 & 23 (3 miles to the east). All are recognized as Historically Disadvantaged and Areas of Persistent Poverty.

This corridor, particularly Ash Rd and Lincolnway serve as commuting corridors impacting residents from a wide geographic area. This project would aim to ensure those commuters have a reliable, accessible, and safe travel to high-quality jobs. For the immediate project area, Environmental Burden and Transportation Security are the top two components nearing the disadvantaged threshold.



USDOT Disadvantaged Component Scores - Percentile Ranked

IX. Grade Crossing Information

US DOT grade crossing inventory #	Proposed Improvement	Primary Rail Operator	Railway Owner	Latitude	Longitude
522520B (Cottage Grove Ave)	Improved	Norfolk Southern, Amtrak, Canadian Pacific	Norfolk Southern	41.6617392	-86.0980434
522519G (Beech Rd)	Improved	Norfolk Southern, Amtrak, Canadian Pacific	Norfolk Southern	41.662329	-86.080341
522517T (Apple Rd)	Improved	Norfolk Southern, Amtrak, Canadian Pacific	Norfolk Southern	41.662826	-86.070669
22515E (Ash Rd)	Separated	Norfolk Southern, Amtrak, Canadian Pacific	Norfolk Southern	41.663764	-86.061090

Amtrak and Canadian Pacific also operate along the railway.

X. Safety Benefit

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Average Predicted Accidents
Cottage Grove	0	0	0	1	0	0.115833
Beech Rd	0	0	0	0	0	0.010119
Apple Rd	0	0	0	1	1	0.222495
Ash Rd	0	0	0	0	0	0.011802

Between 2019 to 2023, there have been a total of 3 highway-rail crashes, resulting in a fatality and an injury. 10 year crash data from 2014 to present include a total of 7 high-way rail crashes resulting in three fatalities and one injury. Further safety benefits are discussed in the next section.

Please note, there was a fatal collision that occurred at the Ash Road crossing in July 2024.

XI. Evaluation and Selection Criteria

- **Proposed Grade Separation and Improvements to Improve Safety**

This planning grant will allow for the study of four (4) at-grade railroad crossings. This work will result in the safer movement of people and goods by enhancing crossing protection or identifying potential closures at Cottage Grove Ave, Beech Road, and Apple Road rail crossings, including facilities for pedestrians and bicycles, and eliminating any safety risks posed at Ash Road and the railroad crossing through design of an overpass.

Crash Data

A review of the last five years of crash data (2019 to present) for the four (4) at-grade crossings with Norfolk Southern Railway revealed three (3) collisions, including one (1) fatality and one (1) injury. All of these collisions have taken place since November of 2022, including a pedestrian fatality on Cottage Grove



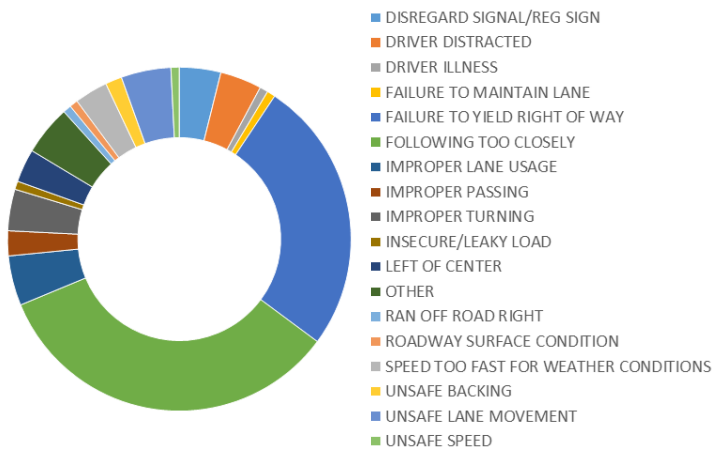
Apple Rd Train Collision: February 7, 2023

Ave. On average, the four (4) at-grade crossings result in 12,432 vehicles and 60 trains coming into conflict every day. These conflicts have resulted in nearly 50 collisions total since 1975 as reported by the FRA. Moreover the Accident Prediction System ranks the crossings at 18th and 49th for Apple Road and Cottage Grove Ave respectively, and 152nd and 166th for Ash Road and Beech Road out of 1,533 Norfolk Southern Railway public at-grade crossings in Indiana. This puts all crossings in the top 10% of the most hazardous crossings in the State.

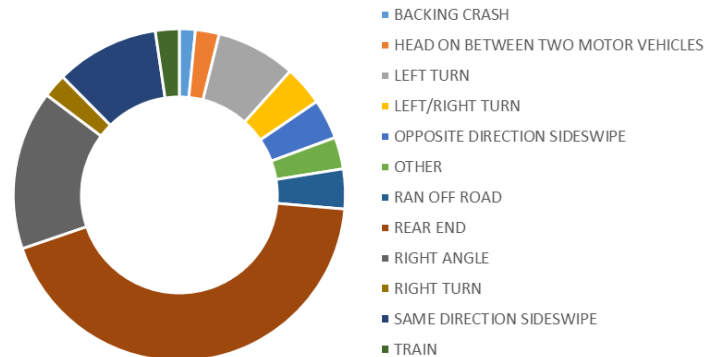
When considering nearby intersections and the four identified at-grade crossings, there were a total of 129 crashes between 2019 and 2023, including 8 fatal or serious injury crashes.

Intersections and Nearby Railroad Crossings 2019-2023 (Excluding Collisions with Train)				
	Cottage Grove Avenue	Beech Road	Apple Road	Ash Road
Collisions	6	25	21	75
Serious Injuries	0	0	0	0
Total	6	25	21	75
Percent of Crashes	4.72%	19.69%	16.54%	59.05%

The majority of these crash types include rear ends, right angles, same direction sideswipes, and left turn collisions. The most common primary factors were following too closely and failure to yield the right of way.



Count by Primary Crash Factor



Count by Manner of Collision

Of the 129 crashes, over 59% of crashes occurred along or near the Ash Road and Lincolnway intersection. With a grade separated overpass, these collisions would be significantly reduced by restricting turn movements onto Ash Road and reducing conflict points.

Improving Access to Emergency Services

First Responders and Emergency Management Services, particularly Penn Township Fire Department, are impacted by delays due to train slow or stopped traffic, which also poses an unmeasurable safety risk. While the two fire stations are positioned both north and south of the railroad, the quickest route to serve residents on the southside of Osceola requires crossing the tracks. Micheal Gerndt Jr., Operations Chief for the Penn Township Fire Department, says "Penn Fire is routinely delayed in our emergency responses due to significant railway traffic so much so that we were forced to implement an alternative travel route on all incidents in order to eliminate the risk of being stopped by a slow moving train. Unfortunately, the alternative route can extend our response times as much as 5 minutes (which is quite significant in a life or death scenario)." (See enclosed letter of support) The construction of an overpass will provide emergency services with a direct and reliable route that has a known travel time and cannot be impacted by a stopped or slow moving train.



Ash Road Fatal Train Collision: July 17th, 2024
Source: WSBT

Protect Vulnerable Road Users from Safety Risks

Currently, there are no crossings in this corridor that accommodate the travel of pedestrians or bicycles safely with a dedicated facility. During a 24-hour turning movement count conducted at Ash Road and Lincolnway in August of 2020, 18 bicycles were counted, showcasing the need for a dedicated active transportation facility in an environment currently dominated by vehicular traffic.

This project will address this safety risk by properly planning for and accommodating the most vulnerable users of our transportation network through a dedicated pathway. This is especially important as Lincolnway and Ash Road serve as the only transit corridor (the Yellow Line) between the Cities of Mishawaka and Elkhart, operated by South Bend Public Transportation Corporation (Transpo) and the Interurban Trolley.

- **Improves Mobility of People and Goods**

[The County Connections Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Study](#) identified this project based on stakeholder and public input and data analysis in 2021. The presence of the railroad significantly restricts mobility in the region. Over a seven mile stretch, between Capital Ave/State Road (SR) 331 and SR 19, no grade separated crossings exist. Planning for a grade separation at Ash Road will restore community connectivity and eliminate the physical barrier created by the railroad for residents and commuters.

As previously mentioned, Emergency Management Services (EMS) routinely experience delays because of this barrier, which poses unmeasurable safety risks. Because of this, the Penn Township Fire Department has been forced to implement an alternative travel route on all incidents in order to eliminate the risk of being stopped by a slow moving train. Unfortunately, the alternative route can extend response times by as much as five minutes, which is quite significant in a life or death scenario. The addition of an overpass will provide emergency services with a direct and reliable route that has a known travel time and cannot be impacted by a stopped or slow moving train, thus improving mobility and connectivity.

In a corridor that is dominated by vehicles and trains, this project will ensure Complete Streets principles are incorporated, ensuring all users of the roadway are able to get to their needed destinations.

Regional Systemic Rail-Vehicle Mobility and Safety Improvements

Over the past two decades, many systemic improvements have been made along the Norfolk Southern Corridor that have improved the movement of freight and safer mobility of other users of the transportation network. These improvements, which have included grade separations and closures, along with a potential grade separation at Ash Road, would create a rail

corridor of over 10 miles, with just one remaining at-grade crossing on Main Street in the City of Elkhart. This positively impacts the reliability of freight movement and creates a safer environment for all users of the roadway.

In the MACOG region, there are nearly 400 miles of rail lines in the area and over 400 highway-rail grade crossings. We know that the safest grade crossing is one that does not exist. MACOG has made intentional investments into improving rail-vehicle safety, especially on this Norfolk Southern Rail Line.

Since 1999, MACOG has been working on a vision to greatly improve mobility and safety along this Norfolk Southern Line from Capital Avenue (SR 331) through US 20. MACOG first invested in a grade separation at Indiana Ave in the City of Elkhart which started in the late 1990s and was built in 2004. MACOG also advocated INDOT for an upgraded Capital Avenue (SR 331) which included a grade separation. This project opened to traffic in 2013. At the same time, MACOG invested in Prairie Avenue, another grade separation in Elkhart that went to construction in 2014. MACOG has continued to work with our local governments to invest in mobility and safety along this rail corridor.

In 2018, our region was successful in receiving State Funding for the next two grade separations on Hively Avenue in the City of Elkhart and Sunnyside Avenue in Elkhart County. Those two projects will be built in the next two years. Each one of these grade separations also included the closure of other local roads.



Norfolk Southern Corridor: Existing and Planned Improvements

An investment in this planning project will be the final steps in completing a nearly 25-year-old vision.

- **Reduces Emissions, Protects the Environment, and Provides Community Benefits**

A grade separation project will result in improved air quality by reducing vehicle delays and congestion caused by waiting for trains. The reduction of vehicle congestion will reduce the amount of carbon dioxide being emitted into the air and help improve air quality. At the Ash Road crossing, utilizing the methodology below, it is estimated that 325 vehicle hours of delay is experienced a day. Utilizing an average user delay cost of \$15 per hour, which is considered a normal value for Indiana and has been applied to past studies conducted by Purdue University, this user delay equates to \$4,885 a day, or \$1.78 million a year.

Improving access to communities

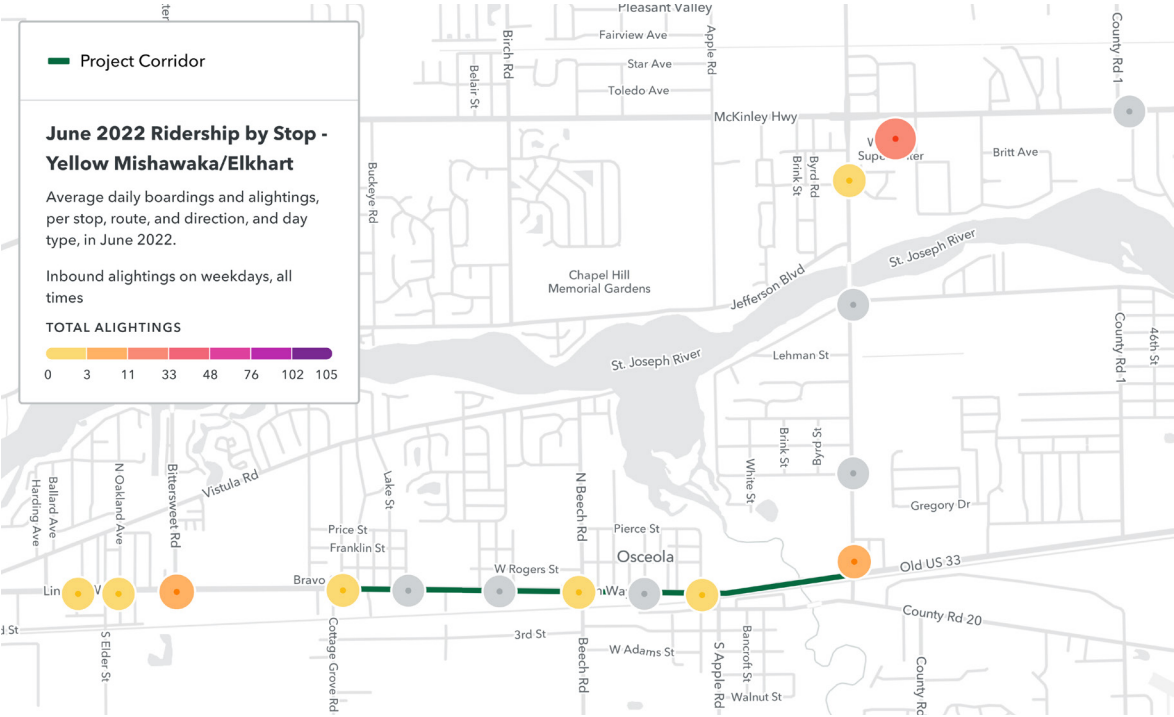
Time Trains Blocking Crossing			
Train Length (L)	1.5	mi	
Speed (V)	30	mph	
Crossing Time (Tc)	0.05	hrs	$T_c = L/V$
Number of Trains (Nt)	60	trains	
Total Hr Blockage/Day (Tb)	3	hrs	$T_b = N_t * T_c$
Average Vehicles Crossing per Day			
ADT	5210	veh/day	
Hrs/Day	24	hr/day	
Average Veh/hr (Vh)	217.08	veh/hr	$V_h = ADT * Hrs/Day$
Average Vehicle Hours of Delay per Day			
Vehs/Hr (Vh)	217.08	veh/hr	
Blockage hrs/day (Tb)	3	hr/day	
Vehicle Delay per Day (D)	325.625	veh/hrs/day	$D = 1/2 V_h * T_b$

To further support the significance of delay experienced along this corridor. A study was completed in April 2024 to capture train counts and how long the crossing was blocked by trains at Ash Rd. Within a 48 hour period, there were 142 trains, which resulted in the Ash Rd crossing being blocked for 10 hours and 52 minutes. This represents over 20% of the time - period studied and provides a staggering fact to support restoring access and enhance mobility options within the community.

Additionally, the project will improve the corridor's active transportation infrastructure, encouraging more people to walk and bike. At present, the transportation network in this area is predominantly designed for the movement of vehicles, with little thought to how pedestrians and bicycles move. By designing infrastructure to accommodate all users comfortably, more people may choose to commute via walking and bicycling, which will reduce

the amount of vehicles on the road, and result in less emissions and improved air quality.

This corridor is also an important transit corridor, with the Yellow Line connecting St. Joseph and Elkhart Counties operated by South Bend Public Transportation Corporation (Transpo) and the Interurban Trolley. These Transit Systems are in the final stages of developing a regional 10-year plan, Connect Transit Plan, to improve transit services across the region. Boardings and alightings along the corridor are modest - however increased ridership could occur with enhanced service and active transportation facilities to reach the transit corridor conveniently and safely.



Average Daily Yellow Line Alightings

Lastly, as part of the study MACOG will evaluate locations for the potential for public Electric Vehicle Charging infrastructure.

Improving Community Benefit

This project would also support work to establish a Quiet Zone by eliminating the at-grade crossing at Ash Road through a grade separation, and the evaluation of closures or implementation of Supplementary Safety Measures (SSAs) at three additional crossings (Cottage Grove Ave, Beech Road, and Apple Road).

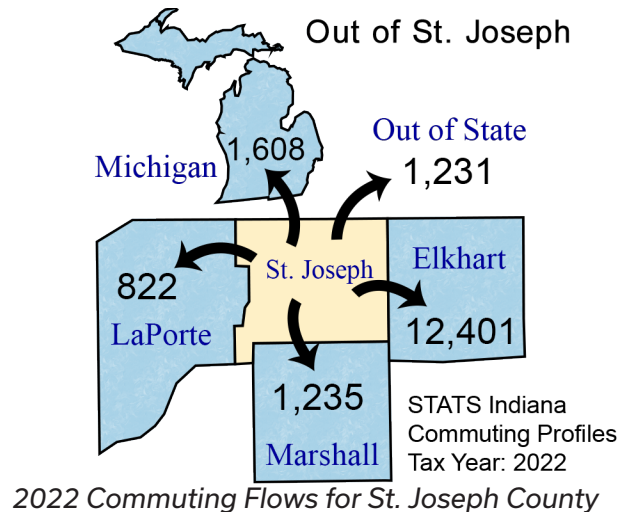
The establishment of a Quiet Zone, or whistle ban, through the Town of Osceola is a critical quality of life improvement for over 9,000 residents that reside within one mile of the railway. With 60 trains, including 34 overnight trains, the noise pollution created from train traffic is significant. By creating a quieter environment, the well being of residents improves and preservation or restoration of neighborhood character is enhanced. This results in additional positive impacts such as increased property values.

Distance from the Railway			
	0.25 Miles	0.5 Miles	1 Mile
Number of Jobs	400	900	1,700
Population	1,400	3,700	9,000

- **Provides Economic Benefit**

The movement of freight via rail and the mobility of workers has a significant impact on the economic competitiveness of our region.

Railroads can be a catalyst for economic development connecting businesses to markets and creating new jobs. Elkhart County being home to Norfolk Southern's 2nd largest freight classification yard reinforces the rail's economic impact in our region. One of those impacts is Elkhart County's recognition as the RV manufacturing capital of the world, responsible for 80 percent of our nation's RV production.

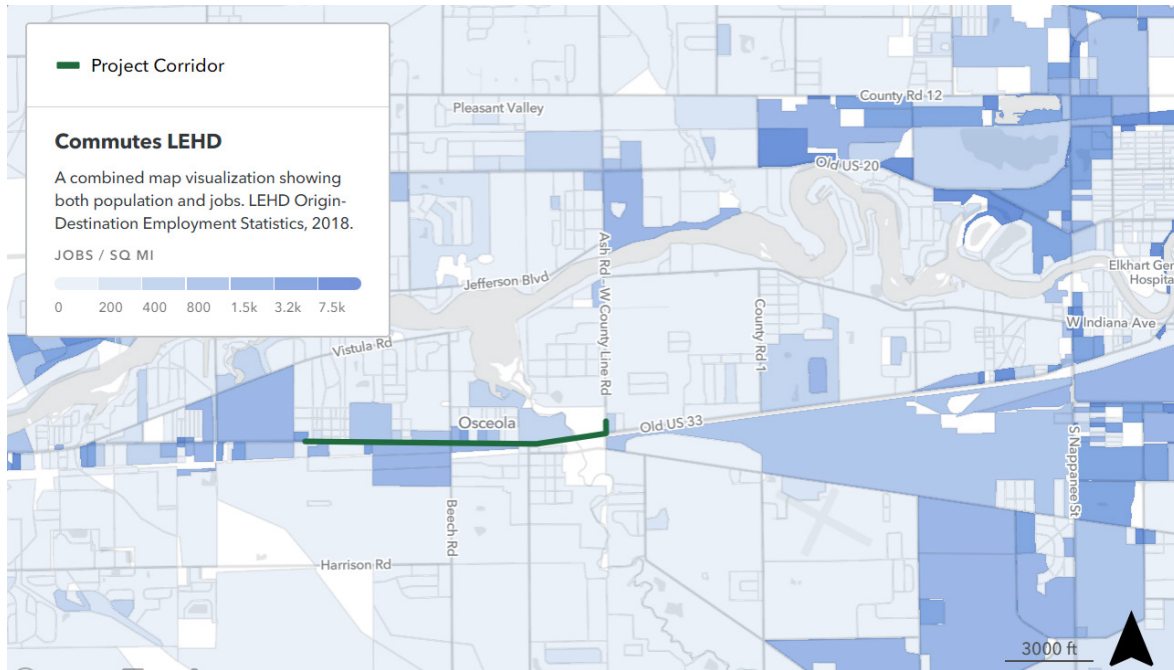


The number of jobs created from manufacturing and the RV industry can be seen by the number of commuters coming from St. Joseph County into Elkhart County. Based on Indiana IT-40 Returns for 2022, over 12,000 people travel into Elkhart County from St. Joseph County for work each day.

While there are approximately 1,700 jobs located within a mile of the project corridor, the Ash Road corridor connects workers to a concentration of manufacturing facilities along CR 20/ Mishawaka Road and McKinley Hwy/Old US 20, employing close to 20,000 workers. This concentration of jobs can be seen below for 2018 LEHD Employment Statistics. The addition of a grade separation in the area will improve travel time reliability for commuters, while also improving the movement of goods in and out of Norfolk Southern's freight classification rail yard.

For Norfolk Southern Railroad, the more efficient movement of people and goods can help improve business. Increased business creates the need to hire more people, which leads to increased opportunities for families to achieve economic security through the rail industry. Due to St. Joseph and

Elkhart County's close proximity to Chicago, these efficiency improvements not only benefit our Indiana counties, but the entire regional railway system.



Jobs per square mile (2018 LEHD Employment Statistics)

- **Uses contracting incentives to employ local labor, to the extent permissible under federal law**

MACOG will use a qualifications-based selection in hiring an engineering consulting team for the study. One of the selection criteria provides points for consulting teams that are local to the region or within the State of Indiana.

XII. Project Implementation and Management

MACOG will be the lead applicant for this application in support of our Region's systematic approach to addressing railroad and vehicular conflicts. Each fiscal year, MACOG is allocated federal funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). On average, MACOG manages and distributes roughly \$10.6 million in the South Bend Urbanized Area and roughly \$6.3 million in the Elkhart-Goshen Urbanized Area, for a total of \$16.9 million each fiscal year. Once projects are selected and funding is awarded, MACOG oversees these local projects to ensure compliance with federal aid processes. MACOG further oversees transportation projects within the four-county region that are directly funded by INDOT. MACOG has extensive experience managing and overseeing grade separation projects, such as the Prairie Avenue overpass between Main and Middlebury Street in Elkhart which let in 2014. In the past couple of years, MACOG has been awarded several USDOT Discretionary grants including a Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant, Charging & Fueling Infrastructure, and most recently a FY 24 RAISE grant.

MACOG and St. Joseph County will plan to conduct a Request for Proposals to seek a qualified consultant to complete the Planning Study. MACOG

will provide administrative support for the grant and facilitate partner coordination for the duration of the study.

Environmental Readiness

As this is a planning project, the NEPA Process has not begun. This project carries a number of environmental and land use challenges including wetlands, Ferrettie/Baugo Creek County Park, and the proximity of the rail corridor to the street network. By conducting a study now, environmental and community values can be incorporated into transportation decisions early in the process. This allows for a more expedited project delivery, can assist with developing broad consensus, and allows for the evaluation of a wider range of strategies. Ultimately this study will enable strategies to deliver the project in a timely and expedited manner.

Environmental work expected to be completed includes wetland delineation, mitigation analysis, groundwater testing, and soil borings, along with completion of NEPA/Section 106 components.

Project Readiness

Previous work on this project has taken place through an initial Hazard Elimination and Mobility, providing the foundation for completing and finalizing the project planning lifecycle. This project is supported by many different regional stakeholders including Congressional Representatives Yakym, Braun, and Young, local elected officials, business owners, chambers of commerce, first responders, public schools and Norfolk Southern - as documented in the attached 21 Letters of Support. Additionally, The County Connection Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Study, has further enhanced collaboration amongst our local jurisdiction - identifying key transportation investments, such as this project, between communities.

This study will enable further collaboration, in particular with the public. Grade separations, while providing many positive community impacts, can also create difficult design decisions. Building consensus and support from the public for a preferred alternative is vital for the successful implementation of the project. MACOG and the counties will utilize guidance from the USDOT's Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making Guide to ensure that underserved populations are engaged through the study.



Ash Rd blocked by miles long train coming out of the Robert Young Classification Yard

