



Public Meeting Information Package

**Administration Building
Village of Swanton
219 Chestnut St.
Swanton Ohio 43558**

**Thursday, May 17, 2007
4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.**

FUL-HALLET AVENUE RAILROAD GRADE SEPARATION

PID 23114

Ohio Department of Transportation
District Two Office
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is located in Fulton County and Lucas County, Ohio. The centerline of pavement of existing Hallett Avenue is located on the County line. The portion of the project located within Fulton County is entirely within the Village of Swanton. The portion of the project located within Lucas County is partially within the Village of Swanton and partially within Swanton Township. The Village of Swanton has a population of 3,283 according to the 2000 Census.

Under the preferred alternate this project would involve separating the existing Hallett Avenue at-grade crossing with the Norfolk Southern Railroad by constructing a new 307 foot long bridge over three tracks operated by Norfolk Southern Railroad. The proposed three-span bridge will have a 23 foot vertical clearance distance over the tracks resulting in a maximum roadway approach grade of 6.8%. The bridge and approach pavements will have a 32 foot wide pavement width to accommodate two (12 foot wide) lanes of traffic and two (4 foot wide) shoulders on each side. A 7 foot wide sidewalk will be installed on the west side of Hallett Avenue within the project limits. The proposed roadway overpass centerline over the railroad tracks will be located approximately 80 feet east of the existing Hallett Avenue and transition back to the existing roadway over a 1.15 mile length distance.

The streets that intersect Hallett Avenue in the proposed project area (from south to north) are: West Ridge Drive, Chestnut Street, Brindley Road, Broadway Avenue, and Church Street. The existing intersection of Lawrence Avenue and Chestnut Street will be reconstructed and an alley will be upgraded to Village street standards to provide a second access to both residences living along the abandon section of Hallett Avenue and for Emergency Services.

West Ridge Drive currently intersects Hallett Avenue from the east side, creating a "T" intersection. Under the preferred alternative, West Ridge Drive will still intersect at nearly the same location, but have improved turning radii onto Hallett Avenue and have additional catch basins, curbs and gutters.

Chestnut Street currently intersects Hallett Avenue from the west side which also creates a "T" intersection. The preferred alternative will relocate this intersection 60 feet south of where it is today. Chestnut Street will be relocated over a distance of 530 feet on parcels currently occupied by five residential dwellings which will be removed with this project.

Approximately 938 feet of existing Brindley Road will be relocated 300 feet south of where it currently intersects Hallett Avenue. Chestnut Street and Brindley Road are east-west roadways intersecting Hallett Avenue at separate three-way intersections south of the railroad tracks. This proposal will build a new single four-way intersection with Hallett Avenue having stop signs on Chestnut Street and Brindley Road. The abandon section of Brindley Road will be maintained as an access drive to accommodate three residences and the AT&T communications facility. The relocation of Brindley Road will require removing one residential dwelling.

Lawrence Avenue currently intersects Chestnut Street approximately 360 feet west of Hallett Avenue. Under the preferred proposal, the intersection of Chestnut Street and Lawrence Avenue will have improved turning radii, additional catch basins, curbs and gutters. An existing Village alley that intersects Lawrence Avenue will become an access road to residences along the abandon portion of Hallett Avenue and require upgrading due to the expected added utilization.

Existing Broadway Avenue parallels the railroad tracks along the northwest quadrant and intersects Hallett Avenue at a three-way intersection approximately 50 feet north of the railroad crossing. The preferred alternative will extend Broadway Avenue underneath the new Hallett Avenue overpass bridge. The 1150 foot road extension will be constructed as a loop - going from an easterly direction initially, then north, until intersecting with Hallett Avenue at Church Street. The existing Church Street / Hallett Avenue three-way intersection will be converted to a four-way intersection. To accommodate the Broadway Avenue extension, one residential property will be removed along the east side of Hallett Avenue.

PURPOSE & NEED

In 1999 a major railroad company in the United States, Conrail Corporation, ceased operations. The track service areas of this defunct railroad company was divided-up and added to various existing track service areas of Norfolk Southern Railroad and CSX Railroad. The crossing at Hallett Avenue in the Village of Swanton was formerly owned and operated by Conrail Corporation. The consolidation of three major railway operations into two has resulted in an increase in the daily volume of train traffic in many areas in the United States – including this area in northwest Ohio. The changing rail traffic patterns and increased train traffic have created problems such as blocked railroad grade crossings which delay vehicular traffic and separate some residences and businesses from fire, emergency, and police services. It is for these reasons that Ohio's former Governor Robert Taft initiated the Railroad Grade Separation Program in January 2000.

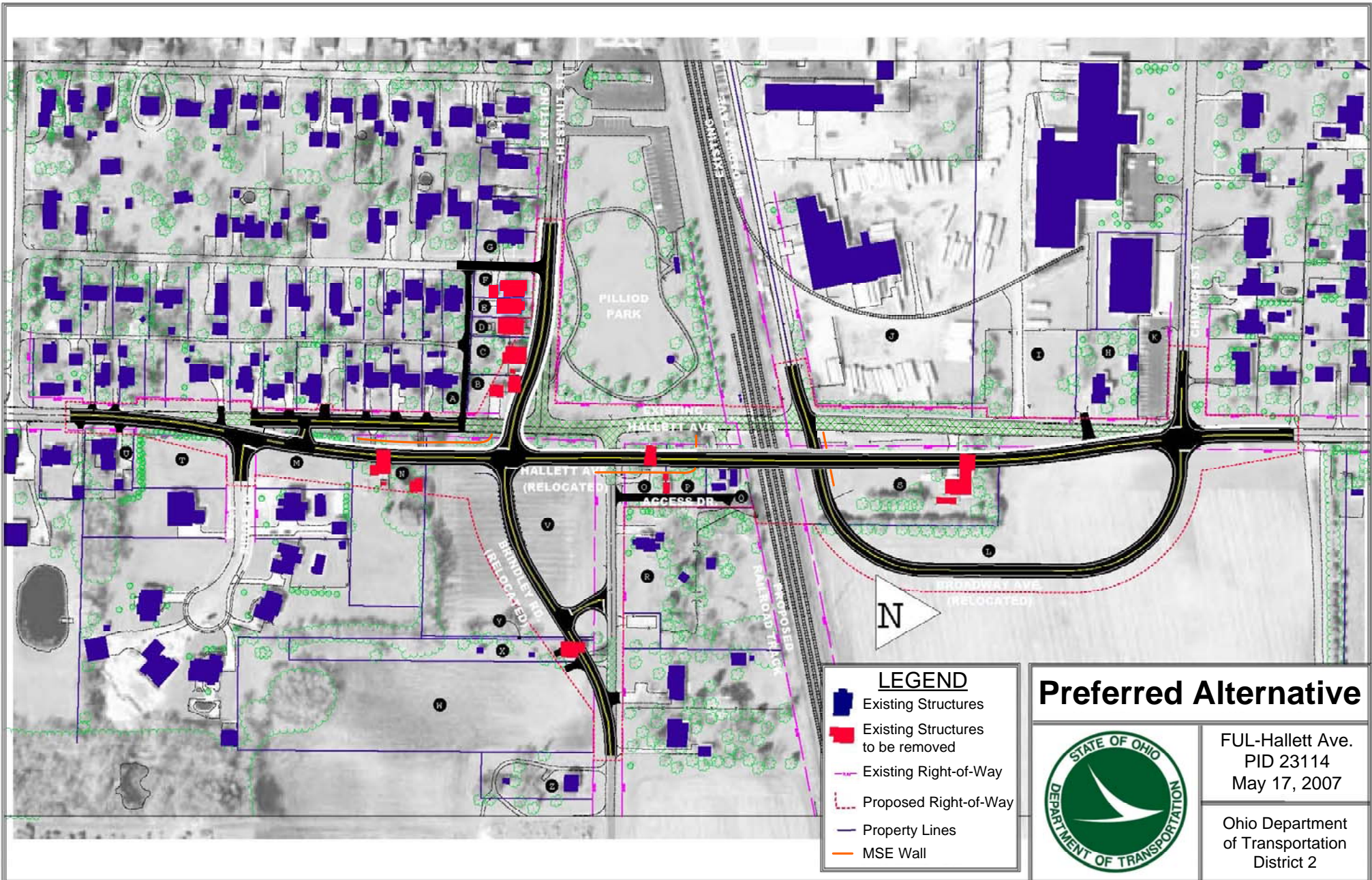
Hallett Avenue crosses the Norfolk Southern Railroad mainline at-grade. The nearest grade separation is approximately 5 miles to the west in the Village of Delta. According to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio's web site, there were 46 (day) thru trains and 46 (night) thru trains in 1999. Norfolk Southern Railroad acknowledged in November 2006 that train traffic has increased substantially since 1999 through the Village of Swanton. Accordingly, train numbers have nearly doubled to 145-160 trains per day with the freight tonnage of 63 million tons per year. The high frequency of 1-2 mile long trains traveling in each direction with an average crossing time at Hallett Avenue of 3-5 minutes are constantly causing extended waiting periods for drivers. Norfolk Southern Railroad has indicated that their long-range plans are to build an additional mainline track through northwest Ohio which would generate additional train traffic.

The existing crossing also lacks sidewalks on either side of the roadway which creates unsafe options for pedestrians. Pedestrians attempting to cross the railroad tracks at this location also must do so on the roadway or over the railroad tracks. Both pedestrians and bicyclists are delayed by a blocked crossing. Because of Village residents living primarily on the west side of Hallett Avenue and the location of Pilliod Park in the southwest quadrant, only one (7 foot wide) sidewalk will be constructed on the west side of the facility.

The high volume of trains is not the only reason crossings in the Village of Swanton are blocked for extended periods of time. This section of track serves as a control point for Norfolk Southern Railroad operations. Control point locations are where slower, less important trains traveling in the same direction stop in order to allow higher priority train to switch track and pass them on the other mainline track. For this operation to occur, trains are periodically stopped at various locations in and around the Village of Swanton – some unavoidably at roadway crossings. Once the trains have passed one another, the stopped train can move again thereby “opening” blocked crossings. Depending on several factors, this entire operation can take 15-30 minutes to safely complete.

Emergency services are affected by rail blockages since Swanton’s fire and rescue departments are located on opposite sides of the railroad. The fire station is located on Church Street, west of Hallett Avenue. These services, which are manned largely by volunteers, serve not only the Village of Swanton, but also a large portion of Harding and Swanton Townships in Lucas County and Fulton and Swan Creek Townships in Fulton County. The Village is responsible for Toledo Express Airport and a ten mile section of the Ohio Turnpike, including two Turnpike Plazas and a Turnpike Maintenance facility. When trains block the crossings, volunteer EMT and Firemen are delayed in getting to their equipment in a timely manner. If all the crossings within the Village of Swanton are blocked, emergency vehicles have to travel a minimum of four additional miles on roads around the Village’s corporation limits to obtain access to the other side of the railroad tracks on Hallett Avenue.

Four public school buildings and one parochial school building are affected by the railroad crossings within the Village. The Swanton Junior/Senior High School Complex, Crestwood Elementary School and St. Richard’s Elementary School are located north of the railroad tracks. Park Elementary School and the Swanton Township Elementary School are located south of the railroad. Rail blockages often cause students to be late for class. They also delay teachers in arriving at school. When all three crossings within the Village are blocked, school buses travel a minimum of four additional miles outside the Village in order to cross the railroad tracks on a road not blocked by a train.



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