



## Legislation Text

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**File #: 3103-2023, Version: 1**

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### **1. BACKGROUND**

The Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) is now accepting grant applications for its Ohio Grade Crossing Elimination Program, which provides state assistance to Ohio communities in competing for federal grade crossing elimination grant funding. This program was created for State Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025 as part of the State Operating Budget. Applications will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis.

The State Operating Budget has set aside \$100 million to help Ohio communities compete for federal discretionary funds. The goal of this program is to develop projects and secure funding to eliminate at-grade railroad crossings. Ohio communities will submit railroad crossing elimination projects to ORDC, which will identify the projects with the best opportunities for federal funding and assist communities in developing these locations into competitive federal grant applications. As envisioned, ORDC will classify projects into four categories:

1. Projects that are ready for federal application. For projects in this category, ORDC will work with the community to develop the necessary documentation, funding proposals and preliminary engineering necessary to apply for federal construction funding.
2. Projects that need additional development before they can be submitted as a federal application. For projects in this category, ORDC will assist the communities to perform the necessary planning studies to create a federal application.
3. Projects that have significant public benefits but are not a good candidate for current federal discretionary grant opportunities. For projects in this category, ORDC will work to identify other funding for the project.
4. Projects that do not meet state or federal program requirements.

The City meets the criteria to be eligible to submit an application to ORDC. The Department of Public Service (DPS) has identified two potential project candidates to submit to ORDC. One project is the grade separation of two-at grade crossings on Williams Road. These two crossings - 481445B and 228919S - are less than 250' apart, and the frequency and duration of stopped trains at these crossing create significant safety and community access concerns. The other project is the grade separation of a crossing on Hilliard Rome Road. This crossing - 513244C - is between Broad Street and Feder Road/Fisher Road, and the frequency of daily trains at this crossing creates significant safety and community access concerns. DPS staff believe both projects would provide significant benefits to local residents and businesses, while also being competitive for discretionary funding from FRA.

This legislation will authorize the Director of Public Service to formally apply for assistance from ORDC. It also authorizes the execution of agreements with ORDC or others in connection with the application for the grant, the award of the grant, the expenditure of grant funds, and the return of unused grant funds if any should remain at the end of the grant.

### **2. FISCAL IMPACT**

No financial participation is required at this time. City funds will be approved in the form of design contracts and/or construction contracts that will be or have been submitted for Council's approval.

To authorize the Director of Public Service to submit applications to the Ohio Rail Development Commission for the Ohio Grade Crossing Elimination Program; to authorize the execution of grant and other requisite agreements with Ohio Rail Development Commission and other entities providing for the acceptance and administration of said grant award on behalf of the City of Columbus Department of Public Service; to authorize the expenditure of any awarded funds and the refund of any unused funds. (\$0.00)

**WHEREAS**, the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) announced it is seeking applications for the Ohio Grade Crossing Elimination Program, which is a grant program to be awarded on a competitive basis; and

**WHEREAS**, ORDC is accepting applications on a rolling basis; and

**WHEREAS**, the City intends to submit applications for two different locations with at grade crossings - Williams Road (481445B and 228919S) and Hilliard Rome Road (513244C); and

**WHEREAS**, City Council approval is needed to apply for and accept the grant funding; and **NOW, THEREFORE**

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:**

**SECTION 1.** That the Director of Public Service be and is hereby authorized to submit applications to ORDC seeking grant funding from the Ohio Grade Crossing Elimination Program for Williams Road (481445B and 228919S) and Hilliard Rome Road (513244C).

**SECTION 2.** That the Director of Public Service be and hereby is authorized to accept said grants, if awarded; and to execute a grant agreement and any other documents necessary to effectuate said applications, acceptance, or agreement on behalf of the Department of Public Service.

**SECTION 3.** That the Department of Public Service be and hereby is authorized to expend any awarded grant funds in accordance with the terms and conditions of said grant.

**SECTION 4.** That, at the end of the grant period, or upon request of the grantor, any repayment of unencumbered balances required by the grantor is hereby authorized and any unused City match monies may be transferred back to the City fund from which they originated in accordance with all applicable grant agreements.

**SECTION 5.** That this ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after the earliest period allowed by law.