



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad
Administration**

SEP 08 2017

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Michael Armitage
Office of the Mayor and City Administration
City of Milan
147 Wabash Street
Milan, MI 48160

Dear Mayor Armitage:

Thank you for your July 10, 2017, letter to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) on behalf of the citizens of the City of Milan (City), MI. You wrote to FRA about blocked crossings in your community.

On July 18, 2017, FRA's regional representative learned that Norfolk Southern Railway (NS) is performing major work in and around the City. NS is installing several new switches on the main and siding tracks. Rail is being laid between the switches and throughout the City. Also, the City's highway-rail grade crossings are being replaced, as is the crossing at U.S. Highway 23, which is outside of the City.

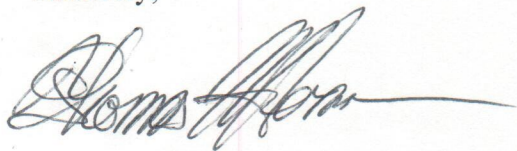
NS acknowledged that railroad engineering or capital project programs forced the aggressive project schedule and apologized for the lack of communication. NS will focus on improving communication between the parties, including tentative daily updates on progress. With open lines of communication between the railroad and road authorities, safer conditions and awareness on crossing closures and detours impacting the motoring public and rail operations will improve. In the near term, the construction will require the temporary closure of some crossings and the parties will have to work together to mitigate this their impact. NS will continue to monitor these issues and plan mitigation strategies for future projects.

Regarding blocked crossings, FRA has not issued regulations concerning the amount of time a train may block a crossing; however, we take the problem of blocked crossings seriously, both because of their effects on safety (e.g., impeding the movement of emergency response vehicles) and because of their impact on the livability of communities. We also understand that many operational realities require trains to stop for significant periods of time at some locations. Our regulations do address standing trains that unnecessarily activate highway-rail grade crossing warning systems. These regulations, under Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations § 234.209, prohibit standing trains, locomotives, or other rail equipment from activating the warning systems at highway-rail grade crossings, unless the operations are part of normal train or switching movements. This rule deals primarily with trains standing in the approach circuits to

active warning systems. There is no limit to the amount of time a long and/or slow-moving train may occupy a crossing or activate a signal.

Again, thank you for your letter. If you have further questions, please contact Mr. Ron Ries, Staff Director, Highway-Rail Crossing and Trespasser Programs Division, at (202) 493-6285 or ronald.ries@dot.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karl Alexy", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sor Karl Alexy
Director, Office of Safety Analysis