



# City of Lima, Ohio

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David J. Berger, Mayor

March 2, 2016

Richard Kerman  
5585 Leatherwood Rd.  
Elida, OH 45807

Re: ALL-LIMA-RRGS, PID 80441  
TRAC Comments

Dear Mr. Kerman:

This letter is in response to your comments sent to ODOT TRAC on December 25, 2015 regarding the proposed grade separation on Elm Street. The proposed project began with a total of nine alternatives in the *2008 Alternatives Analysis Report* which included an underpass and overpass on Bellefontaine Ave. After further refinement of the alternatives and two public meetings, the Bellefontaine Ave. alternatives were eliminated and the Elm Street alternative was selected based on the following reasons:

1. Estimated commercial relocations and acquisition costs exceeded Elm St. alternatives by \$6 million.
2. During construction, traffic would not have been able to use Bellefontaine Avenue for access to commercial and residential properties and access to Lima Memorial Health Systems would be limited increasing emergency response times.
3. Access to commercial and residential properties on Bellefontaine Ave. would be eliminated within project limits due to retaining walls and or laid back slopes (*Bellefontaine Ave. alt. 3A and 3B*).

With particular regards to the comment concerning the removal of properties on Elm St. ("*Elm Street is lower class people more easily and cheaply muscled out*"), a goal of the project is to avoid disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority and low-income populations. This is a directive of Executive Order 12898. According to 2010 US Census data, the project area ranges in composition of minorities and low-income from 7% to 49% and 47% to 85%,



respectively. So it is evident the project is in an area where environmental justice populations are of concern. However, it is equally important to note that these same populations extend south past Bellefontaine Avenue and north of North Street. Therefore, any crossing on the east side of the Ottawa River will have similar environmental justice issues to consider.

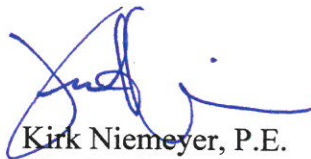
The project will require the relocation of seven residences and one business, all between Grove Avenue and Shawnee Street and within the noted environmental justice areas. However, a *Relocation Assistance Program* (RAP) Report prepared for the project in March 2015 determined there is an adequate amount of available decent, safe and sanitary housing throughout the area, as well as a number of vacant lots available for new construction. This analysis confirms the displaced individuals should be able to stay in the area near shopping, schools, churches and other community facilities, if they so choose.

Aside from the above displacements, there will not be any significant negative impacts to the identified environmental justice populations. This includes no significant changes in access or substantial job loss for minority or low-income populations. Additionally, there will not be a loss of business that supplies goods or services to the identified minority and low-income populations. The project benefits the affected community by providing a safer crossing that separates both vehicular and pedestrian traffic from train traffic. The project also provides a benefit by upgrading pedestrian facilities within the construction limits to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Therefore, the project will not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect to environmental justice populations.

Finally, in the event of a traffic back-up on Bellefontaine Avenue caused by a train event, vehicles and emergency service vehicles will still be able to utilize Shawnee Street and Elm Street (underpass) to navigate around the at-grade Bellefontaine Avenue rail crossing. The importance of this project being a grade separation occurring in this area of the City (east of the Ottawa River) that provides opportunities to alleviate traffic delays during a train event. This opportunity does not limit itself to traffic only on Elm Street.

I hope this addresses your concerns. If not, please feel free to contact me or if you would like to stop by my office to review the various reports/studies (419-998-5508).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kirk Niemeyer', is written over a printed name and title.

Kirk Niemeyer, P.E.  
City Engineer

cc: Dan Kaseman, ODOT D1  
Lori Brinkman, ODOT D1  
Beth Clark, ODOT D1  
Jim Gates, ODOT Central Office  
Howard Elstro, Public Works Director