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Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
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February 6, 2025

Office of the Commissioner of Railroads
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53707-7854

Dear Commissioner:

Project ID 1000-77-50 (Signals) & -51 (Surface)
Avon Street & Hagar Street, City of La Crosse
SOO Crossing Signals & Surface
La Crosse County
Crossing No. 390935R, MP 281.070

Project ID 1000-77-52 (Signals) & -53 (Surface)
Liberty Street & St. Cloud Street, City of La Crosse
SOO Crossing Signals & Surface
La Crosse County
Crossing No. 390934J, MP 280.950

This is a petition being filed with your office in accordance with Sections 195.28 and 195.29 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

The State of Wisconsin will be adding a second mainline track in the City of La Crosse from the La Crosse Yard to just West of the USH 53 (Copeland Avenue) bridge as part of the Twin Cities – Milwaukee – Chicago (TCMC) Intercity Passenger Rail Project. This work will include the reconfiguration of two at-grade railroad crossings: the Avon Street & Hagar Street (390935R) intersection and the Liberty Street & St. Cloud Street (390934J) intersection. The project will be LET on November 11, 2025, to be constructed during the 2026 construction season.

Avon Street & Hagar Street Grade Crossing

The FRA database reports that rail traffic on this line consists of two day through freight trains, two night through freight trains, one freight switching train, and two passenger trains per day. Starting on May 21, 2024, the Borealis Intercity Service began, increasing the daily passenger train count to four total. However, event log data collected between November 2022 and January 2023 indicated the crossing had on average 47 crossing activations per day. The reported maximum timetable speed is 40 mph with reported typical speeds ranging from ten-40 mph. On Wednesday, April 28, 2021, the City of La Crosse collected 24-hr counts for Avon Street and Hagar Street. There was a total of 513 vehicles

counted on Avon Street and 491 vehicles on Hagar Street. The speed limit is 25 mph. There are three crashes at this crossing in the FRA database. The first occurred October 27, 1985, resulting in a fatality; the second on January 29, 2018, resulting in a fatality; and the most recent on October 2, 2019, resulting in an injury.

A City of La Crosse Traffic Analysis was completed by WisDOT in 2023. The traffic analysis found 17 vehicular-vehicular crashes between January 1, 2018, and December 31, 2022, at the Avon Street & Hagar Street intersection. Ten crashes were a result of the intersection being uncontrolled. Four crashes involved drivers navigating a turn and striking the median next to their receiving lane. Two crashes involved a driver attempting to back up to turn around due to the crossing gates being down. One crash involved a hit-and-run vehicle striking a parked car near the intersection. The analysis also noted there was on average 47 crossing activations per day, with a daily activation average of four hours, 24 minutes, and six seconds. More switching trains activate this grade crossing per day than FRA reports due to the nearby CPKC La Crosse Yard.

The existing cross section for Avon Street consists of a six-foot sidewalk, seven to eight-foot terrace, 30-inch curb and gutter, 20-foot approaching lane, four-foot median, 14-foot receiving lane, 30-inch curb and gutter, five to eight-foot terrace, and six-foot sidewalk. The existing cross section for Hagar Street consists of a six-foot sidewalk, six-foot terrace, 30-inch curb and gutter, 14-foot approaching lane, four-foot median, 14-foot receiving lane, 30-inch curb and gutter, six-foot terrace, and six-foot sidewalk. The existing roadway width is approximately 67-70 feet at the crossing on Avon Street and 60 feet on Hagar Street. The proposed cross sections will remain the same. The proposed design is expected to improve safety by adding detectable warning fields, moving the pedestrian crosswalks away from the crossing and intersection, realigning the sidewalk crossings to a better angle, and extending the medians to 100 feet from where the railroad gate is located. The department also requests that this intersection of the roadway and railway becomes four-way stop controlled, which is anticipated to significantly reduce the number of crashes at the intersection between vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

The existing length of the north crossing surface is 195 feet, and the south crossing surface is 162 feet. In the proposed condition, the existing southern track will be shifted slightly north, with a third track being added to the south. The new crossing surface lengths from north to south are proposed to be 224 feet, 216 feet, and 208 feet. Due to the project, the existing crossing surfaces will be replaced, and a third crossing surface will be installed to the south. We propose the surface work be funded fully by the project.

The existing crossing warning devices consist of mast-mounted flashing light signals and gates with median channelization at all approaches to the tracks. In order to accommodate the project, we propose to relocate the existing warning devices to maintain required offsets from railroad track centerlines. We propose the signal relocation be funded fully by the project.

We propose the crossing signal and surface work be completed by December 31, 2026, to accommodate the construction project.

Liberty Street & St. Cloud Street Grade Crossing

The FRA database reports that rail traffic on this line consists of two day through freight trains, two night through freight trains, one freight switching train, and two passenger trains per day. Starting on May 21, 2024, the Borealis Intercity Service began, increasing the daily passenger train count to four total. However, event log data collected between November 2022 and January 2023 indicated the

crossing had on average 56 crossing activations per day. The reported maximum timetable speed is 40 mph with reported typical speeds ranging from ten-40 mph. On Wednesday, April 28, 2021, the City of La Crosse collected 24-hr counts for Liberty Street and St. Cloud Street. There was a total of 521 vehicles counted on Liberty Street and 184 vehicles on St. Cloud Street. The speed limit is 25mph. There are eight crashes at this crossing in the FRA database. The first occurred September 15, 1979, resulting in property damage; the second on December 7, 1979, resulting in an injury; the third on August 8, 1981, resulting in property damage; the fourth on April 14, 1987, resulting in an injury; the fifth on November 28, 1992, resulting in property damage; the sixth on April 1, 1999, resulting in a fatality; the seventh on February 7, 2009, resulting in property damage; and the most recent on September 11, 2016, resulting in property damage.

A City of La Crosse Traffic Analysis was completed by WisDOT in 2023. The traffic analysis found nine vehicular-vehicular crashes between January 1, 2018, and December 31, 2022, at the Liberty Street & St. Cloud Street intersection. Three crashes were the result of the intersection being uncontrolled. Three crashes involved a vehicle striking the median. Three crashes involved a driver attempting to back up to turn around due to the crossing gates being down. The analysis also noted there was on average 56 crossing activations per day, with a daily activation average of five hours, two minutes, and 44 seconds. More switching trains activate this grade crossing per day than FRA reports due to the nearby CPKC La Crosse Yard.

The project will reconstruct the Liberty Street & St. Cloud Street intersection by constructing cul-de-sacs on all four existing roadway approaches, thus eliminating roadway through-access at this intersection. The project will construct a multi-use pathway grade crossing for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The existing cross section for Liberty Street consists of a six-foot sidewalk, eight-foot terrace, 30-inch curb and gutter, 20-foot approaching lane, four-foot median, 14-foot receiving lane, 30-inch curb and gutter, eight-foot terrace, and six-foot sidewalk. The existing cross section for St. Cloud Street consists of a six-foot sidewalk, three-foot terrace, 30-inch curb and gutter, 20-foot receiving lane, four-foot median, 14-foot approaching lane, 30-inch curb and gutter, three-foot terrace, and six-foot sidewalk. The existing roadway width is approximately 70 feet at the crossing on Liberty Street and 60 feet on St. Cloud Street. The proposed cross section consists of a ten-foot multi-use pathway.

The existing length of the north crossing surface is 114 feet, and the south crossing surface is 146 feet. In the proposed condition, a third track will be added south of the existing tracks. The new crossing surface lengths are proposed to be 16 feet for each track. Due to the project, the existing crossing surfaces will be replaced, and a third crossing surface will be installed to the south. We propose the surface work be funded fully by the project.

The existing crossing warning devices consist of mast-mounted flashing light signals and gates with median channelization at all approaches to the tracks. In order to accommodate the project, we propose to replace the existing signals with two mast-mounted automatic flashing light signals, a bell on each mast, and a bungalow with constant warning time circuitry. We propose the signal installation be funded fully by the project.

We propose the crossing signal and surface work be completed by December 31, 2026, to accommodate the construction project.

If the proposed alterations for the Liberty Street & St. Cloud Street intersection are not deemed acceptable by your Office, the Department would recommend the extension of medians and the installation of stop signs on all four roadway approaches in similar fashion to the proposed alterations at the Avon Street & Hagar Street intersection mentioned above.

We request your office conduct an investigation to determine the appropriate warning devices for crossings 390935R and 390934J and to rule on the roadway alterations at these crossings.

Attached for your information are the following:

1. Ex.-WisDOT-Sommers-1-1 – Avon Street & Hagar Street Crossing Exhibit
2. Ex.-WisDOT-Sommers-1-2 – Liberty Street & St. Cloud Street Crossing Exhibit
3. Ex.-WisDOT-Sommers-1-3 – City of La Crosse Traffic Analysis Report
4. Ex.-WisDOT-Sommers-1-4 – 390935R Avon Street Railroad Crossing Report
5. Ex.-WisDOT-Sommers-1-5 – 390935R Hagar Street Railroad Crossing Report
6. Ex.-WisDOT-Sommers-1-6 – 390935R Crash Report
7. Ex.-WisDOT-Sommers-1-7 – 390934J Liberty Street Railroad Crossing Report
8. Ex.-WisDOT-Sommers-1-8 – 390934J St. Cloud Street Railroad Crossing Report
9. Ex.-WisDOT-Sommers-1-9 – 390934J Crash Report

Sincerely,

Kris Sommers

Kristen Sommers, P.E.
Railroad Engineering & Safety Supervisor

KS: cmj

cc: Brian Osbourne – CPKC
Scott Willinger, Art Sommerfield – WisDOT SW Region
Lisa Stern, Brian Brunmeier, Maithili Dey – WisDOT RHS
Tom Domres – FRA