



Legislation Text

File #: 23-1748, **Version:** 1

Resolution Against MDOT's Proposal to Build a Wall through Ann Arbor

Whereas, The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Office of Rail proposes to install two segments of high security fencing on both sides of the Michigan Rail Line, the first between North Maple Road at Foster Bridge and Bandemer Park (2 miles) and the second between Plymouth Road and Gallup Park Road (4 miles), to prevent trespassing;

Whereas, In 1992, the Federal Railroad Administration designated the Michigan Rail Line between Chicago and Detroit as a high-speed rail corridor and currently Michigan State law prohibits the addition of new at-grade crossings on high-speed rail lines;

Whereas, Previous attempts by MDOT and Norfolk Southern to prevent trespassing by installing fencing and barricades have proven ineffective at deterring people from illegally crossing the tracks due to a high demand to access the Huron River, park land, and other points of interest in the Ann Arbor area, and the limited availability of legal pedestrian railroad crossings;

Whereas, The currently proposed fencing alignment between North Maple Road and Bandemer Park would impede and make more costly the development of the Border-to-Border (B2B) Trail, presenting a serious obstacle to creating legal and safe opportunities for people to travel along and cross the railroad;

Whereas, Continuous high security fencing would restrict wildlife access to the Huron River;

Whereas, MDOT has indicated that the cost of the fence would be approximately \$200 per linear foot, which suggests project costs for this six-mile fence will be in the excess of \$6.3 million;

Whereas, MDOT's funding to improve pedestrian safety and decrease passenger rail delays would be more effectively allocated to expedite the construction of pedestrian and nonmotorized railroad crossings there by providing legal and safe connections to improve access; and

Whereas, Since August 2023, over 4,500 individuals have signed a Change.org community-led petition urging MDOT to not build a fence along Huron River Drive;

RESOLVED, City Council reaffirms its commitment to completing construction of the Border-to-Border Trail, which has been part of the Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Open Space (PROS) plans for decades;

RESOLVED, City Council calls on the Michigan Department of Transportation to re-engage with the City of Ann Arbor and other local partners to develop a coordinated and phased plan that would improve legal, safe options for nonmotorized access along the Michigan Rail Line through the construction of the B2B Trail;

RESOLVED, City Council calls on the Michigan Department of Transportation to re-engage with the City of Ann Arbor and other local partners to develop safe, legal (e.g. below-grade) nonmotorized access across the Michigan Rail Line;

RESOLVED, City Council directs the City Administrator to inform the Michigan Department of Transportation that the City is opposed to MDOT Rail's current fencing proposal;

RESOLVED, That the City Administrator sends a copy of this resolution to the Michigan Department of Transportation, our local state legislative delegation, Governor Whitmer, and Congressional representatives; and

RESOLVED, That the City Administrator be authorized to take the necessary administrative actions to implement this resolution.

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Briggs, Akmon, Disch, Watson, Radina, Cornell and Mayor Taylor