



# Agawam Massachusetts

Office of the Mayor  
36 Main Street, Agawam, MA 01001  
mayor@agawam.ma.us

William P. Sapelli  
Mayor

Tel: 413-786-4520

Fax: 413-786-9927

March 29, 2021

Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities  
Attn: Jennifer Cargill  
1 S. Sta. Ste. 5  
Boston, MA 02110

**Re:** DPU Notice of Vote and Order and Request for Comments 21-31

Dear Hearing Officer Cargill:


Pursuant to the Department of Public Utilities ("DPU") letter dated March 9, 2021, please treat this letter as the Town of Agawam's written comments regarding the alleged violation of MGL c. 160 §151 on February 17, 2021 by CSX Transportation, Inc. ("CSX"). While CSX may execute a draft consent order from the DPU to resolve the matter, the Town of Agawam nevertheless is compelled to submit written testimony. The long history of violations by CSX at the Front/Bridge Street grade crossing must be considered and an adjustment to operations to prevent future blockages in the crossing needs to be addressed by the DPU.

The frustration on the consistent blockage of the crossing by CSX, sometimes over an hour in duration, has been simmering for years. Shortly after taking office in 2018, I started having regular discussions with West Springfield Mayor William Reichelt on the issue. Meetings were coordinated with the State Legislative delegation and the Massachusetts Secretaries Ashe of Housing and Economic Development and Pollack of the Department of Transportation. I further arranged several meetings with Congressman Richard Neal and Senators Markey and Warren to explain the gross misconduct of CSX. From February 2018 to August 2019, 28 action steps were taken to raise CSX's consistent blockage of the railroad crossing. Despite all these efforts and meeting with CSX officials, long time blockages by CSX remain a major disruption to residential and commercial traffic over the railroad crossing.

While the DPU observed via a live stream camera a CSX train blocking the crossing for approximately 38 minutes on February 17, 2021, this incident was not the only violation of c. 160 §151, nor was CSX's actions that day a rare occurrence. CSX trains coming to complete stops for more than 30 minutes at a time is a regular problem. Agawam and West Springfield have both installed flashing lights to warn citizens if the crossing is blocked. In addition, MassDOT has been very helpful by installing a live stream camera that citizens can access on the internet. Yet, CSX fails to address the root of the problem which is caused by them and can be corrected by them; trains stopped for long stretches over the railroad crossing because of their negligent operations.

Based on the history and CSX's failure to take any corrective action, I request that the maximum fine be levied against CSX. Further, I ask the DPU to continue to investigate CSX's conduct at the Front/Bridge Street grade crossing and issue violations every time a CSX train blocks the crossing for more than five minutes. Repeated and consistent enforcement of c. 160 §151 is warranted on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William P. Sapelli". The signature is written in a cursive style.

William P. Sapelli  
Mayor