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Oculus Rail Launches, Transforming How Communities Understand and Solve Blocked Rail Crossings

NORFOLK, VA — Oculus Rail, a Virginia-based transportation technology company, today announced its official national launch following a successful multi-city pilot across Hampton Roads. Over the past year, the company has deployed 40 AI-enabled sensors across four cities—Norfolk, Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Portsmouth— creating one of the most diverse and comprehensive real-world testbeds in the country for rail-crossing analytics.

These four cities collectively host the highest concentration of rail crossings in the Commonwealth of Virginia, spanning a full range of environments—from dense urban neighborhoods and industrial port areas to suburban corridors and rural communities. This diversity provided Oculus Rail with an unparalleled opportunity to refine its solar-powered, wireless sensing technology across the full spectrum of real-world conditions that impact communities nationwide.

The startup, founded by former Norfolk City Council member Andria McClellan, has drawn advisory input from Class I railroad leaders and USDOT experts to ensure its AI-enabled sensing technology delivers operational value to both municipalities and the rail industry.

“We were able to test our technology where it matters most,” said Andria McClellan, Founder and CEO of Oculus Rail. “By working directly with local governments across different settings—urban downtowns, busy port areas, suburban neighborhoods, and rural crossings—we’ve developed a data platform that’s scalable, resilient, and immediately useful to cities across the country.”

A longtime civic innovator, McClellan served eight years on the Norfolk City Council, where she chaired the regional transportation commission and launched the Smart Cities and Innovation Committee. She founded Oculus Rail after witnessing firsthand how blocked rail crossings disrupt traffic, delay emergency responders, and frustrate residents—with little data available to quantify the problem.

“Local governments have been operating in the dark when it comes to blocked crossings,” McClellan said. “I started Oculus Rail to give cities and residents the data they need to make informed decisions, improve safety, and advocate for solutions with railroads and federal partners.”

Norfolk City Councilmember Jeremy McGee agreed, “I frequently hear from constituents how frustrating it is to be stuck at a rail crossing with no idea how long they’ll be waiting. Oculus Rail gives the city — and our residents, business owners and visitors — real-time insight we’ve never had before. It’s helping us respond faster, plan smarter, and finally address one of the most common complaints we get.”

Oculus Rail’s network of solar-powered, wireless sensors captures real-time data on blocked rail crossings, showing when and how long crossings are obstructed and how often trains impact traffic and emergency response times. The company’s analytics dashboard provides cities, regional planners, and public safety agencies with actionable insights to reduce congestion, improve emergency response, and guide infrastructure investments.

The data gathered in the Hampton Roads pilot is being considered in a regional rail crossing assessment led by the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), supporting efforts to prioritize crossings for state and federal funding through programs like the Federal Railroad Administration’s *Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) Grant*.

“This level of detail has never been available before,” said Pavithra Parthasarathi, Deputy Executive Director of the HRTPO. “Oculus Rail’s data will directly influence how our region—and others—can target investments, reduce delays, and improve safety at the crossings that impact the most people every day.”

To empower residents directly, Oculus Rail has also launched the Oculus Rail App, available free to motorists in both the App Store and Google Play. The app provides timely alerts for the initial 40 monitored crossings across Norfolk, Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Portsmouth, allowing drivers to “Know Before You Go” and avoid delays. Additional crossings will be available in the future when municipalities select and subscribe to specific rail crossings.

With its technology proven in Virginia’s most complex rail environment, Oculus Rail is now expanding nationwide, partnering with cities, metropolitan planning organizations, and railroads to bring real-time rail-crossing intelligence to communities large and small.

For more information about Oculus Rail and its data solutions for cities and transportation agencies, visit www.oculusrail.com.

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