



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

COLLABORATION TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT RAILROAD CROSSING SAFETY PROJECTS

Success Stories from Nevada and Louisiana

Effective communication among a State department of transportation, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), and railroad partners can be a win-win solution for safety at highway-rail crossings. Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) and Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development have taken this approach to improve processes and safety.

IMPROVED, STREAMLINED PROCESSES FOR NEVADA

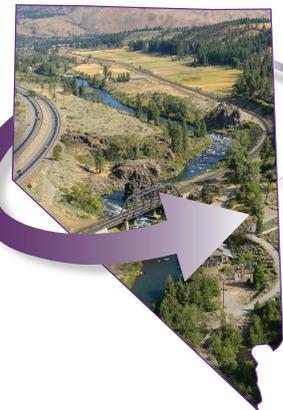
To help ensure successful delivery of the State's Railway-Highway Crossings (Section 130) Program, NDOT railroad safety staff proactively began to meet quarterly with the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) regional manager. The meetings have proven to be so successful and efficient that NDOT and UPRR have continued them to this day. The regular quarterly meetings keep stakeholders engaged in pursuing a safer railroad crossing environment. NDOT and its rail partners are making great strides as a result of these regular collaborative meetings:

→ *Development of a New Master Agreement*

NDOT railroad safety staff and UPRR are motivated in working toward a new Master Grade-Crossing Improvement Agreement for future Section 130 Program projects. The original agreement had been in place since 1978. The new agreement will streamline the project implementation and approval process. It will provide for improvement, installation, maintenance, and operation of safety devices at active or passive grade crossings. This includes all tracks owned and operated by the UPRR or leased by a third party. Under the new master agreement, NDOT will issue task orders for projects instead of entering into individual agreements for each location. These changes will improve the approval process and ensure timely and optimal use of funds for railroad crossing safety.

→ *Engineering Design Support for All Public Railroad Crossings*

In early 2019, NDOT issued a request for proposals for Railway-Highway Crossing Safety Engineering Design Services (RHSEDS) to provide design support for and streamline railroad safety projects. The NDOT Railroad Safety Section plans to use Section 130 Program funds for the design services. The scope includes conceptual design, final design, and post-design support for projects for grade separation, crossing relocation, protective devices, and hazard elimination at all public crossings including roadways, bicycle trails, and pedestrian paths. The Nevada Transportation Board approved RHSEDS during the board's quarterly meeting in May 2019. NDOT anticipates implementing an average of 2-3 large projects a year for the foreseeable future.

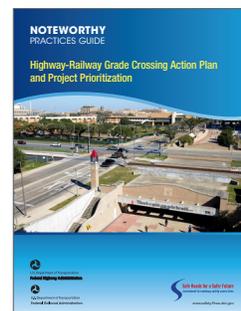


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The Nevada Department of Transportation Railroad Safety section's goal is to be more proactive than reactive.
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Doug Fromm, NDOT Railroad Safety Program Coordinator

Railroad State Action Plan

NDOT Railroad Safety Section has begun development of a Railroad State Action Plan. As part of the action plan, NDOT will implement a data-centric approach to prioritize projects and select strategies. The developers of the action plan will use NDOT's Revised Grade Crossing Hazard Index Model, a Cost-Based Highway-Railway Grade Crossing Prioritization Model, and Rail Inventory Management System to maximize the effectiveness of the action plan. NDOT expects to complete their Railroad State Action Plan in 2020.

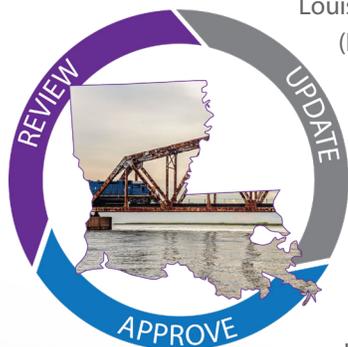
Through ongoing collaboration and regular meetings, NDOT is establishing and nurturing successful working relationships with FHWA, FRA, Nevada Public Utilities Commission, UPRR, and other railroad owners. These relationships improve process flow and initiate more timely implementation of rail-highway safety projects.



Source: FHWA

FHWA's [*Highway-Railway Grade Crossing Action Plan and Project Prioritization Noteworthy Practices Guide*](#) identifies stakeholder engagement as an essential element for developing a Railroad State Action Plan.

COLLABORATION ACROSS LOUISIANA



Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LaDOTD) has held Railroad Safety committee meetings for more than 10 years. The committee includes representatives from FHWA, FRA, Louisiana Highway Safety Commission, Louisiana State Police, Louisiana Operation Lifesaver, LaDOTD's Highway Safety Improvement Program, and LaDOTD's Local Public Agency Training and Assistance Program. Originally, the meetings were held twice a year, but now occur annually.

LaDOTD uses the meetings to review, update, and approve the State's 3-year plan for rail-highway safety projects, and to explain projects and answer questions from committee members. The meetings also provide an opportunity to highlight rail crossing safety among all stakeholders by providing a platform to present the railroad safety program, educate on rail-highway safety issues, answer questions about specific crossings or corridors, and collect ideas from rail partners to improve safety.

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Railroads are vitally important to our nation, but are often not as noticed or supported in the overall transportation vision of the public or local governmental officials.

Bill Shrewsberry, LaDOTD Highway/Rail Safety Engineer

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Sources:

Doug Fromm (Railroad Safety Program Coordinator, Nevada Department of Transportation), email communication, September 26, 2019, and October 31, 2019.

Shawn Luke (Assistant Highway/Rail Safety Engineer, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development), email communication, October 11, 2019.

Photo sources: Getty Images