



M O V I N G T H E  
**AMERICAN  
ECONOMY**

**Action Plan for Highway-Rail Crossing Safety  
and Trespass Prevention  
Accomplishments 2004-2008**

The 2004 *Secretary of Transportation's Action Plan for Highway-Rail Crossing Safety and Trespass Prevention* is a multi-modal effort coordinated by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), with input and assistance provided by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Joint Program Office. The *Action Plan* encompasses a wide range of programs, activities, tasks and projects that will continue through 2008 and beyond.

### **Major Accomplishments**

#### **Regulatory and Enforcement Actions**

- FRA issued a *Final Rule on the Use of Locomotive Horns at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings* requiring train horns to be sounded at all public grade crossings. In addition, it permits the establishment of Quiet Zones by localities provided appropriate safety measures are in place at public crossings to address the increased risk to motorists associated with the horn not sounding.
- FRA issued *Final Rule on Reflectorization of Rail Freight Rolling Stock Car* requiring the placement of reflective tape on locomotives and rail cars to improve their visibility to motorists in dark or inclement weather conditions, particularly for passive crossings not equipped with flashing lights or gates.
- FRA issued *Safety Advisory 2005-03 Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety* to facilitate improved cooperation and coordination with law enforcement agencies investigating train-vehicle collisions and increase awareness about the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders involved in grade crossing safety, particularly that of railroads.
- FRA continues to aggressively enforce federal rail safety regulations pertaining to the inspection, testing, and maintenance of active warning devices by railroads.
- The Department submitted to Congress an FRA reauthorization proposal with a provision to mandate that the National Grade Crossing Inventory be made current and then updated on a regular schedule by States and railroads.

#### **Public and Industry Education Actions**

- FRA developed and distributed a bilingual DVD and other materials to educate migrant farm workers about the hazards present at grade crossings and the dangers of trespassing on railroad property.
- FMCSA and FRA developed and distributed a *Grade Crossing Safety Visor Card* to remind truck and bus drivers of seven specific actions required to safely cross railroad tracks, such as making certain there is enough space on the other side for the entire truck to clear the tracks and what to do if their low-clearance/oversized vehicle gets hung up on the tracks.
- FMCSA launched a series of web pages dedicated to grade crossing safety issues for truckers.

- FMCSA and FHWA issued *Pilot Car Escort Best Practices Guidelines* with provisions discussing grade crossings and navigation by low-clearance/oversized vehicles.

### **Research, Analysis and Information Resource Development Actions**

- FRA issued a *Collision Hazard Analysis Guide* for passenger rail operators to identify and manage mitigation strategies for hazards along rail corridors where they operate, including grade crossings.
- FRA issued a comprehensive report entitled *Safety of Private Highway-Rail Grade Crossings* detailing the knowledge acquired and lessons learned from five public meetings held on the subject and describing possible courses of action to improve safety at such locations through development of a national policy or issuance of federal regulations.
- FRA issued a research report entitled *Rail Trespasser Fatalities: A Demographic Profile* to better understand who is trespassing, where, and the reasons why individuals are on railroad property, to aid in developing possible preventative countermeasures.
- FRA developed and distributed a publication entitled *Compilation of Pedestrian Safety Devices in Use at Grade Crossings* to provide guidance to states and local communities on the current state of the practice of pedestrian accommodation at grade crossings, including pedestrian-only crossings, and includes examples of signs, signals, pavement markings and other treatments.
- FRA developed and distributed a publication entitled *Guidance on the Use of Traffic Channelizing Devices at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings* to provide guidance to states and local communities on the several types of traffic-separating devices designed to keep motor vehicles in their lane and prevent them from driving around lowered crossing gates.
- FRA issued a report on a remote video monitoring trespass deterrent system used in Pittsford, New York that triggered an automated verbal warning message when the presence of an illegal trespasser person was detected in the area.
- FRA issued a report on the use of *Toll Free Emergency Notification Systems at Grade Crossings* which are intended for use in reporting warning device malfunctions, vehicles stuck on tracks or other imminent safety hazards affecting rail and roadway traffic at a crossing.
- FRA initiated research using video recordings from locomotive-mounted cameras that capture real-time motorist violations at grade crossings, train-vehicle collisions, and illegal trespassing to help determine the role human factors play in their occurrence.
- FRA submitted to Congress a report entitled *Impact of Blocked Crossings on Emergency Response Services* that provided guidance to communities to prevent and minimize the adverse affects of blocked crossings and ways to reduce those impacts through crossing closures and consolidation.
- FHWA submitted to Congress two reports addressing the progress being made by States in implementing grade crossing safety improvement projects.

### **Financial and Technical Assistance Actions**

- FRA and FHWA provide annual grant funding to Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (OLI) for continued nationwide public education and awareness activities.
- FRA and FHWA assisted Louisiana in the development of the first-ever state-level grade crossing safety action plan and are now working with Texas and Illinois to create similar plans.

- FRA worked with States to obtain improved Geographical Information System (GIS) data on grade crossing locations for use in the National Grade Crossing Inventory database.
- FRA provided funding for the development of the North Carolina 'Sealed Corridor' program that analyzes safety at all grade crossings along a particular rail line, rather than individually, to decide which crossings should receive safety improvements or be permanently closed.
- FRA provided funding to the Southern California Regional Rail Authority's commuter rail operator Metrolink to conduct a 'Sealed Corridor' study for two of its rail lines in Los Angeles area.
- FRA provided widespread technical support to states and localities seeking to close and consolidate unneeded or little used public grade crossings, and limiting the creation of new grade crossings.
- FHWA revised the *Railroad Highway Grade Crossing Handbook* for use by local and state officials in determining how to improve crossing safety under various conditions and types of locations.
- FHWA issued a memo to States to provide technical guidance on the appropriate use of STOP/YIELD signs at passive grade crossings.
- FMCSA revised the *Commercial Drivers License (CDL) Manual* addressing the dangers present when low-clearance/oversized vehicles operate over grade crossings.
- FTA initiated efforts to encourage rail transit agencies to submit information about at-grade crossings located on transit systems to the National Grade Crossing Inventory database.

#### **Forthcoming 2008 Actions**

- FRA will issue a revised and updated *Guide to Grade Crossing Closure and Consolidation* to assist states and local communities in closing or consolidating unneeded or little used public grade crossings located along a specific rail corridor and provide improvements to those that remain open.
- FRA will issue a multi-year research and development plan that supports projects focused on innovative and low-cost technologies to modernize existing grade crossing warning devices, improve detection of oncoming trains by motor vehicle drivers, and apply Intelligent Transportation System solutions to crossings, among other research efforts.
- FRA will support the revisions being made to the Operation Lifesaver Grade Crossing Collision Investigation (GCCCI) Training Course curriculum widely used by law enforcement agencies.
- FRA will issue a report analyzing the frequency of track obstacle detection equipment malfunctions of four-quadrant gate grade crossing systems.
- FRA will issue a report identifying the factors contributing to the successful reduction of grade crossing incidents from 1994 to 2003.
- FRA will continue collaborative research with the American Association of Suicidology, the Railroad Research Foundation, FTA, Transport Canada and others to develop a prevalence study of rail-related suicides and the development of countermeasures.
- FRA will continue ongoing development of publicly accessible GIS-mapping that provides locations of grade crossings and easier access to relevant grade crossing accident reports and inventory data.

For more information, contact FRA Public Affairs

202-493-6024 or [www.fra.dot.gov](http://www.fra.dot.gov)

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