



FDM 17-35-1 Overview

May 2, 2003

1.1 Background

In the early 1990s the FRA established a national goal of closing at least 25% of the then-existing railroad-highway crossings in the country. WisDOT and the OCR have both taken this goal seriously and have initiated efforts to focus attention on crossing closure and consolidation opportunities.

- OCR has undertaken railroad corridor studies to identify crossing needs, including opportunities for closure or consolidation.
- WisDOT has attempted to identify and pursue closure opportunities in conjunction with every improvement or upgrade project.
- Both the OCR and WisDOT have urged the railroads, to identify and jointly pursue the closure of crossings that are dangerous or redundant.

WisDOT should assist in identifying closure candidates, but responsibility for actual accomplishment falls primarily on the community and the railroad. In every project with railroad involvement, it will be WisDOT policy to evaluate all alternatives for railroad crossings including all reasonable opportunities to close crossings. The WisDOT has the greatest leverage for accomplishing crossing consolidation or closures during the early scoping stages of improvement projects. Regions must actively seek such opportunities and provide sufficient oversight on all local and state projects to assure that consultants are responsive to this policy.

1.2 Guidance

Excellent guidance in accomplishing crossing closure and consolidation is available in two publications:

- "Roadway – Railroad Grade Crossing – A Guide to Crossing Consolidation and Closure," July 1994, Federal Railroad Administration
- "Highway – Rail Crossing Elimination and Consolidation – A Public Safety Initiative", an AASHTO Committee Report, March 1995.

1.3 Options

Projects for the elimination of at-grade crossings can be accomplished by:

- Closing the crossing
- Closing the crossing with improvements to adjacent crossings
- Closing the crossing with improved access to an adjacent crossing
- Constructing a grade separation
- Relocating the highway
- Relocating the railroad

As a guide, in an urban area, any crossing within 1,000 feet of the new or grade-separated crossing should be included in the study. In a rural area, crossings within -1 mile should be included.

Conditions to consider in evaluating the closing of a crossing include:

1. Response time for emergency vehicles
2. Physical conditions and visibility
3. Feasibility of moving traffic to new/reconstructed facility
4. Accident history or predicted accident frequency rate
5. Improvement in quality of life in the area where a crossing is closed.
 - No train horns
 - No through highway traffic

1.4 Incentives

In support of the "crossing closure" initiative, FHWA has made provision for incentive payments to communities, matching (up to a \$7,500 maximum per crossing closure) similar incentive funds that a railroad provides to a

community. It should be emphasized that the railroad must make its incentive payment as a pre requisite to the federal incentive payment. The federal share must be used towards a community transportation safety purpose. With such incentives, it is expected that crossing closures will increase in future years

1.5 Process

See [Attachment 1.1](#) for a summary of the process.

The incentive payment process requires that the region and community enter into a Municipal Agreement to include two exhibits. One exhibit will be proof of the railroad's payment to the Community, and the other a letter from the community requesting the federal incentive money and identifying what transportation safety effort the community will undertake with the federal funds.

Unless the local government vacates a street or highway in accordance with Chapter 80 of the Wisconsin Statutes, the Commissioner of Railroads must approve all public crossing closures (see Section 195.29 W.S.). While the funds provided by the WisDOT must be used to enhance transportation safety not currently in the community's budget, funds provided by the railroad may be used for any local purpose.

1.6 Payment

The WisDOT (federal -aid) funds will be presented to the community after:

1. The Commissioner of Railroads issues an order to close the crossing when required to do so;
2. A Municipal Agreement is executed between the WisDOT region and the community which is to include (a) a statement from the community relating how the federal portion of the payment is to be used and (b) a copy of the check from the railroad to the community; and
3. Verification from the region that the road is officially vacated or the requirements of the Commissioner's orders have been satisfied (i.e. barricades installed, crossing surface removed, approaches removed, etc.).

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

[Attachment 1.1](#) Crossing Closure Incentive Payment Project Process