



Railway Level Crossings

FACT SHEET – DECEMBER 2008

This fact sheet outlines the management of railway level crossings on the NSW road network by local councils. The information focuses on the arrangements for interface agreements, improvement, maintenance, behavioural campaigns and for the RTA to provide financial assistance to Local Government.

General

Railway level crossings (RLC) involve both public and private railways and public and private roads that cross at the same grade. Level crossings are spread throughout NSW on State, Regional and Local Roads.

RLC present a risk to the safety of road users within New South Wales. Whilst the number of crashes is relatively low, the potential for fatalities and serious injuries of road users as a consequence of a crash, combined with an extended delay to the operation of the road and rail networks, is high.

Individual rail and road authorities are responsible for the management of the various components of infrastructure associated with an RLC.

The Level Crossing Strategy Council (LCSC) is an interagency forum created by NSW Government to provide coordination between rail and road authorities in the management of safety at level crossings in NSW. The Local Government Association and Shires Association and RTA are members of the LCSC and are responsible for the management for the road component.

Pedestrian only RLCs are not covered within this fact sheet. The management and financial obligations of pedestrian only RLCs are a responsibility of Local Council and the particular rail authority.

Interface agreements

Australian Transport Ministers voted in February 2008 to approve the Rail Safety (Amendment No.2) Bill.

The NSW Rail Safety Bill 2008 *Division 3 Interface co-ordination* will legislate that road and rail infrastructure

managers must jointly develop and agree on an interface agreement for any RLC.

The purpose of the *Interface Co-ordination* provisions is to ensure that rail infrastructure managers and road authorities identify risks to safety arising from rail or road crossings, determine measures to manage, so far as is reasonably practicable, those risks and seek to enter into interface agreements to manage the risks and the implementation of improvements to reduce risk.

The RTA as a matter of policy has accepted responsibility (*i.e. manage, maintain and fund*) for interface agreements related to infrastructure on, under or over the NSW State Road network at an RLC. Local Government will be responsible for interface agreements relating to RLCs on Regional and Local Roads.

When the legislation is approved, the RTA will work with Local Government Association and Shires Association and Local Councils on material to guide road authorities in the creation of interface agreements.

Improvements

Improvement to safety at railway level crossings include:-

- Installation of flashing lights and warning bells, with or without boom barriers;
- Clearing of sight obstructions;
- Widening of road pavement over tracks;
- Widening and sealing of approaches to crossings and the provision of vehicle escape bays;
- Modifying or improving signposting including replacement of signs, provision of pavement markings and erection of hazard markers to meet Australian Standard AS 1742.7;

- Installing traffic management devices at an adjacent intersection;
- Installing new and/or linking existing traffic control signals at an adjacent intersection to flashing lights, warning bells, boom barriers at the RLC;
- Closing and removing redundant road infrastructure at, and in advance of, an RLC on an operational railway line;
- Removing road infrastructure at, and in advance of, crossings on non-operational railway lines;
- Providing pedestrian facilities at existing RLCs; and
- Providing grade separation.

Funding arrangements for improvements

Railway Level Crossing Safety Improvement Program

The RTA Railway Level Crossing Safety Improvement Program (SIP) is the State Government's contribution to infrastructure improvements and behavioural campaigns that improve safety at RLCs in NSW. The SIP is approved by the LCSC.

The priority selection of RLCs for improvement is principally based on the nationally adopted ALCAM (Australian Level Crossing Assessment Model).

The RTA will provide allocations for improvements to individual RLCs depending on the availability of funds, project cost and the priority of project.

State Roads

For those State Roads being cared for by Councils by agreement with the RTA, the RTA will meet the full cost of the road authority's share of the approved improvement project where it has agreed to provide financial assistance for the improvement.

Regional Roads

The RTA will meet the full cost of the road authority's share of the approved improvement project where it has agreed to provide financial assistance for the improvement.

Local Roads

The RTA will meet two-thirds (2/3) of the full cost of the approved improvement project to which it has agreed to provide financial assistance. Council will be required to meet the remaining one-third (1/3) of the cost.

Interface Agreement and Grade Separation Projects

Risks identified in interface agreements that are not addressed by the RTA SIP will be the responsibility of the relevant road manager (RTA or Council) to rectify as per reasonably practicable.

The implementation of grade separation at RLCs is very expensive and accordingly rarely undertaken by Councils. The RTA contribution for grade separation proposals are

dealt with on a site-specific basis. The decision to proceed with a grade separation is typically based on a detailed analysis of safety risk, project costs, traffic impacts, site conditions and local social and environmental factors. Council's wishing to investigate the feasibility of implementing grade separation at an RLC should consult RTA Strategic Network Planning Branch early in the planning process.

Maintenance

State and Regional Roads

On-going maintenance on State and Regional Roads following completion of RLC projects will continue in terms of the agreement between the rail authority and the RTA, having regard to both agencies inherent physical and legal responsibilities.

The "road authority" referred to below may be either the Local Council or the RTA in accordance with the normal arrangements for State, Regional and Local roads.

The rail authority referred to below may be either RailCorp, Australian Rail Track Corporation, Country Rail Infrastructure Corporation, Victorian rail agency or a private company.

Specific responsibilities are:-

- a) The road authority will accept full responsibility for all approach road warning signposting, delineation and guard fences for road safety.
- b) The road authority will maintain road pavements within the boundaries of railway property up to the ends of the sleepers, or ends of outer sleepers where there is more than one railway track.
- c) The rail authority will maintain the area of roadway within the railway reserve of a crossing to a standard equivalent as near as practicable to the remainder of the road.
- d) The appropriate Local Government Body or Council will be responsible for the maintenance of street lighting associated with an RLC.
- e) The rail authority will accept full responsibility for the maintenance of the appropriate signs, flashing lights, boom gates, warning bells and associated equipment within the rail reserve.

For councils with maintenance contracts to the RTA for State Roads, facilities which are the responsibility of the road authority will be covered by the maintenance contracts.

Where the responsibility for installing and maintaining these facilities rests with Council on a Regional Road, Council may fund the works from its Block Grant.

Local Roads

Ongoing maintenance on Local Roads following completion of RLC projects is a matter between the rail authority and Council.

However, for warning signs and pavement markings which are the responsibility of the road authority on local roads Councils may fund the works from its Block Grant.

Behavioural campaigns

Behavioural campaigns are undertaken by road and rail agencies to improve both pedestrian and driver awareness of the risks of using an RLC so that community safety might be enhanced.

In some instances Councils may be requested to contribute to campaigns including data, access to media outlets such as their internet site, libraries; and concurrence to the installation of infrastructure such as signs and variable message signs.

Additional information

The Level Crossings Strategy Council and ALCAM:

www.levelcrossings.nsw.gov.au

Australian Standard AS1742 relating to railway level crossings:

Standards Australia website

Key RTA contacts

- Policy, strategy and program advice –
Manager Network and Bus Efficiency Network Management Directorate.
- Project planning, implementation and operation advice –
RLC Project Managers Regional Operations and Engineering Services Directorate in RTA Regional Offices located in Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong, Parkes, Wagga Wagga and Grafton.
- Driver Awareness campaign advice –
Manager Business and Customer Strategy, Network Management Directorate.