Measure Name: Refuse or delay boarding to discourage grade crossing violations

Definition: Develop and implement procedures to delay or deny boarding for passengers who violate grade crossing warning devices enroute to board the train.

Tags:

Type of Incident:
☒ Non-Motorized Users Only
☐ Motor Vehicles Only
☐ Both

Intervention Strategy:
☐ Data: application and planning
☐ Education: outreach and messaging
☒ Enforcement: policy development and rulemaking
☐ Engineering: technological and physical deterrents

Type of Problem:
☒ Non-Motorized Users Violating Warning Devices
☐ Motor Vehicles Violating Warning Devices
☐ Vehicle ROW Incursion
☐ Vehicle Congestion
☐ Blocked Crossing
☐ Vehicle Hang-up

Measure Category:
☐ Risk Assessment
☒ Policy and Enforcement
☐ Collaboration, Training, and Education
☐ Public Communication
☐ Physical Barriers
☐ Detection and Lighting
☐ Infrastructure Modification
☐ Post-Incident Management
☐ Warning Devices

Description

This measure consists of developing policies to delay or deny boarding to individuals who are observed violating crossing warning devices before boarding a train. The aim is to discourage individuals from trespassing to reach station platforms.

This measure is best suited for crossing with multiple tracks that are adjacent to a passenger rail station, where crossing warning devices activate when trains stop at the station. Individuals trying to reach the platform may see a stopped train and active warnings such as down crossing gates with flashing red lights, but not realize that a second train is approaching and ignore the warnings. One way to deter individuals from crossing the tracks in the situation is to prevent them from boarding the train as a consequence.

Railroad employees who are responsible for enforcing the policy may be provided with training to deal with customers who are unhappy being delayed or denied boarding the train. Safety patrols including rail or local police may also assist in enforcing this policy or intervene if trespassers become hostile.

As of 2024, there are no research studies that investigated the effectiveness of this measure in reducing the number of people that trespass onto the railroad ROW. However, there are some examples of this approach being used by commuter rail lines, including Metra [1] and BNSF [2].

Additional search terms: *passengers, commuters, remove*

Advantages

- This measure is relatively low cost, as railroad employees on the train and at stations can enforce this policy.

- Delayed or denied boarding after a trespass violation could help deter future unsafe behavior and may reduce repeat offences.

- This measure may also deter other passengers who witness the event from trespassing in the future.

Drawbacks

- Individuals who are denied boarding may become angry or hostile, especially if the next available train does not depart soon.

- Refused or delayed boarding may result in train delays and affect the overall train schedule.

Notable Practices

- An official policy for identifying trespassers and delaying/denying the individual from boarding the train may help rail employees to explain their actions.

- It is important to positively identify the individual who trespassed before denying boarding. [2]

- Boarding should only be denied at the station where trespassing occurred, not at later station. [2]

- Identify staff member(s) to receive training on how to communicate with customers who are difficult or disruptive after being denied boarding.

- Trespassing activity with and without incident can be collected before and after the implementation of this measure to evaluate its effectiveness. The number of times the emergency brake was applied can also be collected to measure effectiveness.

References

[1] Chicago Tribune. (2004, December 13). Metra cracks down on trespassers, *Chicago Tribune*.

Description: News article describing Metra's approach to delayed boarding for passengers who are observed trespassing.

[2] BNSF. (2020). *BNSF Chicago Passenger Operations Manual No. 4.*

Description: This document shows the BNSF manual on passenger operations in the Chicago area including information on delaying or denying boarding for individuals that trespass to reach platform (see Section POM 1.5.2, Individuals Going Around Gates).

Additional Resources

Related Measures

- Safety patrols to deter grade crossing violations
- Complete open/close cycle
- Enforcement
- Second train warning

Images

Figure 1. Law enforcement prevents commuters from accessing boarding platform during crossing activation
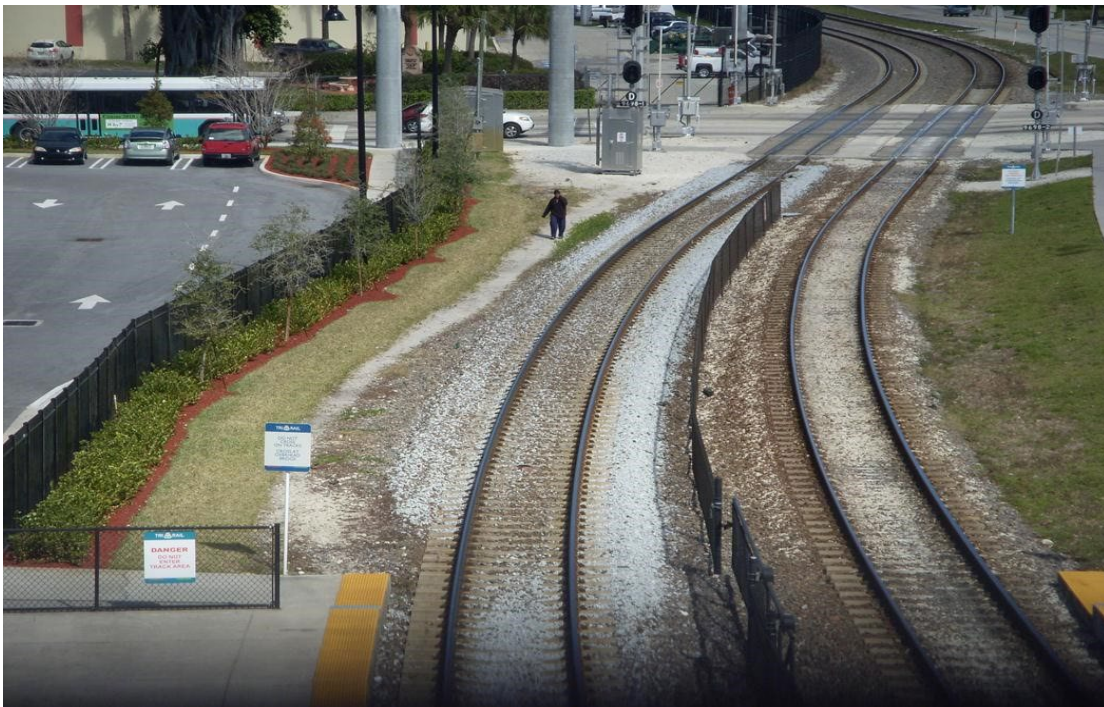*Image Credit: Volpe Center*

Figure 2. Pedestrian trespassing from a grade crossing to access station
Image Credit: Volpe Center