Measure Name: Collaboration with local government and communities

Definition: Plan and work with local government and community organizations to increase rail safety.

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

Collaboration with local government and communities involves sharing information and resources to promote safety around grade crossings and in the larger rail environment. Collaboration aims to help communities explore opportunities for shared responsibility in increasing safety at grade crossings.

Potential community collaborators include:

- Rail carriers.
- Local government agencies.
- Law enforcement and other first responders.
- Local public school administrators and teachers.
- Student groups involved in community service initiatives.
- Other community groups and individual members of the community.

Potential community collaboration topics include:

- Holding trains outside of crossings where vehicular traffic is substantial reduces the chances for blocked crossings [1]. This may also increase the safety of individuals in larger groups (e.g., local school dismissal or special public event).
- Directly involving local government and the public when implementing countermeasures such as monitoring, detection, and fencing [2].
- Hosting public forums to enhance the community's safety awareness at grade crossings.
- Including considerations for trespass risk in community planning and development for various community facilities in close proximity to grade crossings, such as schools, elder care services, rehabilitation centers, parking lots, and other facilities.
- Facilitating rapid incident response and resolution through planning and coordination with law enforcement and other first responders.
- Facilitating consistent data collection by rail staff and law enforcement at the scene of a collision; this information can be used to better understand rail trespass at grade crossings to prevent future incidents.

In 2011, FRA published the *Community Trespassing Prevention Guide*, a document that supports a community-based approach to preventing rail trespass [3]. The guide outlines a problem-solving model for trespass prevention named Community, Analysis, Response and Evaluation (CARE), which includes recommendations for collaborating with community stakeholders. During 2009-2013, FRA sponsored an evaluation of this model that was conducted in West Palm Beach, FL, along the South Florida Rail Corridor and Florida East Coast Railroad's rights-of-way [4]. Findings show that the CARE model can successfully provide a structure to help stakeholders to understand and address trespass problem areas, as well as develop and evaluate mitigations. The CARE model also led to the establishment of other collaborative projects that had additional community safety benefits.

Additional search terms: *CARE model, coordination, partnering, partnership*

Advantages

- Existing staff can be designated for tasks related to the coordination and development of process associated with this measure.
- Establishing relationships between stakeholders can create additional safety-related benefits for the community over time. [4]
- Collaboration can raise awareness of rail safety implications in other planning and engineering activities, such as traffic mitigation, zoning, and other development. [4]
- Collaboration increases local government awareness of the need to address safety at a grade crossing. [4]
- This measure can help to increase safety in both the rail environment and within the community.
- Create a public awareness campaign to encourage community members to be active participants in notifying the proper authorities about safety events such as a stalled vehicle at a grade crossing.

Drawbacks

- It can be difficult to build consensus among multiple stakeholder groups. [4]
- It may be challenging to maintain engagement of parties outside of the rail industry. [4]
- Representative turnover can be a challenge if new representatives do not share the same agenda as others in the stakeholder group. Delegation to junior staff can also become challenging if they are not given the authority to make decisions. [4]

Notable Practices

- Identify and engage all stakeholders early to help support the effort throughout the collaboration and create a sense of shared responsibility for rail trespass and suicide. [4]
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder involved in the planning, communication, and implementation.
- Develop a written plan for collaboration and communication with concurrence from all stakeholder groups.
- Assemble a formal press release to help support the credibility of the effort and obtain buy-in from local government, as well as foster community support. [4]
- Acknowledge different perspectives and sensitivities among the group that may affect participation levels. [4]
- When possible, utilize existing efforts that already address safety issues in the community. [4]
- Consider developing procedures to ensure the safety of those entering the track area to respond to a trespassing incident.

References

[1] Association of American Railroads. (2021, September). *How railroad collaborate with stakeholders to reduce grade crossing impacts.* https://www.aar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/AAR-Occupied-Crossings-Fact-Sheet.pdf

Description: AAR provides a fact sheet on blocked crossings and potential steps to keep in mind when its occurrence is probable.

[2] Gabree, S. H., Hiltunen, D., & Ranalli, E. (2019). *Railroad Implemented Countermeasures to Prevent Suicide: Review of Public Information* (No. DOT/FRA/ORD-19/04). Washington, DC: Federal Railroad Administration.

Abstract: The public discussion of railroad safety initiatives can help to improve safety, either directly with the public through an increased awareness, or by encouraging other carriers to consider similar safety efforts. Rail carriers are often quick to promote trespass and crossing safety efforts, however, efforts to mitigate rail suicide are often not discussed. Suicide is unique from other rail safety topics in that it requires more precise language when discussing publicly. Responsible discussion of suicide prevention can increase the availability of information on how to get help, while limiting the dramatization of these events, thereby reducing the likelihood of copycat events. In this report, the authors conducted web-based searches to identify rail-specific efforts to mitigate suicide that have been publicly discussed, either by the carrier themselves or through the media. Generally, there is limited discussion of suicide-specific prevention efforts being undertaken by rail carriers, and the level of detail provided about these efforts varies. In total, 14 carriers and a range of strategies were identified including fencing, signage, detection and monitoring, training of employees and authorities, public and industry events, websites, and media guidelines. Partnerships with suicide prevention groups, both local and national, were most often discussed.

[3] Federal Railroad Administration. (2011). *Community Trespassing Prevention Guide*. Washington, DC: Federal Railroad Administration.

Description: This guide outlines a problem-solving model for trespass prevention – Community, Analysis, Response and Evaluation (CARE) – which includes collaboration with community stakeholders that can be applied to a variety of collaboration-based measures.

[4] DaSilva, M., & Ngamdung, T. (2014). *Trespass Prevention Research Study-West Palm Beach, FL* (No. DOT-VNTSC-FRA-14-02). Washington, DC: Federal Railroad Administration.

Abstract: The United States Department of Transportation's (U.S. DOT) Research and Innovative Technology Administration's John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center (Volpe Center), under the direction of the U.S. DOT Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Office of Research and Development (R&D), conducted a Trespass Prevention Research Study (TPRS) in the city of West Palm Beach, FL. The main objective of this research was to demonstrate potential benefits, including best practices and lessons learned, of implementation and evaluation of trespass prevention strategies following FRA's and Transport Canada's existing trespassing prevention guidance on the rail network in West Palm Beach, FL, and all of its rights-of-way.

This report documents the results of the implementation of the guidance discussed in this study. The results of the trespass prevention strategies will be analyzed to help determine areas of potential risk, develop solutions to prevent and minimize risk exposure, and implement successful countermeasures in the future. The ultimate objective of the research is to aid in the development of national recommendations or guidelines to reduce trespass-related incidents and fatalities.

Additional Resources

Related Measures

- Enforcement
- Grade crossing education in communities
- Identify and monitor hotspots
- Public messaging to enhance grade crossing safety

Images

- No images available