



## **RAIL-HIGHWAY CROSSING PROGRAM**

### **Purpose**

This policy implements Board Policy 4085 and instructs the Department on the management of the Rail-Highway Crossing Program (RHCP). The RHCP is established to enhance safety at public rail-highway crossings throughout the State of Idaho and to promote rail safety education.

### **Legal Authority**

The Department shall be responsible for executing the RHCP in accordance with;

Idaho Code 40-310 – The Board has the authority to locate, design, construct, reconstruct, alter, extend, repair and maintain state highways and plan, design and develop statewide transportation systems

Idaho Code 40-312(2) – Authority of Board to promulgate rules for the expenditure of all moneys appropriated or allocated by law to the Department or the Board

Idaho Code 40-314 – The Board shall exercise all powers necessary to carry out the provisions of Title 40 of the Idaho Code and the control of the financial affairs of the Department and Board

Idaho Code 40-317 – Authority to enter into cooperative agreements with the federal government and local governments

Idaho Code 40-702(5) – Establishment of the State Highway Account to include all federal surface transportation funds received from the United States government

Idaho Code 62-301 and 62-303 – Cost sharing when eliminating or altering crossings of state highways and railroads

Idaho Code 62-304A, B, C, D – Railroad Grade Crossing Protection Fund

Idaho Code 62-306 – Construction and maintenance of railroad grade crossings

Idaho Code 63-2412 (c) – State Fuel Tax distribution to the Railroad Grade Crossing Protection Account

Title 23, U.S. Code Section 130 – Railway-Highway Crossings - the cost of construction of projects for the elimination of hazards of railway-highway crossings, including the separation or protection of grades at crossings, the reconstruction of existing railroad grade crossing structures, the relocation of highways to eliminate grade crossings, and projects at grade crossings to eliminate hazards posed by blocked grade crossings due to idling trains, may be paid from sums apportioned in accordance with federal law from the federal funds set aside by this section.

## **Funding**

The RHCP is comprised of two dedicated funding sources:

- Federal set-aside (Title 23, U.S. Code Section 130) from the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) apportionment
- \$250,000 annual allocation (Idaho Statute 63-2412(c)) to the State Railroad Grade Crossing Protection Account.

Partnering with railroad companies, local agencies and the Idaho Public Utilities Commission for in-kind work, rail-highway crossing inventory, labor donations, etc. is encouraged to meet RHCP goals.

## **Eligible Projects, Types and Restrictions**

Eligible projects include:

- Installation of protective devices at public rail-highway crossings, such as gates, lights, etc.
- Elimination of hazard(s) at public rail-highway crossings, such as removal of visual impairments, realignment of crossing, installation of safety features (protective devices), etc.
- Data compilation and analysis
- Reports mandated by FHWA and/or FRA
- Rail safety education

A maximum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) from the State Railroad Grade Crossing Protection Account shall be spent annually to support public education and safety programs which promote awareness of public safety at rail-highway grade crossings.

In conformance with Title 23 U.S. Code Section 130, no more than eight percent (8%) of these funds may be used for data compilation and analysis.

## **Recommendation Committee: Railroad Operation and Safety Team (ROaST)**

ROaST proposes, reviews, evaluates and recommends projects. The voting members of ROaST are comprised of a representative from each of ITD's six districts and the Idaho Operation Lifesaver State Coordinator. Ex officio members include: Federal Highway Administration, Local Highway Technical Assistance Council, ITD's Highway Design, Traffic Services, Freight Manager, Highway Safety Manager and Rail-Highway Crossing Program Manager. All proposed projects are vetted through the applicable district ROaST members.

## **Selection and Programming of Projects**

Projects will be selected based on priority and in accordance with FHWA/FRA eligibility requirements and guidelines. ITD's Rail-Highway Crossing Program Manager will solicit proposed projects based on current annual funding availability. Project selection criteria includes consideration of the Federal Railroad Administration's Web Based Accident Prediction System (WBAPS)<sup>1</sup>, benefit cost ratio, project costs, project readiness, local/railroad knowledge,

safety features consistent with proximate crossings, designated emergency and school bus routes, etc. Proposed projects will be reviewed, evaluated and ranked by the ROaST based upon project selection criteria, feasibility and eligibility. A list of recommended projects will be submitted to the Idaho Transportation Board as a component of the annual update of the Idaho Transportation Investment Program (ITIP).

Project prioritization is determined utilizing a weighted criteria scoring process.

### **Program Management**

Funds made available due to project delay, removal, or project savings will be re-distributed by the Rail-Highway Crossing Program Manager in collaboration with the ROaST in the following priority:

1. Project Advancements: Advances shall be dependent upon project readiness and available funding, vetted and recommended through the ROaST, with consideration given to projects on the prioritized list. Said recommendations for advances shall be presented to and approved by the Idaho Transportation Board.
2. Cover unforeseen project cost increases due to change in standards or conditions. This is not intended to cover changes in project scope.
3. Efforts will be made to transfer unused project funds to minor (*or emergency*) safety enhancements or experimental features at public rail-highway crossings. Partnering with railroad companies, local jurisdictions and safety organizations for these types of projects will be encouraged.

Annually a status report of the RHCP shall be submitted and presented to the Board.

<sup>1</sup> In conformance with the US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration's Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook, Third Edition July 2019.

Approved by the Director on:

  
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L. Scott Stokes  
Director

Date 12/16/24