

Policy: 6865-8- Railroad Maintenance of Grade Crossings on the State Highway System

Section: Railroads

Office/Department: 6Utilities

Reports To: 6Div Director Operations

Contact: 404-631-1000

Cooperation

It is the Department's responsibility, as well as the Railroads' to work with each other in a cooperative manner and provide assistance as outlined in this directive.

Application

This directive is to provide guidance in matters relating to the maintenance of grade crossing surfaces on the State Highway System whether within or outside the limits of any city.

The Official Code of Georgia, Annotated (O.C.G.A.) [Section 32-6-190](#) states "Any railroad whose track or tracks cross a public road at grade shall have a duty to maintain such grade crossings in such condition as to permit the safe and reasonable passage of public traffic. Such duty of maintenance shall include that portion of the public road lying between the track or tracks and for two feet beyond the ends of the crossties on each side and extending four feet beyond the traveled way or flush with the edge of a paved shoulder, whichever is greater, of such crossing."

Thus, under O.C.G.A. Section 32-6-190 for every grade crossing there is a potential to have three scenarios requiring maintenance. One scenario places the maintenance requirements entirely within the limits of the grade crossing and would be the Railroad's responsibility. The second scenario places the maintenance requirements entirely outside the limits of the grade crossing and would be the Department's responsibility. Finally, the third scenario is where the maintenance work extends across both jurisdictions of the Railroad and the Department. The responsibility for maintaining the crossing surface and roadway approaches would typically be with both parties.

On future Railroad maintenance, it is reasonable to expect the Railroad's duty to extend beyond the "two feet beyond the crossties" limits as stated in O.C.G.A. Section 32-6-190 in order to provide a safe and reasonable passage for the traveling public. (For example, if a railroad raises their rail, it is reasonable to expect the railroad to extend their work beyond the 2 feet beyond the ends of the crossties.) [See Procedure #10](#) in the Section "Procedures for Coordinating Routine Maintenance Activities" below.

For Department owned railroad tracks, the Department's lessee or operating Railroad Company is considered to be the Railroad for the purposes of this directive.

This directive does not apply to the installation and maintenance of traffic control devices that is addressed in Article 3 Part 1 of [O.C.G.A. 32-6-50](#).

Procedures for Addressing Complaints

The Department may receive verbal or written complaints involving the maintenance of a grade crossing from various sources. The following information needs to be documented on any complaint; *complainant's full name, mailing address, phone number, date, time, county, route number, road name, approximate location and details on the type of complaint.*

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All complaints, including the required information, shall be forwarded to the District Utilities Engineer within one (1) business day of receipt of the complaint.

The District Utilities Engineer shall coordinate the review of each complaint with the appropriate district personnel until the matter is adequately resolved. In addition to the original information received (see above) about a complaint, the District Utilities Engineer shall document and maintain records that contain the following information: railroad track owner, operating railroad (if different than owner), railroad identification number, type of complaint, comments on the initial investigation and assessment, a brief description of any maintenance work performed by the Railroad or the Department along with dates and date when the matter was resolved.

It shall be the responsibility of the District Utilities Engineer to make all necessary attempts to resolve issues involving maintenance of railroad grade crossings with the appropriate Railroad.

In the event the District and respective Railroad cannot resolve the issue, the District Utilities Engineer shall forward all information and documents to the State Utilities Engineer for review and further action in accordance with O.C.G.A. [Section 32-6-202](#).

Procedures for Coordinating Routine Maintenance Activities

The District Utilities Engineer shall be the primary contact for the Department involving routine railroad maintenance and shall coordinate pending railroad maintenance activities with the appropriate Area Engineer.

1. When a Railroad notifies the Department of impending maintenance, the Railroad should provide details of the proposed work. The Department's Area Engineer and Railroad representative should thoroughly discuss activities to be performed and reach an agreement on a work plan and schedule for implementation before the roadway can be partially or totally closed. The work plan, schedule and any other details should be documented by both parties prior to beginning any work.
2. The Area Engineer or Railroad may provide the proposed scope of work, proposed detour plan, anticipated schedule of work, and Railroad contact names and phone numbers to the District Maintenance Engineer, District Traffic Operations Engineer and District Utilities Engineer for their review and approval.
3. A copy of the proposed Railroad maintenance work shall be provided to the District Communications Office by the Area Engineer for notifying the Public, City and County officials, Emergency Response Offices and other appropriate parties affected by the impending work.
4. When maintenance work extends across both the Department's and Railroad's jurisdictions, the Department shall coordinate with the Railroad the necessary maintenance of the roadway approaches, which may include milling, inlay, resurfacing or a combination of them.
5. The Department shall assist the Railroad by providing traffic control, signing and detours (if available) upon request and reasonable notice by the Railroad as stated in O.C.G.A. [Section 32-6-201](#). As a minimum, the temporary traffic control shall be in accordance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), current edition.
6. The Railroad should notify the Department (Area Engineer or his representative) at a minimum of 45 calendar days in advance of their proposed maintenance. The Railroad shall obtain the Department's approval for any work that may partially or totally close grade crossings to vehicular and pedestrian traffic. If an emergency situation exists, the Railroad shall notify the Department as soon as possible of any road closure.
7. Railroads performing (minor) maintenance such as replacement of timber guards or asphalt repair shall perform their work at a grade crossing one half at a time so vehicular traffic can be maintained.
8. Railroad maintenance involving the removal and replacement of base material, crossties and rail may require closing of the roadway. On-site detours/runarounds should be considered for use; however, it may be more conducive to use an off-site detour if an acceptable route is available. Every effort should be made in the planning stages to minimize the length of

time for the off-site detour. Based on discussions with the Railroad and after reviewing the existing field conditions, the Area Engineer should make a reasonable determination as to the length of time needed for the off-site detour. The Railroad should provide sufficient details to support any request for an off-site detour with duration in excess of 24 hours. The Area Engineer or his representative shall inspect the Railroad's work to ensure compliance with the agreed upon terms and resolve any discrepancies while the work is in progress. The Area Engineer shall verify and document the rail elevations prior to the Railroad beginning work and upon completion.

9. The Railroad must not raise or lower the rail elevation such that it creates or increases an unsafe or unreasonable crossing for vehicular traffic. At such locations, the Railroad and the Department shall reach an agreement on a work plan ([see #1](#) in this section) that clarifies the obligations of each party and reduces the impact of such maintenance activity by minimizing the changes to the rail elevation at the crossing. When an agreement cannot be reached, the Railroad must maintain the existing rail elevations without change or the Railroad shall, at its own expense, extend the approaches beyond the current requirement of "two feet beyond the crossties" as required in Section 32-6-190, O.C.G.A. so that the resulting railroad crossing remains at a safe and reasonable passage for the vehicular traffic.
10. The Department will continue to encourage the removal of tracks that no longer provide service or have no potential to provide future service. At locations where the railroad grade crossing existed prior to the public road and the Railroad agrees to remove the rails and crossties from the roadway, the Department shall provide the necessary equipment, labor and materials to restore the roadway. At locations where the public road existed prior to the railroad grade crossing, the Railroad shall provide the necessary equipment, labor and materials to remove the rails and crossties and restore the roadway section.

Implementation

The responsibility for coordinating and reaching an agreement on a work plan with Railroads and implementing this directive on each grade crossing situation rests with the District Engineer. It is expected that the District Utilities Engineer will be the Department's primary contact with the Railroads. The State Utilities Office will provide guidance as necessary.

Distribution of Directive to Railroads

This directive will be transmitted to each Railroad operating in the State with a cover letter of explanation and the Department's contact information.

References:

History:

annual review: 11-01-19;
added to TOPPS: 05/17/96;
issued: 12/06/86
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