



# Iowa DOT Rail Safety Action Plan

Your input is desired

## Proposed Action Items

Through collaborative efforts with various stakeholders the Iowa DOT has proposed a list of Action Items intended to be incorporated into the programs and policies of the Rail Section of the Modal Transportation Division. The overall goal is to improve safety at railroad crossings as well as prevent trespasser activity on railroad property.

Your input and comments concerning the proposed Action Items as well as suggestions for additional Action Items would be appreciated.



**The following Action Items have been identified to date:**

Education

- Action A: College and High School Education Campaign.
- Action B: Family Education Partnerships

Enforcement

- Action C: Enforcement/Judicial Awareness Campaign Iowa Code 716 revision makes it easier for law enforcement to fine railroad trespassers. However, feedback from railroads operating in the state indicated that we need to have stronger legal statutes to enforce against trespassing on railroad right-of-way.

**The following Action Items have been identified to date, (cont.):**

Engineering

- Action D: Rumble Strips on Paved Secondary Roads Before Crossings. This action is a priority of the railroads but will need to be reconciled with federal and state highway safety requirements before being implemented.
- Action E: Verify Engineering for Preemption Signal Timing
- Action F: Crossing Signal Light LED Conversion Study These conversions are being completed over time by railroads as a part of normal signal maintenance/repair work.
- Action G: Develop Closure Rating Criteria The criteria were developed through a collaboration with Iowa State University and a formula devised. It remains challenging to actually get the crossings closed.

**The following Action Items have been identified to date, (cont.):**

Programming/Funding

- Action H: Closure as part of the Grade Crossing Surface Repair Program Continue to assess whether crossings should be closed when planning funding projects.
- Action I: Closure Incentives for Section 130 Program Continue discussions regarding closure as an alternative to system upgrades. In some cases, system upgrades to an adjacent crossing are offered as an incentive for closure. What this action proposes is a factoring process that promotes nearby closures of sites being upgraded.

**The following Action Items have been identified to date, (cont.):**

- Action J: Decrease reallocation of Section 130 funds Complete-The backlog of surface projects has significantly decreased. Section 130 funds have not been diverted for surface projects since state fiscal year 2013 and are not expected to be in the future.
- Action K: Passenger Rail At the time of the first Safety Action Plan, Iowa was in the process of planning a high-speed passenger rail service from Chicago to Iowa City. Part of the process included upgrading safety measures at crossings and closing selected crossings. That study has been completed, but the project is not currently active.

**Recommended New Action Items:**

1. Developing the Best practices for government entities & project sponsors that are planning projects which interact with railroad property and railroad crossings document.
2. Working on identifying locations for a pedestrian / trespasser prevention CRISI grant request to construct pedestrian bridges at multiple locations.
3. Utilizing Section 130 funds for fencing to channelize pedestrians near AMTRAK stations and prevent the transition of sidewalk pedestrians to train platforms.
4. Crossbuck / yield sign renewal project with Section 130 funds.
5. Oversight for railroad crossing signals / traffic signals preemption annual inspection requirements.

**Recommended New Action Items, (cont.):**

6. Contribute Section 130 funds toward grade separation projects as part of larger roadway corridor projects.
7. Develop GIS mapping for accidents to identify individual crossing accident locations so analysis of specific railroads, railroad corridors, or regions can be conducted.
8. Encourage railroads to reincorporate railroad crossing safety into the precision scheduled railroading business model (including addressing blocked crossing issues).
9. Include roadway geometry changes into Section 130 projects where applicable as determined by the onsite diagnostic review. This could include narrowing and defining roadway lanes, closing / relocating driveways near railroad crossings, elimination of curbside parking and separating the pedestrians from the roadway.

**Recommended New Action Items, (cont.):**

10. Encourage the revision of 23 USC 646.210 (1) sentence "Projects for grade crossing improvements are deemed to be of no ascertainable net benefit to the railroads and there shall be no required railroad share of the costs." Safety improvements at railroad crossings are in fact a benefit to railroads. The Section 130 program cannot be successful without railroad participation. Some railroads quote this code section to prevent participation in the Section 130 program and / or maintain railroad crossing infrastructure.
11. The Iowa DOT is currently in the process of identifying humped and dipped railroad crossings in the state as part of the annual railroad crossing inventory data collection each summer. All railroad crossings in the state should be inventoried by the Fall of 2024. This additional humped / dipped data will be analyzed to locate the exact crossings with issues and an effort will be made to remedy the worst geometry issue crossings first.

**Recommended New Action Items, (cont.):**

12. Create a trespasser reporting webpage where the public and railroad employees can report trespasser activity.
13. Continue replacing the legacy accident prediction formula as part of the Section 130 project selection benefit-cost formula to include the, *A New Model for Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Accident Prediction and Severity* FRA document, published in October of 2020.

**Next Steps:**

- Please review the preceding list of Action Items.
- Please provide feedback regarding the preceding Action Items.
- Please provide ideas for additional Action Items for consideration for inclusion in the Safety Action Plan.
- Contact Kris Klop at the Iowa DOT for any questions or clarifications and to provide your input regarding the listed Action Items and/ or provide additional Action Items by January 7, 2022.
  - Kris Klop / 515-239-1108 / kristopher.klop@iowadot.us



THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION

