Railway Overpass and Underpass Program (ROUP) General Application Instructions

(Revised October 2026)

General Background & Instructions:

The RAILWAY OVERPASS AND UNDERPASS PROGRAM (ROUP) operates under Iowa Code 307.19 to "distribute in the form of grants to cities and counties to assist with the construction of highway overpasses and underpasses across railway tracks." ROUP allocates funds to cities and counties to assist with the study or construction of overpasses and underpasses across railway tracks.

The program will receive $5 million annually, with a maximum award of $75,000 and $2.5 million per study and construction project, respectively.

ROUP provides funding for two categories of projects: Feasibility/Planning Studies and Construction projects. Eligible activities include:

- **Feasibility/Planning Studies:** Studies evaluating existing railway overpasses or underpasses or assessing alternatives for a new grade separation at an existing at-grade crossing.
- **New Grade Separation Construction:** Construction of a new railway overpass or underpass at an existing at-grade railroad crossing.
- **Existing Grade Separation Replacement:** Replacement of an existing railway overpass or underpass.

Routine repair or maintenance of existing crossings and grade separations associated with entirely new roadways or railroad crossings are not eligible for funding.

Only cities and counties in Iowa are eligible to apply for ROUP Funds. Joint applications submitted by two or more agencies must specify a lead agency and list all participating jurisdictions. Applicants must demonstrate coordination with the applicable railroad(s).

ROUP is jointly administered by Iowa DOT Modal Transportation Bureau and Local Systems Bureau, which are responsible for Feasibility/Planning Studies and Construction Projects, respectively. Due to the joint administration, all program inquiries and applications shall be directed to the dedicated email DOT.ROUP@iowadot.us.

Timeline:

1. A Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) is anticipated to be published in November 2026 and annually thereafter.
2. Applications shall be received in the dedicated email by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 19.
3. Review and approval notifications are generally sent within six (6) months of the application due date.

4. Funding for selected projects is anticipated to become available in State FY 2028, subject to applicable program requirements and execution of funding agreements.

Application Requirements:

Total application shall include the completed Excel application and **no more than 5 pages in length for narrative and additional supporting documentation**. Do not include studies, endorsement letters, or testimonials with the application.

Incomplete applications will not be considered by the Iowa Transportation Commission for funding. All information submitted as part of the application, as well as any additional information requested by the Department, will be used to evaluate the application.

An application considered but not funded in one cycle must be updated and resubmitted by the applicant if it is to be considered in subsequent cycle(s).

Project Selection & Expectations

Applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of representatives from Iowa DOT's Modal Transportation Bureau and Local Systems Bureau. Applications will be evaluated and scored using established program criteria, including both narrative and data-driven components. Applicants may submit multiple applications per funding cycle. **However, no applicant will be awarded more than one award per fiscal year.**

Following evaluation, the review committee will select projects for recommendation to the Iowa Transportation Commission for consideration. Final awards are subject to Commission approval and available program funding.

Applicants and selected recipients are expected to:

- Meet all program eligibility requirements and demonstrate the ability to fund project costs not covered by ROUP.
- Execute a funding agreement and place selected feasibility/planning studies under contract within 18 months of agreement execution.
- Let selected construction projects within three (3) years of agreement execution.
- Let construction projects through the Iowa DOT in accordance with applicable requirements.

Submit complete applications electronically to:

DOT.ROUP@iowadot.us

Section 1: Project Information & Project Narrative

1-A: **Project Name** – Provide a descriptive name identifying the proposed project.

1-B: **Application Agency** – Identify the city, county, or other eligible public agency that is submitting the application and will administer the project.

1-C: **Contact Person & Title** – Identify the primary contact person responsible for coordinating the application and provide their official title.

1-D: **Phone & Email** – Provided the primary contact person's phone number and email address for correspondence regarding the application.

1-E: **TPMS ID (if applicable)** – Provide the TPMS ID if a project is already under development.

1-F: **Railroad Partner(s)** – Identify the railroad company that owns or operates on the tracks at the project location.

1-G: **FRA Crossing Number** – Provide the unique identification number assigned to the railroad crossing by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

1-H: **Railroad Milepost** – Provide the railroad milepost at the project location.

1-I: **Latitude/Longitude** – Provide the geographic coordinates of the existing railroad crossing or proposed project location in decimal degrees.

1-J: **Application Priority (if applicable)** – If multiple applications are submitted, identify the applicant's priority for this project relative to their other submissions.

1-K: **Minimum Required Elements** – Complete all applicable items in the minimum required elements checklist. Each item is required and missing or incomplete information may result in the application not being considered.

Public Road Crossing: Confirmation that the project involves an existing public roadway. Private crossings or crossings serving developmental purposes are not eligible and will not be considered.

Eligible Railroad Crossing: Confirm the project involves an existing railway track. New lines or sidings are not eligible and will not be considered.

Local Agency Sponsor: Identify the eligible local public agency sponsoring the project.

Resolution Attached: Attach a resolution from the LPA governing body demonstrating the sponsoring agency's support and authorization to submit the application. If a joint application is submitted, resolutions from all participating local governments shall be included in the application submitted by the lead agency.

Railroad Coordination Initiated: Submit proof that coordination with the affected railroad has begun or the railroad is committed to project success.

Environmental Constraints Identified: Identify known environmental constraints that may affect project development or construction, including a project schedule and briefly explaining any work completed prior to application submittal.

Cost Estimate Attached: Provide an estimated total project cost, including ROW needs, engineering fees, etc.

Sketch of Existing Horizontal/Vertical Alignments: Attach a sketch illustrating the existing roadway and railroad alignments and highlight deviations from current design standards.

Map of Detour Routing/Timing: Provide a map identifying the proposed detour route, additional travel distance, and estimated increase in travel time due to blocked crossing(s).

Map of Adjacent Crossing(s): Provide a map identifying nearby railroad crossings, including any previously closed or proposed for closure as part of this project. The map shall be to scale, utilize an aerial background, and show general proposed project limits.

1-L: **Project Narrative** – Provide a narrative describing the proposed improvement, existing conditions, transportation and financial needs, anticipated benefits, issues the project will address, and a project timeline. The narrative may utilize the space provided or additional pages, but in any case, the narrative shall not exceed two (2) pages. Hyperlinks embedded within the narrative will not be reviewed or considered.

Section 2: Project Readiness & Financial Need

2-A: **Complexity of Funding Commitments** – Identify all committed and anticipated funding sources contributing to the proposed project, excluding ROUP funding. Specify the number of local, state, federal formula, and federal discretionary funding sources. This information will be used to determine administrative complexity and coordination requirements associated with the proposed funding package.

2-B: **Financial Burden** – Provide the estimated total project cost and the applicant's local transportation funding revenues for the previous four fiscal years. This information will be used to determine the financial burden of the project relative to the applicant's average annual transportation funding available for capital improvements.

2-C: **Project Readiness Status** – Identify the status of each applicable project development activity, including required permits, approvals, and coordination

efforts. Indicate whether each activity is not applicable, not started, in process, or completed. Provide supporting documentation where available.

Section 3: Technical Merit

3-A: **Estimated Average Daily Traffic of the Roadway (vehicles/day)** – Provide the estimated average daily traffic volume for the roadway approaching the crossing. Use the most recent available traffic count data and indicate the source of information. Do not include growth projections in this item. Anticipated growth, if applicable, belongs in the project narrative.

3-B: **Posted Roadway Speed Limit (miles/hour)** – Identify the posted speed limit of the roadway approaching the crossing. If the crossing is located at a transition between two posted speed limits, use the higher speed limit.

3-C: **Estimated Average Daily Traffic of the Railway (trains/day)** – Provide the estimated average number of train movements passing through the crossing each day. Include through trains, switching movements, local service, and other train movements occupying the crossing. Use the most recent available railroad or FRA data. Do not include growth projections in this item. Anticipated growth, if applicable, belongs in the project narrative.

3-D: **Average Train Speed at Crossing (miles/hour)** – Provide the documented average train speed through the crossing. Use the most recent available railroad operating data, FRA data, or other reliable documentation.

Section 4: Project Benefits

4-A: **Bypass/Detour Length (Out of Distance Travel) (miles)** – Provide the additional travel distance required when the crossing is blocked or closed. Use the shortest reasonable detour route and identify the route on the required detour map in *Section 1: Project Information & Project Narrative*. Do not include Level B or C roads, alleyways, or routes containing posted bridges. See Page 2 of I.M. 1.100, Attachment B for additional information.

4-B: **Approximate Emergency Response Time Increase (minutes)** – Estimate the additional emergency response time resulting from the crossing being blocked or closed. Base the calculation on the additional detour distance and posted roadway speed limits along the detour route or provide other reliable documentation available.

4-C: **Pedestrian Accommodations** – Identify existing pedestrian accommodations and conditions at the crossing, including sidewalks or trails, nearby pedestrian destinations, crossing controls, multiple tracks, and designated quiet zones. Select all applicable conditions.

4-D: **Crash Severity in Last 10 Years** – Provide the number and severity of reported railroad crossing crashes occurring within the most recent 10-year period. Categorize crashes by property damage only, possible/minor injury, suspected serious injury, and fatal injury. Include only those crashes attributable to the crossings (IE, animal related crashes should not be included) Identify the source of the crash data.

4-E: **Sight Distance Deficiency (percent)** – Provide the existing and applicable design sight distances at the crossing. Calculate the percentage of available sight distance for each applicable condition. The most deficient condition will be used for scoring.

4-F: **Vertical Clearance Deficiency (percent)** – Identify existing vertical clearance conditions at the crossing. For at-grade crossings, indicate applicable roadway profile and vertical alignment deficiencies. For grade-separated crossings, provide existing and acceptable vertical clearances. The most deficient condition will be used for scoring.

4-G: **Average Time Crossing is Blocked (minutes/day)** – Provide the estimated average total time the crossing is blocked by train movements each day. Include all train movements that prevent roadway and pedestrian traffic from passing through the crossing. Identify the source of information.

4-H: **Frequency of Crossing Being Blocked** – Identify how frequently the crossing is blocked by train movements. Select the applicable frequency category based on documented occurrences and provide the source of information.

4-I: **Number of Adjacent Rail Crossings Closed as a Result of this Improvement** – Identify adjacent at-grade railroad crossings that could reasonably be closed, have previously been closed, or are proposed for closure as part of the improvement project. Previously completed closures will receive the same consideration as proposed closures. Identify crossings that could reasonably be closed but are proposed to remain open. Show these crossings on the adjacent crossing map required in Section 1.

Section 5: Application Certification for Public Agency

5-A: **Application Certification** – The application must be certified by an authorized representative of the applying city or county. Complete all required fields, including the agency name, signature, printed name, title, and date, as well as the attestation information. Applications submitted without the required certification statement will be considered incomplete and will not be eligible for funding consideration until the certification is provided.

The General Application Instructions (above) are for informational purposes only and do not need to be returned with your completed application.

Resources

Roadway & Structure Resource Links

- Iowa DOT Local Systems IMs
- Iowa DOT Traffic Data
- Iowa DOT Iowa Crash Analysis Tool
- Iowa DOT Bridge Condition Data
- Iowa DOT Design Manual
- Iowa DOT Road Network Portal (RAMS)
- Iowa DOT Non-Federal-aid Project Development Guide
- Iowa DOT Federal-aid Project Development Guide[1]

Railroad Resource Links

- FRA Inventory Data Sheet
- FRA Accident Reports
- FRA Office of Safety Analysis
- FRA Blocked Crossing Data

1: The Railroad Overpass and Underpass Program (ROUP) is funded with state funding. The Federal-aid Project Development Guide is included as an additional resource for applicants considering federal funding as part of their proposed project.

Frequently Asked Questions

Eligibility Questions

1. **Does the crossing for consideration have to be on the NHS?**
   No. Projects are not required to be located on the NHS or any other specific classification. However, the proposed project must be open to the public and meet all applicable ROUP eligibility requirements.

2. **Can a city and county submit a joint application?**
   Yes. Joint applications are allowed between eligible local governments. A lead agency must be identified, and all participating jurisdictions must be listed in the application.

3. **Are private railroad crossings eligible?**
   No. Project must involve an existing public roadway and eligible railroad crossing. Private crossings and crossings serving development purposes are not eligible for ROUP funding.

4. **Can a city or county submit multiple applications?**
   Yes. Applicants may submit multiple applications during a funding cycle. However, no applicant will receive more than one funding award per fiscal year.

5. **Is there a match requirement?**
   No. There is no established minimum local match percentage for ROUP funding. However, applicants are responsible for securing sufficient funding to cover the entire project costs exceeding the ROUP award amount. Applicants must identify all anticipated funding sources and demonstrate the financial ability to complete the proposed project.

Scoring Questions

1. **How is a project scored?**
   Applications are evaluated with consideration given to project readiness, technical merit, and project benefits. Points are assigned based on the information provided in the application, as well as any supporting documentation. Projects are ranked based on their overall rating in those categories and final awards are subject to Iowa Transportation Commission approval and available program funding.

2. **How do I calculate the bypass/detour length?**
   The bypass/detour length is the out-of-distance travel required when the existing railroad crossing is blocked or unavailable. Calculate the difference between the shortest reasonable alternate route and the normal route through the crossing, using publicly accessible roadways or sidewalks. Exclude Level B and Level C roads and roads containing posted bridges. Unpaved roads shall be included when they provide the shortest eligible route. See Iowa DOT Local Systems I.M. 1.100, Attachment B for additional detail.

3. **Are all train movements counted in frequency and average time a crossing is blocked?**
   Yes. Include all train movements that prevent roadway or pedestrian traffic from passing through the crossing, including moving, stopping, and switching trains. Applicants should document the frequency and duration of blocked crossing events and identify the source of information used.

4. **Am I docked points if I have already closed all adjacent crossings?**
   No. Previously completed closures receive consideration, as do proposed closures. Applicants should identify adjacent crossings that have been closed, are proposed for closure, or could reasonably be closed as part of the project. Supporting documentation should identify the locations and status of these crossings.

5. **What types of crashes should be included in the 10-year crash history?**
   Only crashes directly associated with the railroad crossing or grade separation should be included. Examples include train-vehicle collisions, train-pedestrian collisions, and vehicle strikes involving railroad-related structures or infrastructure. Unrelated crashes, such as animal collisions or roadway departures not attributable to the crossing or struct should be excluded.

6. **Are railroad crossings required to have a minimum distance between them to be considered for closure?**
   No specific distance has been established. Applicants need to identify adjacent at-grade railroad crossings that have been closed, are proposed for closure, or could reasonably be closed in conjunction with the proposed improvement. The application should explain the relationship between the adjacent crossings and the anticipated impacts of closure.

Administrative Questions

1. **When are applications due?**
   Application deadlines are established in the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). Complete applications must be received by the specified deadline to be considered in the current funding cycle.

2. **Can I revise my application after submitting it?**
   Yes, but only prior to the deadline and not after the submittal deadline. Applications submitted at least two months before the application deadline will generally have an opportunity for resubmittal within the same funding cycle, if necessary.

3. **What happens if my project is not selected?**
   Applications considered but not selected for funding must be updated and resubmitted for consideration in subsequent funding cycles. Applicants are encouraged to address identified deficiencies and provide updated project information when resubmitting.

4. **Can supporting documentation be included?**
   Yes. It is up to the applicant to identify importance of supporting documentation in addition to the application. See Section 1: Project Information & Project Narrative section above.

5. **When must an awarded construction project be completed?**
   Selected construction projects must be let within three years of executing the funding agreement. Construction projects must be let through the Iowa DOT in accordance with applicable program requirements.