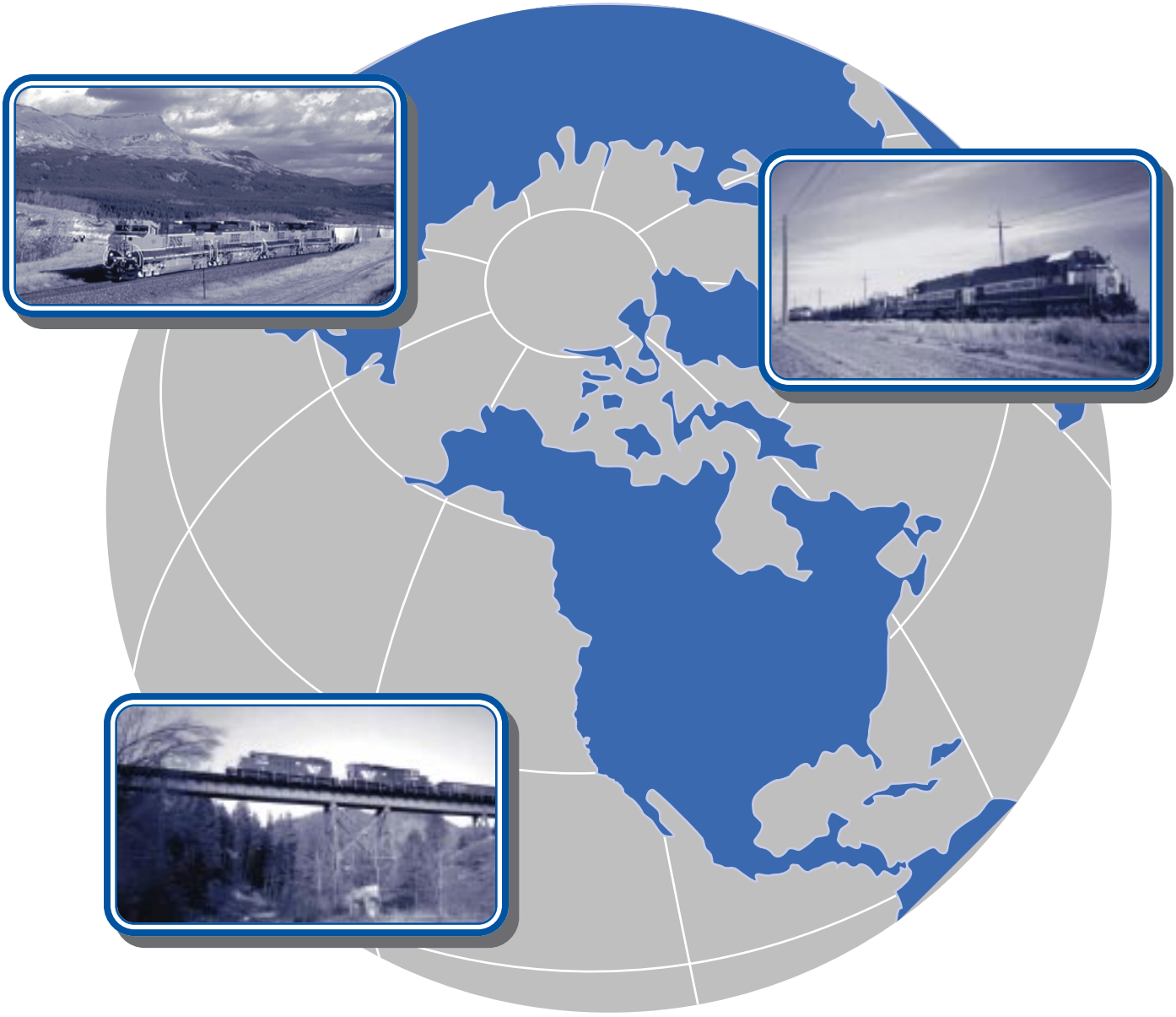
TRANSPORTATION FUTURES

RAIL EFFICIENCY AND COMMUNITY LIVABILITY



A Report to the Western Governors' Association
Task Force on Transportation Futures
by
The Working Group on Railroad Efficiency & Community Livability
August 1998

The Western Governors' Association
Transportation Futures Task Force
Working Group on Rail Efficiency and Community Livability

In 1995, the Western Governors' Association appointed a Transportation Futures Task Force to identify opportunities to increase capacity, efficiency and safety of the transportation system in the West. In 1996, this Transportation Futures Task Force created a Working Group on Rail Efficiency and Community Livability to investigate ways to achieve the benefits of increasing rail freight volumes while minimizing negative impacts from that traffic on quality of life in communities along major rail corridors.The working group is composed of:

Co-Chairmen

Paul E. Nowicki
Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation

Carl B. Williams
Business, Housing & Transportation Agency
State of California

Working Group Members

Allan Abbott
Nebraska Department of Roads

Tom Fronapfel
Nevada Department of Transportation

Bob Gallamore
Union Pacific Railroad

Gene Griffin
Great Plains Transportation Institute

Brian Hatch
Office of the Mayor, Salt Lake City

Kevin Heanue
Federal Highway Administration

Claudia Howells
Oregon Department of Transportation

David Kalberer
Port of Seattle

Eric Kutch
Federal Railway Administration

Rob Martin
Federal Railroad Administration

Joe Mickes
Missouri Department of Transportation

Philip Odom
Office of the Mayor, Hastings, NE

David Parkinson
Arizona & California, California Northern RR

Steven Roop
Texas Transportation Institute

Fred Simpson
Montana Rail Link

Ernie von Ibsch
California Public Utilities Commission

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August 1998

From heartland to harbor and from production line to consumer, railroads carry the goods that support a booming economy in the West which accounts for 10% of global production and 31% of US GDP. However, the efficiencies and environmental benefits of increasing rail traffic have come with a price. In particular, communities on high density rail corridors are increasingly frustrated by adverse impacts from railroads and their inability to mitigate these impacts.

It's time to come to grips with these issues and find ways to accommodate increasing rail traffic without imposing even greater burdens on the communities along high density rail routes. This is what the Western Governors recognized in 1996, when they asked the Transportation Futures Task Force to convene a Working Group of railroads, shippers, federal, state and community transportation officials to investigate and make recommendations regarding these issues.

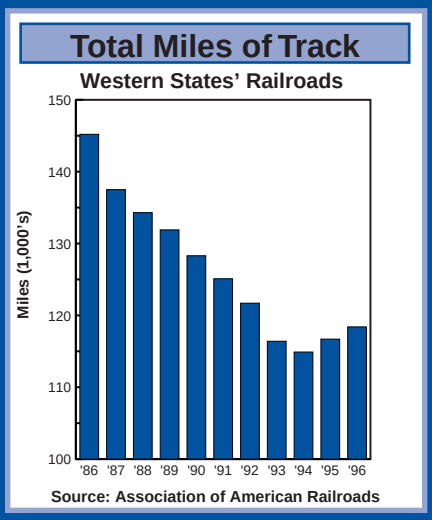
Specifically, the Working Group was charged with developing approaches to balance improved rail operating efficiencies in the West with concerns for community livability. This report is based on input from 126 communities, 16 WGA member states and major, regional and shortline railroads. Its recommendations provide opportunities for the Governors and rail officials to make practical changes that will improve the quality of life in the hundreds of communities across the West where livability is adversely impacted by rail traffic.

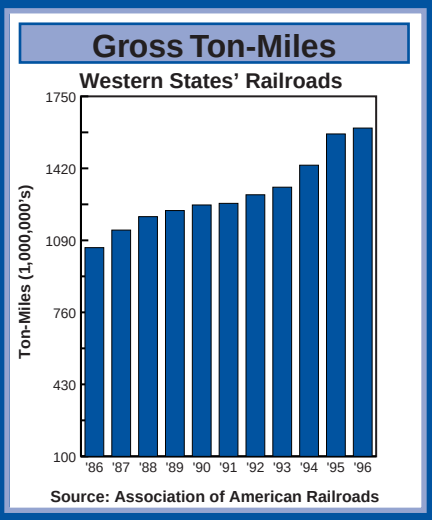
As co-chairs, we want to thank the federal, state and private rail officials who supported our efforts. We appreciate the participation of the members of our Working Group and extend a heartfelt "thank you" to the communities across the West who responded to our requests for information with such detail and thoughtfulness.

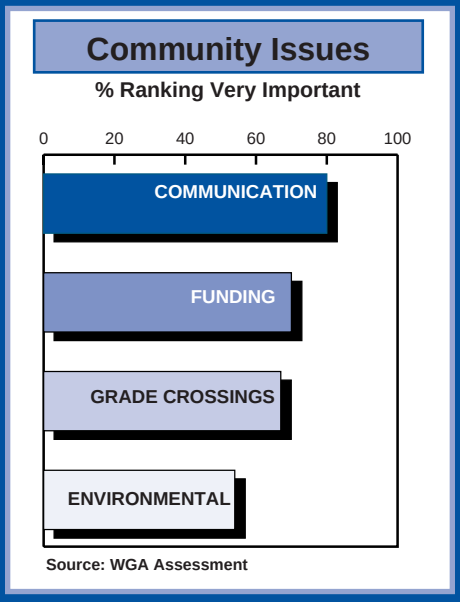
We encourage implementation of the recommendations in this report, and we pledge our continuing assistance to the WGA and the Transportation Futures Task Force in their efforts to improve transportation in the West.

Paul E. Nowicki
Assistant Vice President
Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation
Working Group Co-Chair

Carl B. Williams
Deputy Secretary
Business, Housing and Transportation Agency, State of California
Working Group Co-Chair







INTRODUCTION

Led by growing demand for Powder River Basin coal, increasing international trade and booming agriculture production, rail traffic is increasing significantly across the West. However, the economic and environmental benefits from increasing rail volumes have been offset by impacts on community livability. On one rail line in Wyoming, for example, the number of trains has increased over the last decade from three a week to sixty a day, placing a profound burden on communities all along the route.

While such a large increase in traffic is an exception, there are increasing volumes of traffic on every major high density rail line in the West. During the last decade, total railroad track mileage in the western states decreased 19% from 145,200 miles to 118,400 miles. At the same time, the amount of freight carried increased 52% from 1,057 billion gross-ton-miles to 1,605 billion gross-ton-miles, virtually doubling train traffic per track mile. With our growing economy and the continued consolidation of routes following the western railroads' recent mergers, it is likely these trends will continue.

The Western Governors' Association created the Working Group on Railroad Efficiency and Community Livability to assess the impact of growing rail traffic on community livability. This group canvassed 126 communities on western rail lines, state and local officials involved in rail planning and regulation, and railroad personnel from the major, regional and short line railroads.

The major issues they identified were:

- Poor communication between the railroads and community officials;
- Inadequate funding for projects to improve community safety and livability;
- Obstruction and safety at grade crossings;
- Adverse environmental impacts (noise, property maintenance, air quality) caused by railroads in the communities.

This report examines each of these four areas and identifies the opportunities and challenges communities face in each area. We also report on innovative approaches that have been employed by communities and railroads in solving these problems, and describe four demonstration projects in which our Working Group participated.

Finally, the report concludes with important recommendations to the Governors of the western states for improving both rail efficiency and community livability along these high density rail corridors.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

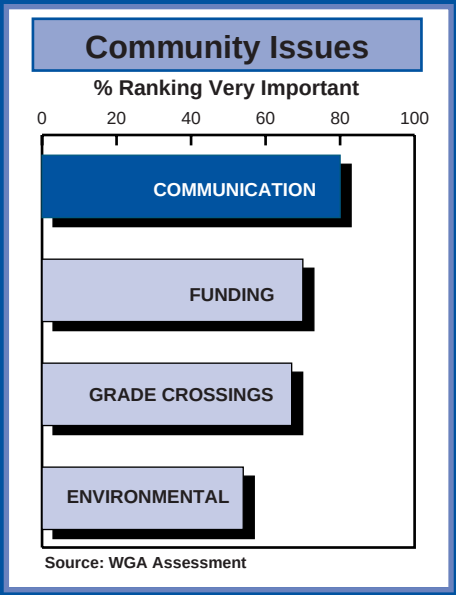
The Working Group adopted four guiding principles for their project:

Improvement in rail freight efficiencies and increased rail volumes are essential for growth of the West's economy and enhancement of its global competitiveness;

Western railroads are currently expanding capacity to meet the needs of western shippers and consumers;

Growing freight traffic on high density rail corridors will increasingly impose negative impacts on communities along these corridors if no action is taken;

Communities along rail corridors need regional and state leadership and support to make the most efficient use of the limited resources available to mitigate railroad impacts on livability.



"Railroads are extremely unresponsive and do not communicate about their plans. Their personnel are nearly impossible to contact."

Layton, Utah

"State DOT should lead programs and provide interface/priority of statewide problems."

Denver, Colorado

"Railroads should have a more visible role working with community residents and leaders to define problems and seek solutions. Railroads are often viewed as large, bureaucratic organizations that are unapproachable."

Sandpoint, Idaho

1
COMMUNICATION

Poor communication with the railroads is the number one problem identified by the 126 communities contacted by the Working Group. This finding was consistent regardless of community size — both small towns and big cities expressed a high degree of frustration concerning their communications with railroads. The absence of effective communication is the biggest factor underlying the growing public hostility toward the railroads.

This has not always been the case. In years past, before centralized rail operations were common, communities addressed their concerns to local railroad employees. But today, railroad personnel are simply not present in most communities and the few who remain are often not empowered to respond to the community's concerns.

The communities' communication needs with the railroads have also changed. Today, more than in the past, there is a need to develop long term transportation and community land use plans that require an understanding of the railroads' plans. Community planning in the absence of such knowledge often leads to misunderstandings, missed opportunities, and sometimes wasteful investments.

Establishing strong, ongoing communication links between the railroads and the communities also opens up opportunities for public-private efforts to explore solutions to existing or anticipated problems in a community. Good communication can prevent frustration and hostility from escalating to confrontational situations that are costly to the communities and that adversely affect the efficiency of the rail carriers.

The challenges regarding communication are to:

- Establish a central forum within each state for community officials and railroad representatives to share information for planning coordination;
- Involve local railroad personnel more in community affairs without compromising their railroad operational responsibilities;
- Enhance communication links through better use of personnel in the state departments of transportation rail sections.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS

Communication Between City and Railroad Results in Savings

Portland, Oregon is building a drainage system to collect sewage and stormwater to prevent it from entering the Columbia Slough during rainstorms. This "Big Pipe" will bring overflows to the Columbia Boulevard Wastewater Treatment Facility. As a result of good communication, cooperation and planning with Union Pacific Railroad, the city will utilize part of UP's right-of-way for this project. UP will receive $5.5 million to offset the cost of relocating tracks, while the city will save more than this in construction and maintenance costs. The railroad will benefit from a grade crossing closure associated with this project which will allow improved operating efficiency at a nearby rail yard. The neighborhood will benefit several ways, including less disruption during construction, preservation of trees and park land, and improvements at another grade crossing that will be paid for with environmental service funds.

Software to Link "First Responders" to HAZMAT Carriers

Operation Respond, a not-for-profit organization in Washington, DC, has developed a software program designed to help emergency response teams who are first on the scene at a rail accident involving hazardous material. This system, known as the Operation Respond Emergency Information System (OREIS™), provides a quick, accurate link to mainframe computers of the major railroads and trucking companies that ship hazardous material. Within minutes of an accident, the community's emergency response team can identify any hazardous material involved and get information on recommended response techniques. Both UP Railroad and BNSF Railway are supporting OREIS™ .

State DOT Provides a Communication Forum for Communities and Railroads

In 1996, the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments hosted a workshop to educate local officials about railroad operations and safety issues. Presentations were made by the State Operation Lifesaver Coordinator, a railroad terminal superintendent, the general manager of a short line railroad and state government rail staff. Attendees included local community leaders, emergency responders, planning and public works personnel and the local press. This workshop broadened knowledge about railroads and their importance to the economy, while establishing a foundation for ongoing communication links between the railroads and the communities.

BNSF's "Front Range" Corridor in Colorado

The 190 mile "Front Range" rail corridor from Fort Collins to Pueblo, Colorado includes twenty communities ranging in population from less than 1,000 to over 500,000. Freight traffic on this corridor exceeds fifty trains a day. To test an approach to improving communication, BNSF assigned a staff member to be a liaison between these communities and the railroad.

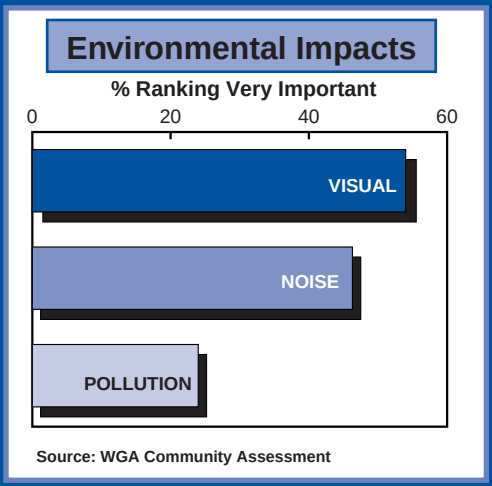
Officials in each community were contacted and meetings were held with them to explore ways to improve communication. The communities, it was learned, needed contacts with local railroad operating officials and also with corporate managers to address issues concerning railroad real estate, long range transportation planning and corporate policies.

Two months after the initial meetings and subsequent distribution of a list of contacts at the railroad, the communities were interviewed to assess the effectiveness of this approach. They gave it high marks and were pleased with the railroad's initiative.

As a result of this successful project, BNSF is now taking a more proactive approach to communication with communities. Additional community affairs employees are being hired to implement this approach system-wide.

For more information:

Bill Joplin, Government Affairs
Burlington Northern Santa Fe
303-480-7406



"One of the most frequently stated community concerns regarding rail operations relates to train whistle noise. Train whistles are located on top of the train and are blown long in advance of the crossings due to the speed of the train. Warning devices need to be developed that are directed more to the vehicular and pedestrian/bicycle traffic."

Irvine, California

2
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The primary environmental concerns related to railroads reported by the communities we surveyed were visual and noise impacts. Visual impacts included poor maintenance of railroad buildings and inadequate weed control on railroad rights-of-way. Noise impacts were primarily from locomotive horns and are directly related to train traffic volume, so they are likely to become more severe as train frequencies increase.

Addressing the impact of horn noise is a double edged sword. Reducing locomotive horn blowing will have a positive affect on community livability but a negative impact on safety. This issue is complicated by unclear regulatory jurisdictions concerning the use of horns at crossings between the railroads, state regulatory agencies and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Community governments that must respond to angry constituents impacted by horn noise are easily frustrated by this complex scenario.

Railroads contribute to improved air quality because they move more freight with less fuel and fewer emissions than motor carriers. However, there are situations where train operations adversely affect the environment with secondary air pollution, such as the increased emissions produced by automobiles waiting in queues at grade crossings. Some communities have justified using Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funds for grade crossing improvement projects. The challenges for managing the environmental impacts will be to:

- Encourage communities and railroads to work together to improve appearance of railroad property in sensitive locations;
- Reduce noise from locomotive horns while maintaining safety at grade crossings;
- Clarify and simplify regulations regarding the blowing of locomotive horns at grade crossings;
- Reduce at-grade crossing congestion through grade separations, track relocation and coordinated traffic management.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Shortline & Community Work Together to Reduce Noise

Complaints about noise and pollution caused by locomotives idling at the Willamette & Pacific Railroad yard in Albany, Oregon were solved through cooperative efforts of the railroad and the community. Once a solution to the problem was identified (retro-fitting 16 turbo-charged locomotives with a device that drops the idling speed from 300 RPM to a much quieter 225 RPM, while also saving fuel), the railroad and community shared the cost of implementation. The city loaned the railroad $25,600 from their Economic Development Fund and the railroad covered the remainder of the cost. The conversion eliminated complaints and concerns from residents living near the yard.

Wayside Horns Dramatically Reduce Noise

In 1995, Union Pacific Railroad and the City of Gering, Nebraska cooperated in the development and installation of "wayside horns" at the city's three grade crossings. This allowed the railroad to eliminate the use of locomotive horns through the community, resulting in a reduction of the objectionable noise area from 120 acres to 3 acres for each crossing. The community enthusiastically supported these devices and has been extremely pleased with the subsequent reduction in noise from the 60 freight trains that pass through town daily. A USDOT study indicated that using wayside horns instead of locomotive horns has not compromised safety at these crossings.

Eliminating At-Grade Crossings Reduces Vehicular Pollution

Brownsville, Texas, is relocating railroad tracks from their central city area. The project will eliminate 79 of the 87 existing at-grade rail crossings and dramatically reduce delays and frustrations for motorists. The Environmental Impact Statement for the project indicates that "a 35 to 40 percent reduction in area-wide train emissions would be realized...," and that the project " would provide a 97 percent reduction in daily emissions from queued vehicles at railroad crossings." In addition, the community will no longer be so severely impacted by locomotive horn blowing. Funding for this $43 million project was 71% federal, 19% state, 7% private (railroads), and 3% local (City of Brownsville, Cameron County and Brownsville Navigation District).

Wayside Horn — Flagstaff, Arizona

Seventy-five freight trains a day go through the heart of Flagstaff's central business district and noise from locomotive horns at the five downtown crossings is a significant problem around the clock. To reduce the community's high levels of annoyance with locomotive horns, a demonstration project was undertaken to install "wayside horns" in Flagstaff. Wayside horns are locomotive-like horns, mounted at grade crossings, and activated by approaching trains. The concept behind these horns is to project the warning sound at oncoming vehicles rather than having it spread across entire neighborhoods, as with a conventional locomotive horn.

Wayside horn in Gering, NE

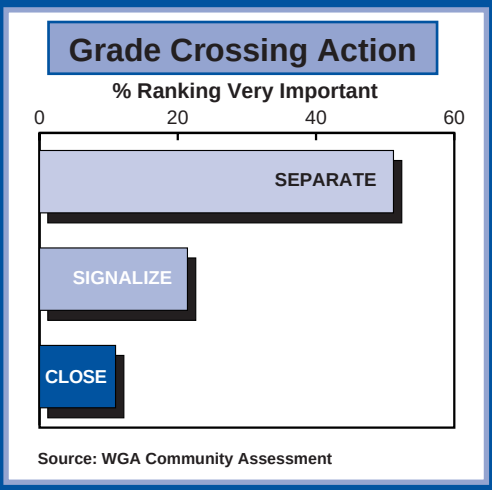
As the city and BNSF explored the feasibility of this, procedural and financial barriers became apparent that prevented the project from being completed. The major barrier was related to the lack of a ruling from the Federal Railway Administration (FRA) regarding the suitability of this device as a substitute for locomotive horns. FRA has studied wayside horns in Gering, Nebraska and other sites but has not made a decision on their effectiveness. As a result, both BNSF and Flagstaff were reluctant to install the horns.

For more information:

Merrill J. Anderson
Automated Horn Systems, Inc.
Phone: 402-592-9377

Major Western Rail Lines

High Density Rail Routes In The West



"Most complaints are related to trains blocking crossings for excessive time periods."

Seattle, Washington

"Lack of separated grade crossings is the single largest contributor to traffic congestion and safety."

Flagstaff, Arizona

"...train traffic through our downtown area will triple with the UP/SP merger. This will effectively block the main downtown streets much more often and will affect safety vehicles' ability to respond."

Winnemucca, Nevada

"...the city is criss-crossed by two major rail lines that have physically fragmented the community."

Grand Island, Nebraska

3
GRADE CROSSINGS

Problems associated with grade crossings are another source of frustration and concern reported by communities. Traffic delays and safety were the major problems; secondary concerns include blocked routes for emergency vehicles and poor quality of crossing surfaces.

Over one-half of the communities that responded to our survey felt construction of grade separated crossings was the best way to deal with crossing problems. Fewer than one-quarter felt signalizing more crossings was important, and only one-tenth considered consolidation (closing) of grade crossings to be a good solution.

Unfortunately, there are no easy or cheap solutions to grade crossing problems. Constructing a typical grade crossing separation costs several million dollars and takes years to plan, fund and construct.

While communities of all sizes face formidable challenges to fund these projects, smaller communities are particularly impacted. Not only do they have limited abilities to raise funds, but their needs are more pressing as they often have only one school, one hospital and one emergency response team that must serve citizens on both sides of the railroad tracks.

The challenges of grade crossing issues are to:

- Coordinate the prioritization of grade crossing separation projects along the busiest corridors so that scarce resources can be optimally utilized;
- Ensure all communities on high-density rail lines have equitable opportunities to develop grade separation projects;
- Encourage communities to continue efforts to consolidate grade crossings;
- Consolidate parallel rail lines, where appropriate, as a means of improving operating efficiency and reducing grade separation costs;
- Seek innovative funding approaches, including public-private, to accelerate grade crossing solutions.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO BETTER GRADE CROSSINGS

A Low Cost Overpass

In 1994, a BNSF engineer recognized that a pre-designed, "off the shelf," standard bridge, normally used for spanning waterways, could be easily modified for a highway/rail grade separation project in Stockton, California. Joint planning with the city, county and state ensured that all clearances and specifications would meet California standards for public roads. The cost of the project is expected to be less than $1 million, well below normal costs for such projects. Where crossing geometries are compatible, this approach can result in significant savings over the typical cost of a custom designed grade separation structure. This project should be completed in 1999.

Increasing Visibility of Warning Signs at Crossings

The Idaho Transportation Department, in cooperation with Idaho Operation Lifesaver, developed the "IdaShield," a highly reflectorized sign to improve visibility of conventional "crossbucks" at grade crossings where active warning devices were not justified. Follow-up studies indicated that the Ida-Shields are effective in increasing motorists' safety at railroad crossings. The state used prison labor to construct the shields, and they are being installed, along with new reflectorized crossbucks, by the railroads at no charge to the state.

Corridor Approach to Prioritizing Projects

The Freight Action Strategy (FAST) Corridor Project is a joint undertaking of the cities, ports, railroads and regional and state agencies along the Seattle-Tacoma, Washington corridor. FAST reviewed several proposals to reduce impacts from increasing freight rail traffic on communities along the corridor and to improve the efficiency of rail operations. Using a software program known as TransDec, recently developed by the Rail Research Center at the Texas Transportation Institute at Texas A&M University, regional agencies were able to conduct a multicriteria analysis of a range of factors, including mobility, safety and emergency responsiveness. This allowed the relative merits of various projects to be compared even though all the criteria were not conveniently rendered into monetary terms. This software promises to be an effective tool for helping officials make better trade-offs when selecting projects for a corridor.

Alameda Corridor East

The Alameda Rail Corridor, between the Ports of Long Beach/Los Angeles and downtown Los Angeles, will greatly enhance the movement of cargo and allow dramatic growth in rail freight volumes. In fact, rail traffic is expected to increase from 50 trains daily now to over 130 trains a day in 2020.

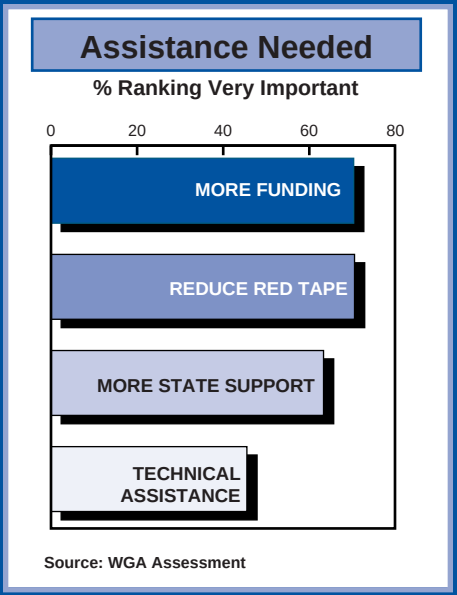
But, what happens to these trains when they get to downtown Los Angeles? They must then traverse the densely populated Los Angeles Basin to Colton. Only then do these trains begin to operate in areas free of suburban development. Communities along rail lines east of downtown LA are concerned about the impact of increasing rail traffic.

To address the concerns of the communities and to coordinate their efforts to reduce adverse impacts from growing rail traffic, a long term forum was created by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) with leadership from the state. Largely as a result of this effort, the Redondo Junction - Colton rail route has been declared a "Corridor of National Significance" in TEA 21.

This project will take years to unfold, but chances for an optimal outcome have been enhanced by the coordinating and planning efforts of SCAG. The lessons learned here can be applied to other high density rail corridors where multiple communities are involved.

For more information:

Kenneth Basonko
California Business,
Transportation & Housing Agency
916-327-2892



"We are attempting to find funding for one grade separated railroad crossing. At present, our community is virtually cut in half by the railroad."

Pendleton, Oregon

"Railroads need to accept responsibility for impacting communities and become involved in livability issues. Railroads are part of the problem, they should provide resources, including financial, towards the solution."

Indio, California

"Today, railroads are investing record amounts to increase capacity. If the railroads don't expand, more freight will move in trucks, adding to wear and tear of the highways, degrading motorist safety, and causing increasing congestion and pollution. How can the railroads also be expected to pay for community livability projects?"

Ed Hamberger, President
Association of American Railroads

4
FUNDING

Communities across the West rank inadequate funding and excessive red tape as the major obstacles to solving livability problems caused by rail operations. That is not surprising since the amount of money spent on such problems is marginal, at best. The only dedicated funding source is limited to grade crossing projects — Section 130, the Grade Crossing Improvement Program, which dates back to the Federal Highway Safety Act of 1973.

In 1997, approximately $160 million was apportioned to the states for grade crossing projects under Section 130. This is a mere pittance relative to the magnitude of the problem, and to make matters worse, not all of this is being spent for grade crossing projects. At present, over $227 million of Section 130 funds remain unspent by the states nationally, and an additional $230 million has been transferred to highway projects not related to rail safety.

One place for the states to start solving their rail problems is to ensure that these funds are utilized for grade crossing improvements. This will require more involvement in planning with communities, prioritization of grade crossing projects, and a commitment to use all Section 130 funds as intended.

Additional funding opportunities are available through the increased flexibility of TEA 21 programs. Under certain conditions, nearly all of TEA 21's major transportation program categories may be utilized for rail and rail-related projects. Additionally, funds from more than one TEA 21 source may be blended together where there are multiple benefits, such as improved intermodal connectivity and reductions in vehicular pollution.

The states also have key roles in coordinating community efforts to effectively utilize scarce financial resources. Smaller communities benefit by having a centralized program at the regional or state level to assist them in planning and financing appropriate projects.

The challenges of funding are to:

- Assist communities to access all of the funds that are currently available for grade crossing projects;
- Allocate additional funds to mitigate the increasing impacts endured by communities on high-density rail lines;
- Identify projects where there are both public and private benefits and elicit proportionate private funding for them.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO FUNDING SOLUTIONS

Consolidating Rail Planning at the State Level

In 1997, the Nebraska Legislature passed legislation requiring that all actions related to highway-rail grade crossings be consolidated under one agency. This unification of regulation, planning, funding and construction is expected to provide consistent prioritization criteria for grade crossing improvements and optimal use of Section 130 and other funds. A second important result will be minimization of red tape for communities seeking assistance in making grade crossing or other livability improvements.

Flexible Funding Supports Port/Rail Project

The new Intermodal Expansion Rail Bridge in Portland, Oregon which completes a link between the North and South Rivergate, effectively improves shipping efficiencies, decreases highway traffic and reduces vehicle emissions. Because of the positive environmental impacts, part of the financing for the project was obtained from Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funds. Of the $14 million required, $2.1 million came from ISTEA, $0.9 million from CMAQ, and the rest was provided by the Port of Portland. BNSF will repay the Port through user fees.

Public/Private Funding Improve Rail and Highway Traffic Efficiency

The City of Fort Collins, Colorado, the FRA, the FHWA, the Colorado Department of Transportation (DOT) and UP and BNSF railroads are cooperating on a project to consolidate tracks in downtown Fort Collins. Ultimately, fourteen grade crossings will be eliminated to enhance traffic flow and safety. Elimination of redundant tracks will also improve operating efficiencies for both railroads. Funding is being provided by the City ($1,100,000), the state DOT ($750,000), BNSF ($502,000), UP ($410,000) and the Federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) ($850,000). Cooperative planning efforts helped identify benefits for the railroads which justified their financial participation.

Salt Lake City Gateway

Salt Lake City has coordinated a rail relocation project in conjunction with the five year reconstruction of I-15, the major interstate highway through the city. This will result in a net $10 million savings in highway construction costs and open 650 acres for re-development in the central business district. Sixty-six grade crossings will be eliminated.

Recognizing the potential advantages of public/private cooperation in this project, city officials aggressively sought ways to involve the private sector to their mutual benefit. Working with the Union Pacific Railroad and Amtrak, new track alignments were established for the down-town rail network that will significantly increase the efficiency of rail operations. Union Pacific will also benefit from appreciation in the value of 40 acres of real estate they will now be able to sell or develop as a result of the new rail alignment.

Since this rail relocation actually reduced the cost of the I-15 project, no supplemental federal funding was required. The impacts on shippers from track relocation are being mitigated with state and city assistance. Union Pacific is considering financial participation in a portion of the project commensurate with the benefits they will achieve.

For more information

Brian Hatch, Deputy Mayor
Salt Lake City
801-535-7200

Recommendations for Action

Based on our research and experience, the Working Group on Rail Efficiency and Community Livability of the Western Governors' Association Transportation Futures Task Force makes the following recommendations:

1. Communication

- Encourage each state rail agency to convene annual meetings between the railroads, states, local and regional transportation planners to improve communications.
- Challenge the rail industry, working with state and local officials, to establish forums to facilitate joint planning. Addressing common concerns and resolving conflicts early will result in expeditious and lower cost solutions to problems.
- Encourage better communication and joint training between railroads and state and local emergency response teams. This will foster better teamwork between groups responsible for safety, hazardous material incidents and accidents.

Action Item: *The governors should sponsor annual forums with their state's Class I, regional and shortline railroads, and state rail planners/regulators, to discuss current operations and future plans. In addition, states should support town hall meetings two or three times a year at various locations to allow communities to voice their concerns about rail issues and to hear from the railroads. State rail agencies should expand their role as liaisons between the railroads and local governments and planning organizations.*

2. Environmental

- Charge the state departments of transportation to develop innovative landscape and structural barriers for noise and visual mitigation and trespasser prevention along urban railroad rights-of-way. Standards should be provided to communities to ensure that efforts to mitigate one negative impact would not worsen another, such as a sound abatement wall decreasing line-of-sight visibility at a grade crossing.
- Explore ways to develop cooperative right-of-way clean-up and beautification efforts between the railroads and state and local agencies.
- Provide state transportation departments with adequate resources so they can take the lead in ensuring up to date computer modeling tools, such as GradeDEC, v.2 (Federal Railway Administration software) or TransDec (Texas Transportation Institute software) are utilized by community planners.

Action Item: *The governors should communicate individually to their state rail regulatory agencies and jointly to the Federal Railway Administration (FRA) the need for expeditious testing and rulings on innovative grade crossing safety devices. As an example, additional testing should be undertaken to determine the wayside horn's suitability as a substitute for locomotive horns within 18 months.*

3. Grade Crossings

- Encourage WGA states to signalize or separate all grade crossings on the National Highway System by the year 2005.
- Initiate efforts to centralize the state agencies dealing with rail issues into one department to coordinate intrastate and multi-state corridor planning. This will fit better with the railroads' and the federal government's corridor approach to planning and provide more efficient prioritization of projects competing for scarce resources.
- Urge the state departments of transportation rail sections to target technical planning and funding information for grade crossing projects to rural communities on high density rail lines who have limited resources.

Action Item: *The governors should sponsor a competition to identify lower cost grade crossing warning devices and separation structures. Promising ideas generated by this competition can form a menu of alternatives from which states and communities can select the most appropriate solutions to their grade crossing problems.*

4. Funding

- Emphasize to state planners the importance of utilizing all of the Section 130 funds for grade crossing projects. In addition, support limits on options to divert these funds away from grade crossing projects.
- Encourage state rail and highway planners to exploit the flexibility of the new transportation funding legislation in acquiring funds for projects on high density rail lines.
- Instruct the state departments of transportation to facilitate communities' search for private funds. This should include providing benefit analysis for projects and compiling and distributing information from other communities who have successfully recaptured costs from private beneficiaries of grade crossing projects.

Action Item: *Communities, frustrated by a lack of funding, are increasingly suggesting that railroads assume more of the costs for mitigation projects. This could have a profoundly detrimental effect on the cost efficiency of our transportation system. The governors should request and fund an independent study by a blue ribbon panel of the Transportation Research Board to quantify the impacts of such action. The results could provide an unbiased opinion on the appropriate degree of participation by the railroads in such projects.*

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Participating Communities

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WESTERN
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ASSOCIATION

HEADQUARTERS

600 17 Street • Suite 1705 South Tower • Denver, Colorado 80202-5452

Telephone 303.623.9378 • Facsimile 303.534.7309

www.westgov.org