



# Highway/Rail Grade Crossing Consolidation and Closure Procedures

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## Highway/Rail Grade Crossing Consolidation and Closure Procedures

A significant amount of research and review is performed by DOTD's Highway/Rail Safety Unit to improve grade crossing safety in Louisiana and to identify reasonable candidates for consolidation or closure. Grade crossing candidates for consolidation or closure typically are identified as a result of corridor studies. Often, they are considered 'crossings of convenience' because there are one or more other routes to provide alternate access. Candidates for consolidation or closure may also be identified as the result of one or more collisions at the crossing. In other cases, the crossing may have physical features which make it a good candidate for closure. Sometimes a request for closure is made by the railroad company, the LADOTD District, or local authorities after studying possible safety improvements of the crossing and nearby crossings or the crossing may be identified as the result of a railroad and/or highway construction project.

The candidate crossings are thoroughly reviewed before DOTD initiates the following formal process, which begins with a diagnostic review.

### Diagnostic Review

Prior to any consolidation or closure under the law, (RS 48:390), a diagnostic review (DR), per 49 CFR 222, of the location(s) must be conducted with a team of knowledgeable personnel. Discussions between DOTD and Local Officials are to be held for each DR to determine who needs to participate on the team.

The following groups shall be invited to participate on the DR team, as applicable:

- DOTD personnel from the DOTD Rail Safety Unit and the District Office (e.g. District Railroad Coordinator, District Traffic Operations Engineer, and the Area Engineer)
- Local Officials - DOTD Rail Safety Unit to work with lead local official to determine which local officials should be invited. (e.g. city/parish leader, council member, public works personnel, law enforcement, emergency responders, school officials, Chamber of Commerce, etc.) Lead local official will send invitations to other local officials, as needed.
- Railroad Company Officials (e.g. engineering, operations and signal personnel)
- Others (e.g. FHWA, FRA, etc.)

The DOTD Rail Safety Unit will document all telephone calls and other communications concerning the DR and will email meeting invitations, at least one week prior to the actual review, unless other documented arrangements are made. Documentation, including copies of email invitations or other means of invitation, shall be inserted into the DOTD Rail Safety Unit file with the DR.

The DOTD Rail Safety Unit will be responsible for providing the DR information to the participants and for preparing and distributing the completed forms and comment sheets from the DR meeting. The Rail Safety Unit is also responsible for preparing all documents for the DOTD Chief Engineer's decision whether or not to move forward with the consolidation/closure proceedings.

Note: Any DR older than 3 years will be re-done.

**Figure 1: Items to be used in Decision Process**

**The following items are to be considered in DOTD's 48:390 decision process:**

- 1 **Estimated annual average daily traffic (AADT)** \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 **Average number of trains per day (as provided by the Railroad Company)**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Through trains: \_\_\_\_\_ Switching moves, if applicable
- 3 **Train speeds (as provided by the Railroad Company)** \_\_\_\_\_ mph
- 4 **Availability of alternate routes and distance to such routes**  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 **Crash/incident history at the crossing** \_\_\_\_\_ # last five years of FRA data  
 Any special collision issues on note \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 **Existing warning devices** \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 **Sight distance and visibility** \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 **Angle of intersection** \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 **Number of school buses using crossing per day\*** \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 **Number of unique vehicles using crossing per day\*** \_\_\_\_\_
- 11 **Redundancy of crossings in the area (see attached layout)**  
 See 4 above \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 **Proximity of state highway, new crossing or recently upgraded crossing**  
 Example - Near LA 1, Less than 100 feet \_\_\_\_\_
- 13 **Degree of difficulty to improve the approach profile or provide active warning**  
 Example - Approaches are bad and City does not have money to do roadwork. The costs of Gating this will be about \$300,000.00 and cannot be justified. \_\_\_\_\_
- 14 **Effect of change on usage by emergency vehicles**  
 Example - Not significant as discussed with Fire & Emergency personnel \_\_\_\_\_

\*This information may be supplied by local government

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**Figure 2: Notes taken from the Diagnostic Review**

**The following are notes from the (Insert date) DR required by the 48:390 process:**

DOTD post-DR comments in [ ].

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If the recommendation from the DR is to consolidate crossings or to close an individual crossing, the following procedures apply:

**A. Grade Crossing Consolidation and Closure on State Maintained Highways  
(On State Highway System)**

In accordance with Louisiana RS 48:390 B, “The department, when it determines that it is necessary for the safety of the public, may improve, change the location of or abolish any existing public grade crossing on any state-maintained highway.”

The crossing will be evaluated to determine if a traffic analysis is needed. A traffic analysis will not be required if annual average daily traffic (AADT) and distance to alternate access meet requirements in Table 1, “Guidance for Consolidation/Closure of Grade Crossings”, at the end of these procedures. If conditions in Table 1 are exceeded, the DOTD Rail Safety Unit shall work with the District Traffic Operations Engineer (DTOE) to determine if a traffic analysis of the adjacent highways is necessary to accommodate additional traffic from the proposed closure or consolidation. The DR Team may also request further review of the traffic impacts to the adjacent highways. If needed, the DTOE or consultant will conduct the traffic analysis. If conditions in Table 1 are exceeded and it is determined by the DTOE and Highway/Rail Safety Engineer that a traffic analysis is not necessary, documentation of this determination is to be placed in the DOTD Rail Safety Unit file for this crossing.

The Highway/Rail Safety Engineer shall prepare a letter containing a brief explanation of the project location, reasons for consolidation or closure, any special attachments, including the DR meeting notes (Figure 1 and Figure 2), and the traffic analysis, if applicable, and send a request to the DOTD Chief Engineer for approval to proceed with the consolidation/closure process.

Once approval to proceed with the consolidation/closure process is received from the DOTD Chief Engineer, a copy of the approval letter shall be sent to the Assistant Secretary, Office of Operations, DR team members, District Administrator (DA), Public Information/Customer Service Section and applicable State Legislators and Local Officials.

Although not required in R.S. 48:390, the DOTD Rail Safety Unit shall work with the District to set a public meeting to address concerns due to the proposed consolidation or closure. Refer to “Highway/Rail Grade Crossing Consolidation and Closure Public Meeting Procedures”. The public meeting should be held within 60 days following the DOTD Chief Engineer’s approval to commence with the proposed consolidation/closure proceedings.

Following the public meeting, the DOTD Highway/Rail Safety Engineer will consider, address, and incorporate comments received from the meeting into a document. The DOTD Highway/Rail Safety Engineer will review the available information from the meetings, confer with DR members and others as needed, and incorporate the findings into the document with the final recommendations.

If new evidence is presented to DOTD that would revise the original recommendation to close or consolidate crossings, or require additional time to further study the crossings, a letter from the DOTD Chief Engineer, along with the supporting information, shall be distributed as detailed below.

If the recommendation is to move forward with the closure or consolidation, the DOTD Rail Safety Unit will prepare a letter with appropriate attachments supporting the recommendation, for the DOTD Chief Engineer’s final approval. The letter shall contain the anticipated construction date. If the work does not commence within one year following the public meeting, an additional public meeting should be held a minimum of 30 days prior to beginning construction.

The final decision of the DOTD Chief Engineer, in the form of a letter, shall be sent to the Railroad Company with copies sent to the Assistant Secretary, Office of Operations, DR team, District Administrator, applicable State Legislators and Local Officials. The letter with the attachments will be made available to the public meeting participants and others requesting information.

**B. Grade Crossing Consolidation and Closure off the State Maintained Highways**  
**(Public Roadways maintained by Local Public Agencies)**

In accordance with Louisiana RS 48:390.1, "The department is authorized to evaluate the need to close any public railroad grade crossing on a non-state maintained highway ...." RS 48:390.1 further explains procedures for closing a crossing. In general, the following is required:

The crossing will be evaluated to determine if a traffic analysis is needed. A traffic analysis will not be required if AADT and distance to alternate access meet requirements in Table 1, "Guidance for Consolidation/Closure of Grade Crossings", at the end of these procedures. If conditions in Table 1 are exceeded, recommendations to perform a traffic analysis may be made by the DR Team, Highway/Rail Safety Engineer, DTOE, or local governing authority with proper justification or by disclosure of additional information that would significantly affect traffic patterns. If needed, the DTOE or consultant will conduct the traffic analysis. If conditions in Table 1 are exceeded, and it is determined by the DTOE and Highway/Rail Safety Engineer that a traffic analysis is not necessary, documentation of this determination is to be placed in the DOTD Rail Safety Unit file for this crossing. If required, the traffic analysis should determine if any adjustments are needed to accommodate additional traffic on the alternate routes due to closures or consolidations (e.g. signal timing, addition of turnlanes, additional signing, etc.).

The Highway/Rail Safety Engineer shall prepare a letter containing a brief explanation of the project location, reasons for consolidation or closure, any special attachments, including the DR meeting minutes, and the traffic analysis, if applicable, and send a request to the DOTD Chief Engineer for approval to proceed with the consolidation/closure process.

Once approval to proceed with the consolidation/closure process is received from the DOTD Chief Engineer, a copy of the approval letter shall be sent to the Assistant Secretary, Office of Operations, DR team members, DA, applicable State Legislators and Local Officials. The Public Information/Customer Service Section should be copied for informational purposes.



The DOTD Highway/Rail Safety Engineer shall provide written notice to the local governing authority with jurisdiction over the roadway, the Railroad Company, and any other party deemed by DOTD to be interested in the necessity to consolidate or close public grade crossings. The notice shall be in the form of certified mail to the local governing authority. The notice shall establish a period of time, not less than 30 days, for the local governing authority, Railroad Company, or other interested parties to respond in writing to DOTD. The notice shall recommend the local governing authority hold a public hearing, meeting, or council meeting to address concerns of the local residents, businesses, and concerned citizens. The local authority may respond, within the 30 days, with a written request for additional time to accommodate a public forum to obtain comments. No more than 45 additional days should be granted for this process.

DOTD shall address written concerns received in a timely manner, including those from the local governing authority's public involvement process. Once comments have been addressed, and if DOTD determines consolidation or closure is the optimum solution for safety or is in the best interest of the public, the DOTD Highway/Rail Safety Engineer will prepare a notice of intent and written determination to consolidate or close the crossing(s), for approval by the DOTD Chief Engineer. This document will include the summary of findings and any alterations to be made to the crossing or adjacent crossings.

If new evidence is presented to DOTD that would revise the recommendation to close or consolidate crossings, or require additional time to further study the crossings, a letter shall be sent to the local governing authority and Railroad Company explaining the new findings and revised recommendations.

If the closure or consolidation is approved by the DOTD Chief Engineer, the notice of intent is to be mailed, via certified mail, to the local governing authority and the Railroad Company. The notice of intent shall inform the local governing authority of their right to send a written request to the DOTD Chief Engineer for reconsideration within 15 working days. If a reconsideration request is received, the Rail Safety Reconsideration Board composed of the DOTD Secretary, DOTD Chief Engineer, and Executive Director of the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission, shall issue a final determination within 15 working days of receipt of the reconsideration request.

If a written request is not received within the specified time or the determination from the Rail Safety Reconsideration Board is to proceed with the consolidation or closure, DOTD will work in cooperation with the Railroad Company to accomplish the work. The Local Officials will be kept informed of consolidation or closure scheduling.

**TABLE 1**

Guidance for Consolidation/Closure of Grade Crossings						
Type of Track	Max Train Speed (mph)	Urban/Rural	AADT	No. of Trains/day	Location to Adjacent Crossing (miles)	Increase to Median Trip Length (miles)
Branch Line			<2000	>2	≤0.25 and adjacent road has <5000 ADT/2 lanes or < 15,000 ADT/4 lanes	
Spur Line			<2000	>15	≤0.25 and adjacent road has <5000 ADT/2 lanes or < 15,000 ADT/4 lanes	
Mainline					>5 crossings within a 1 mile segment	
≤Class 3	Freight ≤40 Passenger ≤60	Urban	<500		≤0.25	≤0.50
		Rural	<50		≤0.50	≤1.50
Class 4 & 5	Freight >40 & ≤80 Passenger >60 & ≤90	Urban	<1000		≤0.25	≤0.75
		Rural	<100		≤1.00	≤3.00
≥Class 6	>90 & ≥110	Rural	<250		≤1.50	≤4.00

Railroad-Highway Grade Crossing Handbook – Revised Second Edition

Chapter IV: E. Closure

Chapter V: A, 5. Closure