



PUBLIC MEETING PROCEDURES

FOR

Highway/Rail Grade Crossing Consolidation and Closure on State Maintained Highways

09/2011

PUBLIC MEETING PROCEDURES

In accordance with the Highway/Rail Grade Crossing Consolidation and Closure Procedures, when DOTD determines grade crossing consolidation or closure on a state maintained highway is necessary or desirable, a public meeting, in the form of an Open House, shall be held in accordance with the following:

Responsibilities

Responsibilities for implementation belong to DOTD Rail Safety Unit and the District Offices. The Environmental Section and/or Public Information/Customer Service Section may provide support, as needed, to locate meeting facilities, advertise, assist with the meeting, and distribute information.

Outline of Procedures

Following the Diagnostic Review (DR), DOTD Rail Safety Unit will send information to the DOTD Chief Engineer requesting approval to proceed with the consolidation or closure process. Once approval to proceed has been granted, a copy of the letter will be sent to the District Administrator. This letter is also sent to the DR team members, Assistant Secretary, Office of Operations, State Legislator and local officials, as applicable.

Advertisement of Open House (conducted by District with assistance from others, as needed)

One part of the consolidation or closure process is to conduct a public meeting. The District, with the aid of the DOTD Rail Safety Unit, will schedule the Open House public meeting. The District is to advertise the Open House in same manner as road closures are advertised to the local citizens and local public officials. This advertisement should be placed in the local city or parish circulars, DOTD website, and any other medium the District believes would be beneficial to inform the local citizens of the meeting. The DOTD Legislative Liaison shall also be advised of the Open House meeting.

- The advertisement is to be published 10 to 14 days prior to the Open House.
- Preferred location of the ad is in the Metro or similar frequently read section of the paper.
- The ad is to be e-mailed or mailed to the local governing authority, emergency response personnel, and others typically notified of road closures.
- The ad should be mailed or delivered to any household or business within the vicinity of the consolidation or closure. The District is to determine the "vicinity" limits based on land usage and density of residents and businesses.
- Other types of advertising/public notices, in addition to newspaper advertisement, may be used as appropriate. (e.g. variable message boards at the site, social media, flyers, etc.)

Open House (conducted by DOTD Rail Safety Unit with assistance from others, as needed)

- Conduct a 1.0 to 1.5 hour meeting located as close to the project site as applicable. (Site and time are posted in advertisement)
- Provide sign-in sheets to record attendance and provide an opportunity for attendees to request follow-up information via e-mail addresses or mailing addresses.
- Provide a presentation consisting of a continuous running media, preferably with voice (e.g. PowerPoint).
- Provide exhibits and handouts (prepared by the DOTD Rail Safety Unit).
- Provide a station (as needed) for the Railroad Company, DOTD Rail Safety Unit, and others, to answer questions and gather individual's oral comments.
- Provide a station, with comment cards, for the attendees to write comments. This station shall also include a recorder or other means to capture comments from those not able or willing to write comments.

Documentation (prepared by DOTD Rail Safety Unit)

- Provide a description of the project.
- Provide a list of written and oral comments with responses to these comments, as applicable. Responses are to be coordinated with the DR team, DOTD, Railroad Officials and others, as applicable.
- Address major findings from the Open House.
- Provide an explanation of any changes to the original consolidation or closure plan. Any changes to the original plan are also to be coordinated with the DR team and others as listed above, if applicable.
- Provide a summary of engineering justification for recommendations.

Final Recommendation (prepared by DOTD Rail Safety Unit)

- If the original recommendation is revised to maintain the crossing, or additional time is needed to further study the crossing, a letter from the DOTD Chief Engineer, along with the supporting documentation, shall be distributed as detailed below.
- If no new evidence is presented to alter the recommendation for closure or consolidation, a letter shall be prepared for the DOTD Chief Engineer's approval. The letter will include an anticipated construction date for the consolidation or closure. The documentation listed above will be included with this letter.
- The documentation and letter shall be distributed to the Railroad Company with copies to Local Officials, DR team, Assistant Secretary, Office of Operations, DA and State Legislator. The letter, with documentation, shall be made available to the public meeting participants and others requesting information.