

(b) - the replacement of hazardous and worn-out grade crossing surfaces that are considered to be beyond their useful life expectancy. The majority of these projects are in the southeastern portion of New Mexico, where recent surges in economic activity have increased highway traffic and subsequently induced extreme wear and tear to railroad crossing surfaces.

Section 130 Program Requirements

FHWA policies and procedures have rigid requirements for the approval of Section 130 Program funds for safety improvements at highway-rail grade crossings. For example, the State must maintain a current and accurate inventory of all public crossings within the State. The New Mexico railroad crossing inventory is web-based, providing users such as railroads, local agencies, and other stakeholders in highway-rail safety, immediate access to physical features, operational characteristics and accidents at each of New Mexico's 716 public grade road crossings. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) relies upon the New Mexico inventory as the official database for the State's participation in the USDOT Highway-Rail Crossing National Inventory.

FHWA policy for Section 130 authorization requires States to have adopted an approved method for prioritizing grade crossings for safety improvement projects. With the development of the current inventory database, the Rail Bureau ensures that all data elements included in the USDOT Accident Prediction Model are included.

Diagnostic Evaluations (field evaluations) are conducted for Section 130 highway-rail crossing projects. The NMDOT Rail Bureau participates with railroads and representatives of other public agencies in the identification and evaluation of all crossings included in Section 130 highway-rail crossing safety improvement programs. The Rail Bureau conducts field trips throughout the State and also meets with railroads, local agencies, citizens, city councils and other stakeholders to identify and prioritize candidates.

Project Selection

The Rail Bureau uses several factors to select individual Section 130 projects, one of which are crossings identified by the FRA Accident Prediction Model as having the highest probability of a motor vehicle/train crash. The Accident Prediction Model assigns an accident prediction index to all public highway-rail grade crossings in New Mexico. Other factors include conditions observed in the field as well as accident history and concerns noted by local agencies, citizens, railroads, mayors, city councils, pueblo governors, county commissioners and NMDOT district offices. Once developed, an annual project list may be subject to adjustment to fit budgetary constraints.

NMDOT Section 130 Program Procedures and Guidelines Manual

The NMDOT Rail Bureau released its "Section 130 Federal-Aid Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety Improvement Program Procedures and Guidelines Manual" in December of 2014. This manual describes what the NMDOT Section 130 Program does (and does not do) and NMDOT's procedures for railroad crossing assessments and Section 130 program/project development. The manual also includes guidelines for railroad crossing standards — however, in many cases railroads will have their own grade crossing construction standards which will meet or exceed federal, state, and Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) standards. The manual is available for download at www.dot.state.nm.us/Transit and Rail page.