

## MEETING NOTES

# ITE Grade Crossing Committee Meeting

January 23, 2025 8:00 – 9:25 AM PST (Microsoft Teams Meeting)

## Agenda

1. Welcome/Introductions (Karen)
2. General ITE News/Events (Doug)
  - ITE Safety Roadmap
  - Spring Technical Conference – March 25-26, 2025
  - Annual Meeting – August 10-13, 2025
3. Committee Liaison Updates
  - FHWA (TBD)
  - FRA (Brian/Dee)
  - AAR/Railroads (Paul)
  - Canada (Maryam)
  - AREMA (Karen)
4. Committee Products + Task Force Updates
  - Cyclists Considerations at Grade Crossings Task Force (Nino+)
  - Another Train Coming Technical Paper (Doug)
  - Roundabouts and Grade Crossings Task Force (Joanna)
  - Traffic Signal Maintenance at Interconnected Crossings Quick Bite (Karen)
  - Recommended Practice: Preemption of Traffic Signals Near Railroad Grade
  - Crossings + MUTCD 11<sup>th</sup> Edition Updates Task Force (Nick/Kevin)
5. Committee Webinars (John)
  - Future webinar ideas: Quiet Zone Series, TRB Research Ideas, Annual Meeting
6. Abstract possibilities + other ideas welcome
7. MUTCD 11<sup>th</sup> Edition Part 8 Changes
  - Continuation of Technical Content Discussion (Nicole)

Open Forum



## Attendees

- Karen Hankinson - Committee Chair (Olsson, Irvine, CA)
- Nicole Jackson - Committee Vice Chair (Benesch, Fort Worth, TX)
- Maryam Hedayati – Committee Secretary (Transport Canada, Montreal, Canada)
- Ana Coady (Transport Canada, Vancouver, Canada)
- Lauren Jumanan (Kimley Horn, San Diego, CA)
- Stephen Laffey (Illinois Commerce Commission, Springfield, IL)
- Louis Rubenstein (Berkowitz Engineering, Arcadia, CA & Florida)
- Mallory Scates (Freese & Nichols)
- Marc Jacobson (City of San Antonio, TX)
- Paul Menaker (GHD, Northern California)
- Tom Lancaster (Retired, Lancaster Engineering, Portland, OR)
- Travis Bailey (Olsson)
- Steven Venglar (Texas A&M Transportation Institute, San Antonio, TX)
- Wes McClure (Olsson)
- Mike Travis (Olsson)
- Tom Urbanik (Kittleson and Associates, Round Rock, TX)
- Joanna Bush (Mead and Hunt, Madison, WI)
- Mike May (City of Wauwatosa, WI)
- Douglas E. Noble (ITE)

## Meeting Notes

### 1.0 Introduction and Welcome (Karen)

Karen Hankinson welcomed participants and introduced members. She mentioned her tenure as chair will continue for one more year. Nicole Jackson is the current Committee Vice Chair. Maryam Hedayati has joined the Leadership Team, as Committee Secretary.

### 2.0 General ITE News/Events (Doug)

#### *ITE Safety Roadmap*

The main page for the Safety Road Map contains various resources, including the full road map and action plan, a one-page summary of actions, and an alternate tabular format for those who prefer structured data. The action plan focuses on five key areas: safety, student engagement, professional development, IT initiatives, and technical resources and partnerships. The committee is actively involved in updating recommended practices related to tracks and preemption near railroad crossings. Joanna is leading efforts on roundabouts near railroad grade crossings, while additional work is being done on cyclist considerations at crossings.



An explicit definition of "duty of care" is also being developed to guide councils and committees in ensuring that content and products address safety and solutions for all road users. This is expected to be published in the April ITE Journal, building upon a previous article by Michael Sanderson on this concept.

#### *Spring Technical Conference* – March 25-26, 2025

The Spring Virtual Conference is scheduled for March 25-26, featuring sessions on resiliency and automated enforcement, though none explicitly focus on grade crossings. Registration is open.

#### *Annual Meeting* – August 10-13, 2025

The annual meeting in August received over 225 presentation abstracts and nearly 60 workshop submissions, including two related to railroad grade crossings. Session planning is underway, with initial staff reviews due by next Thursday. Karen has also submitted a tour request for Sun Rail near the conference venue to align with one of the session topics. Registration opens on March 1.

#### *Preemption of Traffic Signals Near Railroad Grade Crossings Publication*

There is an open call for new members to join the peer review panel for the Preemption of Traffic Signals Near Railroad Grade Crossings: Third Edition recommended practice. Anyone interested is encouraged to reach out to Doug Noble. You will need to provide a brief summary of your interest and background. Document is hopefully going to be sent out for peer review in late February but is still unknown.

### 3.0 Committee Liaison Updates

**FHWA (Scott)** has completed reviewing all state Rail-Highway Crossing Program annual reports and shared them with FRA. Following the publication of the latest MUTCD edition, FHWA and FRA held a joint webinar in July, featuring updates from Dwayne Thomas. Another joint webinar on GX apps with Dr. Neeraj Koul took place in November and is now publicly accessible on FHWA's website. The next joint webinar is planned for late February to mid-March. Contact [sarah.olk@dot.gov](mailto:sarah.olk@dot.gov) to get on the e-mail distribution list for the next webinar. The next Community of Interest meeting is scheduled for March 25, 2025, in Jacksonville, Florida, to foster discussions and solutions within the rail industry. Additionally, Operation Lifesaver released a PSA on vulnerable road users in December, now available to the public. FHWA's Office of Safety is developing case studies on innovative road crossing safety strategies, with a focus on technology, expected to be published by summer.

**FRA (Brian/Dee)** - No updates

**AAR/Railroads (Paul)** – No updates



**TRB (Dave)** The TRB will be conducting a webinar next Tuesday, January 28 on the topic of trespassing on railroad rights of way and improved grade crossing safety. The webinar is based on 2 TCRP documents that have been published recently. Jeff Warner from the Texas A&M Transportation Institute will be presenting the webinar. You can register via myTRB; there's no cost to register.

**Canada (Ana)** The Grade Crossing regulations, passed in 2014, included phased-in requirements that became fully applicable in November 2024. A federally regulated railway company has requested exemptions for several private grade crossing locations, which have been reviewed; exemptions were granted for some.

**Loss of Shunt:** VIA Rail, Canada's passenger rail system, began using a new type of train set, which has introduced an issue known as "loss of shunt." This problem, previously noted in the U.S., affects how the train's presence is detected by warning systems at rail crossings. The concern is that new train sets are causing these systems to activate later than designed, resulting in shorter warning times for approaching trains.

To mitigate the risk, the host railway company has implemented speed restrictions for trains as they approach crossings. However, these restrictions have led to delays and disruptions in adhering to train schedules. Addressing this issue is now a priority, with ongoing efforts to identify appropriate solutions.

*Discussion* Jason advised that a TRB committee attempted to address this issue, maybe 10 years ago; wide range of options were discussed but nothing was identified that could be researched. Not certain if anything was developed after Jason left the committee. Stephen advised that Amtrak recently received a CRISI grant to install on-board shunt enhancers on their locomotives, to address the issue of loss of shunt.

**AREMA (Karen)** There are no significant updates from AREMA. The annual updated Communication Signals Manual is expected to be released this month. Committee 36, which focuses on grade crossings, continues its work, but no major updates were shared.

## 4.0 Committee Products + Task Force Updates

**Cyclists Considerations at Grade Crossings Task Force (Nino + )** Karen and Doug advised that there's been a lot of discussion regarding cyclists at grade crossings. Between the Rail and Bike Task Force, there have been discussions about various topics:

- Going back to the drawing board to revise the language in the MUTCD; could be in an upcoming amendment or addition to the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the MUTCD;
- Separated bike lane vs. buffered bike lane; when does the bike lane become its own "approach";
- Requirement for separate flashing lights for bike lanes; and



- Gates, signing & pavement markings in the opposite direction of the traffic lane; when there is a 2-way cycle track, how does one deal with gates for the cycle track, specifically on the departure side (cyclist moving in the contra-flow direction to the adjacent traffic lane); Karen noted that the Quick Bite update last year speaks to part of this issue.

Nino has been leading the charge for bike-related matters at grade crossings. He's looking for volunteers to help.

**Another Train Coming Technical Paper** (*Doug*) Work underway. Brent Ogden has been working on a technical paper, which is in its final edit stages. Doug has been working on getting this paper out the door by the end of February.

**Roundabouts and Grade Crossings Task Force** (*Joanna*) At the recent Committee meeting, discussions focused on a task force addressing signage for roundabouts near grade crossings. Currently, there are about 100 roundabouts located close to existing crossings which have been compiled in a database and map.

The task force plans to draft a research statement to seek funding for research into the most effective ways to inform drivers that they are approaching a crossing, particularly when exiting a roundabout.

The task force has about 18 members from both the roundabout committee and this (grade crossing) committee. Joanna is working with the team to define the deliverables for the task force; they want it to be meaningful and useful towards the safety of the traveling public. Doug is investigating how to incorporate the database tool into the ITE website, where members can add information, etc.

**Traffic Signal Maintenance at Interconnected Crossings Quick Bite** (*Karen*) Karen continues to work on this; had set a deadline to send the draft to Nicole and Joanna before this meeting, but that didn't happen. Goal is to complete this by April 2025

**Train Activated Blank-Out Signs** The 11th edition of the manual requires the use of a "No Right Turn" sign with the word "train" for crossings where right turns are restricted due to train activations. However, right-turn restrictions can occur for other reasons, and there's uncertainty about whether a blank-out sign without the word "train" can be used at crossings interconnected with nearby traffic signals. While the general sentiment is that it should be acceptable, the manual's wording is unclear. The committee encourages members to share suggestions for language revisions to address these concerns.



## Recommended Practice: Preemption of Traffic Signals Near Railroad Grade Crossings *(Kevin)*

Kevin noted that work continues on this update (Recommended Practice) to reflect MUTCD 11th edition. There are still some final edits required; might require one more meeting of the task force. Karen and Nicole will be doing the next peer review. Joanna noted that text on pre-signals, queue cutters, placement of detectors is being added to the document. Doug is still looking for peer reviewers for this product. This will be the 3rd edition of the Recommended Practice when it is complete.

## 5.0 Committee Webinars

- Future webinar ideas: Quiet Zone Series, TRB Research Ideas, Annual Meeting
- Abstract possibilities + other ideas welcome from the group

Karen, Doug and Nicole will be reviewing ideas; hoping for 2 webinars from this committee for this next year. Some ideas:

- Joanna noted that the Roundabout Committee would like to see a webinar on roundabouts near grade crossings, hopefully later in 2025.
- Doug suggested that a 'hints & tips' for implementing and maintaining Quiet Zones might be useful for local agencies.

Nicole noted that a current certificate course being offered by ITE gives practitioners guidance on how to use the MUTCD and goes through each part, section by section. There is a Q&A at the end, with the person that taught each section; Nicole is one of the instructors for Part 8.

Doug noted that the ITE has a series of webinars, separate from the MUTCD certificate course, which is part of a 7-part on-demand learning course; it is available from the ITE professional development website. Nicole does the one on Part 8.

## 6.0 MUTCD 11th Edition Part 8 Changes (Nicole)

- Continuation of Technical Content Discussion. Nicole covered diagnostics and basics from Part 8 in the previous session. For today's meeting, she will go over the signs and markings part (8B and 8C).

## Open Forum

