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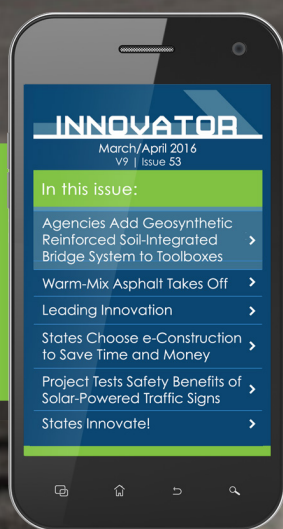
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# Improving DOT and Railroad Coordination

## Collaborative approach expedites highway projects

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As part of its push to streamline project coordination, the Texas Department of Transportation sends construction and maintenance agreements to railroads electronically rather than on paper. This enables railroads to load documents into their agreement management systems more easily and get internal approvals faster.

As a result, agreement processing time dropped from more than 16 weeks to as little as four to six weeks.

“Our biggest success has been on our simple maintenance agreements, which represent two-thirds of our overall project load,” said Robert Travis, manager of the agency’s Rail Highway Safety Branch. “We’ve been able to reduce the turnaround time from two to three months to less than one month for review and acceptance by the railroad.”

Texas is one of nine states that have institutionalized the use of tools and practices to **improve department of transportation and railroad coordination**, a strategy the Federal Highway Administration is promoting in the third round of Every Day Counts. Another six states and Washington, D.C., are piloting the innovation or preparing for full deployment.

The EDC-3 effort uses a model agreement library, tools and training developed under the second Strategic Highway Research Program **R16 project**, which enables agencies and railroads to identify sources of conflict and develop memorandums of understanding for projects and programs.

### Need for improved coordination

“When you consider the hundreds of highway projects that cross or abut railroad rights-of-way each year, you get an idea of the magnitude of extended coordination needed between these organizations,” said Joseph Taylor of the FHWA Office of Infrastructure, who leads the EDC-3 Improving DOT and Railroad Coordination Innovation Deployment Team.

Enhancing collaboration and streamlining processes can save money and time for highway agencies and

railroads and result in faster, smarter highway renewal, Taylor said.

“Although most projects go smoothly, delays during project development and construction do occur,” he said. “Coupling that with predictions that freight rail will increase 88 percent by the year 2035 and highway renewal projects will increase as the highway infrastructure continues to age, new approaches are needed to improve collaboration between the organizations.”

The approaches FHWA is encouraging in EDC-3 fall into two categories:

- Best practices and streamlined processes that enhance relationships between railroads and transportation agencies, such as internal and external coordination, innovative partnering techniques and collaborative approaches
- Standardized—or master—agreements that provide templates for the interactions between organizations and contain provisions that expedite projects while protecting the rights and obligations of agencies and railroads

### New approaches with railroads

Alabama Department of Transportation staff meet with county engineers, railroad representatives and FHWA staff to coordinate on railroad-related issues, such as the railroad agreement and invoicing process. The Alabama DOT collaborated with railroads to write new **railroad crossing guidance** for developing Federal-Aid Highway Program projects that involve railroad property.

The Delaware Department of Transportation is using SHRP2 funds to develop master agreements with the seven railroad companies it works with to streamline the construction project process. The agency signed a maintenance agreement with Norfolk Southern Railway for railroad crossings in the pavement rehabilitation program.

The Idaho Transportation Department collaborated with the primary railroad companies operating in the



*Enhancing collaboration between highway agencies and railroads can expedite transportation project delivery.*

state on a master agreement project. The department and BNSF Railway agreed to keep their existing agreement. The department approved and Union Pacific Railroad is reviewing a draft master agreement for the two organizations. Secondary railroads plan to follow the agreement between the department and Union Pacific Railroad.

The Iowa Department of Transportation developed an online [railroad safety awareness course](#) that inspection staff on railroad-related projects now use. The agency produced standard specifications for work on or near Union Pacific Railroad, Canadian Northern Railway and Canadian Pacific Railway property and is developing specifications for short-line railroads in the state.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation has master agreements with CSX, Illinois Central Railway and Norfolk Southern Railway. Benefits of coordination include early identification of issues railroads may have with project plans and time savings on project development processes. For example, the Tennessee DOT worked with Norfolk Southern to streamline the process for resurfacing projects, which reduced railroad approval time.

### **To learn more**

Watch [Railroad-DOT Mitigation Strategies](#), a webinar on the SHRP2 R16 project and tools available to help agencies and railroads work together on projects.

Read [Strategies for Improving the Project Agreement Process Between Highway Agencies and Railroads](#) for recommended practices, streamlined permitting processes and model agreements.

Contact [Joseph Taylor](#) of the FHWA Office of Infrastructure for information and technical assistance.



*View Federal-Aid Essentials video on coordinating with railroads*