

# PART 8

## TRAFFIC CONTROL FOR RAILROAD AND LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT GRADE CROSSINGS

### CHAPTER 8A. GENERAL

#### Section 8A.01 Introduction

Support:

- 01 Whenever the acronym “LRT” is used in Part 8, it refers to “light rail transit.”
- 02 Part 8 describes the traffic control devices that are used at highway-rail and highway-LRT grade crossings. Unless otherwise provided in the text or on a figure or table, the provisions of Part 8 are applicable to both highway-rail and highway-LRT grade crossings. When the phrase “grade crossing” is used by itself without the prefix “highway-rail” or “highway-LRT,” it refers to both highway-rail and highway-LRT grade crossings.
- 03 Traffic control for grade crossings includes all signs, signals, markings, other warning devices, and their supports along highways approaching and at grade crossings. The function of this traffic control is to promote safety and provide effective operation of rail and/or LRT and highway traffic at grade crossings.
- 04 For purposes of design, installation, operation, and maintenance of traffic control devices at grade crossings, it is recognized that the crossing of the highway and rail tracks is situated on a right-of-way available for the joint use of both highway traffic and railroad or LRT traffic.
- 05 The highway agency or authority with jurisdiction and the regulatory agency with statutory authority, if applicable, jointly determine the need and selection of devices at a grade crossing.
- 06 In Part 8, the combination of devices selected or installed at a specific grade crossing is referred to as a “traffic control system.”

**Standard:**

- 07 **The traffic control devices, systems, and practices described in this Manual shall be used at all grade crossings open to public travel, consistent with Federal, State, and local laws and regulations.**

Support:

- 08 Part 8 also describes the traffic control devices that are used in locations where light rail LRT vehicles are operating along streets and highways in mixed traffic with automotive vehicles.
- 09 LRT is a mode of metropolitan transportation that employs LRT vehicles (commonly known as light rail vehicles, streetcars, or trolleys) that operate on rails in streets in mixed traffic, and LRT traffic that operates in semi-exclusive rights-of-way, or in exclusive rights-of-way. Grade crossings with LRT can occur at intersections or at midblock locations, including public and private driveways.
- 10 An initial educational campaign along with an ongoing program to continue to educate new drivers is beneficial when introducing LRT operations to an area and, hence, new traffic control devices.
- 11 LRT alignments can be grouped into one of the following three types:
- A. Exclusive: An LRT right-of-way that is grade-separated or protected by a fence or traffic barrier. Motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles are prohibited within the right-of-way. Subways and aerial structures are included within this group. This type of alignment does not have grade crossings and is not further addressed in Part 8.
  - B. Semi-exclusive: An LRT alignment that is in a separate right-of-way or along a street or railroad right-of-way where motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles have limited access and cross at designated locations only.
  - C. Mixed-use: An alignment where LRT operates in mixed traffic with all types of road users. This includes streets, transit malls, and pedestrian malls where the right-of-way is shared.

**Standard:**

- 12 **Where LRT and railroads use the same tracks or adjacent tracks, the traffic control devices, systems, and practices for highway-rail grade crossings shall be used.**

Support:

- 13 To promote an understanding of common terminology between highway and railroad and LRT signaling issues, definitions and acronyms pertaining to Part 8 are provided in Sections 1A.13 and 1A.14.

#### Section 8A.02 Use of Standard Devices, Systems, and Practices at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings

Support:

- 01 Because of the large number of significant variables to be considered, no single standard system of traffic control devices is universally applicable for all highway-rail grade crossings.

*Guidance:*

02 *The appropriate traffic control system to be used at a highway-rail grade crossing should be determined by an engineering study involving both the highway agency and the railroad company.*

## Option:

03 The engineering study may include the Highway-Rail Intersection (HRI) components of the National Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) architecture, which is a USDOT accepted method for linking the highway, vehicles, and traffic management systems with rail operations and wayside equipment.

## Support:

04 More detail on Highway-Rail Intersection components is available from the USDOT's Federal Railroad Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20590, or [www.fra.dot.gov](http://www.fra.dot.gov).

**Standard:**

05 **Traffic control devices, systems, and practices shall be consistent with the design and application of the Standards contained in this Manual.**

06 **Before any new highway-rail grade crossing traffic control system is installed or before modifications are made to an existing system, approval shall be obtained from the highway agency with the jurisdictional and/or statutory authority, and from the railroad company.**

*Guidance:*

07 *To stimulate effective responses from road users, these devices, systems, and practices should use the five basic considerations employed generally for traffic control devices and described fully in Section 1A.02: design, placement, operation, maintenance, and uniformity.*

## Support:

08 Many other details of highway-rail grade crossing traffic control systems that are not set forth in Part 8 are contained in the publications listed in Section 1A.11, including the "2000 AREMA Communications & Signals Manual" published by the American Railway Engineering & Maintenance-of-Way Association (AREMA) and the 2006 edition of "Preemption of Traffic Signals Near Railroad Crossings" published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE).

**Section 8A.03 Use of Standard Devices, Systems, and Practices at Highway-LRT Grade Crossings**

## Support:

01 The combination of devices selected or installed at a specific highway-LRT grade crossing is referred to as a Light Rail Transit Traffic Control System.

02 Because of the large number of significant variables to be considered, no single standard system of traffic control devices is universally applicable for all highway-LRT grade crossings.

03 For the safety and integrity of operations by highway and LRT users, the highway agency with jurisdiction, the regulatory agency with statutory authority, if applicable, and the LRT authority jointly determine the need and selection of traffic control devices and the assignment of priority to LRT at a highway-LRT grade crossing.

04 The normal rules of the road and traffic control priority identified in the "Uniform Vehicle Code" govern the order assigned to the movement of vehicles at an intersection unless the local agency determines that it is appropriate to assign a higher priority to LRT. Examples of different types of LRT priority control include separate traffic control signal phases for LRT movements, restriction of movement of roadway vehicles in favor of LRT operations, and preemption of highway traffic signal control to accommodate LRT movements.

*Guidance:*

05 *The appropriate traffic control system to be used at a highway-LRT grade crossing should be determined by an engineering study conducted by the LRT or highway agency in cooperation with other appropriate State and local organizations.*

**Standard:**

06 **Traffic control devices, systems, and practices shall be consistent with the design and application of the Standards contained in this Manual.**

07 **The traffic control devices, systems, and practices described in this Manual shall be used at all highway-LRT grade crossings.**

08 **Before any new highway-LRT grade crossing traffic control system is installed or before modifications are made to an existing system, approval shall be obtained from the highway agency with the jurisdictional and/or statutory authority, and from the LRT agency.**

*Guidance:*

- 09 *To stimulate effective responses from road users, these devices, systems, and practices should use the five basic considerations employed generally for traffic control devices and described fully in Section 1A.02: design, placement, operation, maintenance, and uniformity.*

*Support:*

- 10 Many other details of highway-LRT grade crossing traffic control systems that are not set forth in Part 8 are contained in the publications listed in Section 1A.11.

**Standard:**

- 11 **Highway-LRT grade crossings in semi-exclusive alignments shall be equipped with a combination of automatic gates and flashing-light signals, or flashing-light signals only, or traffic control signals, unless an engineering study indicates that the use of Crossbuck Assemblies, STOP signs, or YIELD signs alone would be adequate.**

*Option:*

- 12 Highway-LRT grade crossings in mixed-use alignments may be equipped with traffic control signals unless an engineering study indicates that the use of Crossbuck Assemblies, STOP signs, or YIELD signs alone would be adequate.

*Support:*

- 13 Sections 8B.03 and 8B.04 contain provisions regarding the use and placement of Crossbuck signs and Crossbuck Assemblies. Section 8B.05 describes the appropriate conditions for the use of S STOP or YIELD signs alone at a highway-LRT grade crossing. Sections 8C.10 and 8C.11 contain provisions regarding the use of traffic control signals at highway-LRT grade crossings.

**Section 8A.04 Uniform Provisions****Standard:**

- 01 **All signs used in grade crossing traffic control systems shall be retroreflectorized or illuminated as described in Section 2A.07 to show the same shape and similar color to an approaching road user during both day and night.**
- 02 **No sign or signal shall be located in the center of an undivided highway, unless it is crashworthy (breakaway, yielding, or shielded with a longitudinal barrier or crash cushion) or unless it is placed on a raised island.**

*Guidance:*

- 03 *Any signs or signals placed on a raised island in the center of an undivided highway should be installed with a clearance of at least 2 feet from the outer edge of the raised island to the nearest edge of the sign or signal, except as permitted in Section 2A.19.*
- 04 *Where the distance between tracks, measured along the highway between the inside rails, exceeds 100 feet, additional signs or other appropriate traffic control devices should be used to inform approaching road users of the long distance to cross the tracks.*

**Section 8A.05 Grade Crossing Elimination***Guidance:*

- 01 *Because grade crossings are a potential source of crashes and congestion, agencies should conduct engineering studies to determine the cost and benefits of eliminating these crossings.*

**Standard:**

- 02 **When a grade crossing is eliminated, the traffic control devices for the crossing shall be removed.**
- 03 **If the existing traffic control devices at a multiple-track grade crossing become improperly placed or inaccurate because of the removal of some of the tracks, the existing devices shall be relocated and/or modified.**

*Guidance:*

- 04 *Any grade crossing that cannot be justified should be eliminated.*
- 05 *Where a roadway is removed from a grade crossing, the roadway approaches in the railroad or LRT right-of-way should also be removed and appropriate signs and object markers should be placed at the roadway end in accordance with Section 2C.66.*
- 06 *Where a railroad or LRT is eliminated at a grade crossing, the tracks should be removed or covered.*

## Option:

- 07 Based on engineering judgment, the TRACKS OUT OF SERVICE (R8-9) sign (see Figure 8B-1) may be temporarily installed until the tracks are removed or covered. The length of time before the tracks will be removed or covered may be considered in making the decision as to whether to install the sign.

**Section 8A.06 Illumination at Grade Crossings**

## Support:

- 01 Illumination is sometimes installed at or adjacent to a grade crossing in order to provide better nighttime visibility of trains or LRT equipment and the grade crossing (for example, where a substantial amount of railroad or LRT operations are conducted at night, where grade crossings are blocked for extended periods of time, or where crash history indicates that road users experience difficulty in seeing trains or LRT equipment or traffic control devices during hours of darkness).
- 02 Recommended types and locations of luminaires for illuminating grade crossings are contained in the American National Standards Institute's (ANSI) "Practice for Roadway Lighting RP-8," which is available from the Illuminating Engineering Society (see Section 1A.11).

**Section 8A.07 Quiet Zone Treatments at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings**

## Support:

- 01 49 CFR Part 222 (Use of Locomotive Horns at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings; Final Rule) prescribes Quiet Zone requirements and treatments.

**Standard:**

- 02 **Any traffic control device and its application where used as part of a Quiet Zone shall comply with all applicable provisions of the MdMUTCD.**

**Section 8A.08 Temporary Traffic Control Zones**

## Support:

- 01 Temporary traffic control planning provides for continuity of operations (such as movement of traffic, pedestrians and bicycles, transit operations, and access to property/utilities) when the normal function of a roadway at a grade crossing is suspended because of temporary traffic control operations.

**Standard:**

- 02 **Traffic controls for temporary traffic control zones that include grade crossings shall be as outlined in Part 6.**
- 03 **When a grade crossing exists either within or in the vicinity of a temporary traffic control zone, lane restrictions, flagging (see Chapter 6E), or other operations shall not be performed in a manner that would cause highway vehicles to stop on the railroad or LRT tracks, unless a flagger or uniformed law enforcement officer is provided at the grade crossing to minimize the possibility of highway vehicles stopping on the tracks, even if automatic warning devices are in place.**

*Guidance:*

- 04 *Public and private agencies, including emergency services, businesses, and railroad or LRT companies, should meet to plan appropriate traffic detours and the necessary signing, marking, and flagging requirements for operations during temporary traffic control zone activities. Consideration should be given to the length of time that the grade crossing is to be closed, the type of rail or LRT and highway traffic affected, the time of day, and the materials and techniques of repair.*

- 05 *The agencies responsible for the operation of the LRT and highway should be contacted when the initial planning begins for any temporary traffic control zone that might directly or indirectly influence the flow of traffic on mixed-use facilities where LRT and road users operate.*

- 06 *Temporary traffic control operations should minimize the inconvenience, delay, and crash potential to affected traffic. Prior notice should be given to affected public or private agencies, emergency services, businesses, railroad or LRT companies, and road users before the free movement of road users or rail traffic is infringed upon or blocked.*

- 07 *Temporary traffic control zone activities should not be permitted to extensively prolong the closing of the grade crossing.*

- 08 *The width, grade, alignment, and riding quality of the highway surface at a grade crossing should, at a minimum, be restored to correspond with the quality of the approaches to the grade crossing.*

## Support:

- 09 Section 6G.18 contains additional information regarding temporary traffic control zones in the vicinity of grade crossings, and Figure 6H-46 shows an example of a typical situation that might be encountered.