



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Railroad  
Administration**

Office of Safety, RRS-23  
1120 Vermont Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20590

## **Procedure for Updating the DOT Crossing Inventory File for Public Authorities**

### **BACKGROUND**

Currently, the Highway-Rail Crossing Inventory Program is a voluntary process whereby every crossing in the nation receives a Crossing Inventory Number (a six digit number followed by an alphabetical character) which coincides with inventory information on the location, classification, physical characteristics, traffic control and warning devices, railroad data, and highway data that is obtained and recorded in the DOT National Highway-Rail Crossing Inventory File, as well as in individual State and Railroad files. All crossings in the United States, public, private and pedestrian, both at-grade and grade-separated (underpasses and overpasses) shall have a DOT Crossing Inventory Number assigned. The number is like a “street-name sign” and should be posted, preferably, on both sides of the crossing on a signal mast, crossbuck post, sign post, or pole. They are usually made of aluminum, about motorcycle license-plate size, and can be commercially purchased. Alternatively, the number might be stenciled on the side of a bungalow or even painted on a tie. The responsibility for posting the number-board signs is that of the railroad.

The responsibility for updating the Inventory is that of both the State and the Railroad - each updating the elements and data fields which are in their purview. Normally, FRA only accepts updates to the Inventory File from the State and Railroad Inventory Contacts, those individuals employed by the State or Railroad that are responsible for this activity. Updating should occur whenever any of the crossing inventory characteristics change, such as the installation of new traffic control or warning devices, a change in highway traffic counts, or a change in the number of trains traveling over the crossing. As a minimum, all crossing inventory data should be reviewed and updated at least once every three years to keep the File current. The following Steps outline the procedure and activities necessary for a Public Authority to effect an Inventory File update for crossings within their jurisdiction.

### **STEP 1. Obtain the Current Record on File**

The first step in updating is to obtain a copy of the *Current Inventory Record* on file for the crossing(s). This can be found on the FRA Safety Data Website at <http://safetydata.fra.dot.gov/officeofsafety/>. (It is suggested that a copy of this *Home Page* be printed since it contains valuable information and references). Click on the Crossing Tab. If the crossing number is known, enter it and obtain the two page Inventory Report for the crossing’s *Current Inventory Record*. This copy can be used to indicate the changes and corrections.

If the crossing number(s) are unknown, the researcher can click on Query by Location/Railroad which offers the selection of all crossings in a City or County of a State. The query will default to “All Railroads,” or a specific railroad may be selected to narrow the search. A “Street Name” may also be entered, but this is not always successful since street names may be misspelled, route numbers may be used, or there may be multiple crossings with the same street name. Submit the query and a listing will appear which should allow identification of the crossing(s) being searched. When searching for a crossing that can’t readily be found, try looking under various railroads or other locations since it is possible that it may be incorrectly recorded in the File. Inventory Reports may be obtained for the desired crossings by clicking on the small square button in the lefthand column, and then clicking on “Generate Report.”

## **STEP 2. Perform a Site Survey and Contact Highway/Railroad Officials**

Once the current Inventory Records have been obtained for the desired crossing(s), a site survey must be conducted to verify and update the information. Additional research may be necessary to obtain current traffic counts from local traffic engineers/officials and current train counts from railroad officials, as well as other railroad data. The *Current Inventory Record* printout can be marked-up in red pen to indicate the changes and corrections. Be sure to indicate the effective date of the changes, or if that is unknown, use the date of the field trip.

If the DOT Crossing Inventory Number for a particular crossing can not be identified after a very careful search of the file, it will be necessary to contact the State Inventory Contact to determine if the crossing is in the State file, or contact the railroad to determine if the crossing is in their records. If this fails to identify the Crossing Number, there is a good chance that a Number was never assigned (this is very unusual for a public at-grade crossing). If a Number can not be identified for a crossing, a new number must be assigned. The procedure for assigning a new crossing Inventory number is identified in a brief entitled “Assignment of Crossing Inventory Numbers” located at <http://www.fra.dot.gov/downloads/safety/Outreach/Numbers.PDF> .

While updates and corrections can be submitted on a marked-up copy of the *Current Inventory Record* or on the Crossing Inventory Form (in red pen), crossings with new assigned numbers must be submitted on the Crossing Inventory Form. (Since May 2000, the two-sided five-part white Inventory Form with the new data elements is to be used, although FRA will continue to accept the older four-part ‘green’ Forms until they are exhausted.) The two-sided single-sheet (or two pages) Form provides for easy photocopying and distribution to all involved parties.

## **STEP 3. Forward the New Information to the State Inventory Contact**

Contact the State Inventory Contact to inform him (her) that updated crossing inventory information is being forwarded to him with a cover letter. Request that the update be expedited and forwarded to FRA for processing. Copy both the railroad and the FRA on the transmittal letter and request that the State Inventory Contact copy you when the update is forwarded to FRA. It will take about three months from the date that the State forwards the updated record to FRA for this new information to appear in the National File.

If either the State or Railroad fails to provide needed information, or if the State fails to forward an updated crossing inventory record to FRA in a timely manner, that is within 30 days, then the Public Authority filing the updated information may send the updated Inventory Form directly to the Associate Administrator for Safety, Federal Railroad Administration, 1120 Vermont Ave.,

NW, RRS-1, Washington, DC 20590. Include a letter explaining any problems and why the Forms are not being submitted through the State.

## **ELECTRONIC UPDATES**

FRA does not have a procedure for updating electronically on-line. This procedure is not utilized because it would by-pass providing the same information to the State and Railroad for their review and incorporation into their files.

However, FRA does accept updated data electronically from States and Railroads in several standard file formats including (1) Text [.txt] in either Positional or Comma Delimited, (2) Data Base File [.dbf], (3) Excel [.xls], (4) Access Database [.mdb], and (5) via the GX32 Computer Program. When using these formats, the data must be provided in the required field specification format - refer to the "Field Specification Document." Files submitted in these formats must meet the specifications for valid values, ranges, field names, sizes, types, and positional layout.

The GX32 Computer Program is a software package developed by FRA which allows the updating of Inventory data on a monitor screen with a display that is similar to the Crossing Inventory Form and which contains edits and checks to insure submittal of complete and accurate data. When updates are sent to our data processing contractor, INDUS Corp., an updated version of the software with the most current data can be requested.

This software is provided free and may be obtained directly from INDUS. They will send a copy of the software with the requestor's State or Railroad data. All electronic updates should be sent directly to INDUS Corp. Contact Ms. Angelica Mamani at 703-548-3313, ext. 223 to coordinate submitting electronic updates or to request a copy of the GX32 Software. The address is: INDUS Corp., FRA Project Office, 1340 Braddock Place, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22314.

If there are more than 40 crossings to update, the GX32 program may be an excellent mechanism to update the data file electronically. If there are fewer than 40 crossings to update, than the hardcopy or paper Inventory Form method is more efficient and should be used. In certain cases where a group of crossings have a simple update change, for example, where crossings are just being closed or where only the railroad ownership is being changed, a letter from the State or Railroad Contact notifying FRA of the change and listing the affected crossings (or an electronic file) will be sufficient.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The Inventory File maintained by FRA is a historical file, that is, it contains all the records and updates that have been submitted since inception in 1975. The responsibility for initially numbering the crossing and for filing the initial inventory report is that of the "Operating Railroad," that is, the railroad that actually operates over the crossing and which would have to file a report if an accident occurred. If multiple railroads operate over the crossing, then the responsibility falls to the railroad who owns and/or maintains the trackage.

For public at-grade crossings, the railroad needs to complete Parts I, II, III & IV of the "U.S. DOT Crossing Inventory Form," except for those items that are clearly a State responsibility. The railroad then forwards the original Form to the appropriate "State Crossing Inventory Contact." This is the State individual who is primarily responsible for submitting crossing

updates to the FRA. Normally, **FRA will only accept updates from the State Inventory Contact or the Railroad Inventory Contact.** The State completes Part V which supplies the vehicle traffic counts and other highway characteristic information. When completed, the State Inventory Contact is required to send the Form to FRA for input into the Crossing Inventory File. For private and grade-separated crossings, only Part I (Location Information) is required, and the railroad can usually forward these updates directly to FRA, but should still copy the State. Some States maintain a very complete and accurate Inventory, and to do that, they request that all railroads in the State send all updates to the State and not to FRA. They enter the updates, usually into the GX32 Software, and forward this data to FRA. These States have a strict policy whereby they forward updates to FRA every three months.

The “U.S. DOT Crossing Inventory Form” FRA-F-6180.71 is available electronically on FRA’s Website at <http://safetydata.fra.dot.gov/officeofsafety/Forms/Default.asp> in Adobe Acrobat Reader [.pdf] format. This Form should be used to submit updates in hardcopy, or alternatively, a copy of the *Current Inventory Record* can be obtained from the FRA Website and used to indicate changes and corrections by indicating such in red ink.

The Instructions for completing the Form are located on the Website at <http://www.fra.dot.gov/Content3.asp?P=801>. This site is titled “DOT National Crossing Inventory - Exploring New Ways to Improve (Outreach)” and it is suggested that a copy of this page be printed for future reference. Click on Crossing Inventory Form Instructions (Draft) to obtain the instructions. This page will also provide information on (1) the Updating and Reconciliation Processes, (2) the Contact List for the State Inventory Contacts responsible for submitting Inventory updates to the FRA, and (3) the Railroad Inventory Contacts for many of the major railroads who are responsible for submitting railroad inventory updates.

On the FRA Safety Data Website *Home Page*, under the Downloads Tab, the FRA Auxiliary Tables contain a complete list of all railroads and their railroad codes. Data can also be downloaded for a whole State or railroad from this location. Further, you can go directly to the DOT National Crossing Inventory (Outreach) information page from the *Home Page* by clicking on DOT Crossing INVENTORY Information.

## **CONTACT FOR ASSISTANCE**

Hardcopy or paper copies of Inventory updates should be sent to the FRA at the following address. If you need additional information, assistance or have any questions, please call:

Thomas P. Woll  
Highway-Rail Crossing Safety Engineer  
Federal Railroad Administration (RRS-23)  
1120 Vermont Ave, NW, Mail Stop 25  
Washington, DC 20590

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