

# Traffic Note 42 – Revision 2

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## Work sites at or near level crossings - guidelines

### Introduction

An investigation into a fatal crash highlighted a number of issues not unique to this event occurring when road works are carried out near railway level crossings.

The Level Crossing Working Group, convened by the Land Transport New Zealand (Land Transport NZ) and comprising representatives of ONTRACK, railway operators, Transit NZ and other road controlling authorities (RCAs) as well as the network and rail regulation sections of Land Transport NZ considered these issues. They have recommended the actions described in this note and encourage RCAs and rail operators to follow the procedures outlined.

### Background

When road works take place near a level crossing the resultant work and the equipment and personnel used have obscured signs, markings or signals or forced drivers into positions from where they cannot clearly see these devices. The rail operator oversight of some road works has concentrated on ensuring there is no effect on the rail infrastructure and has not considered operational issues or options. These could include reducing train speeds (frequently done through work sites) or introducing manual control of automatic signalling systems.

While people involved in approving traffic management plans are frequently familiar with the locality of road works, the plans often make no mention of nearby rail facilities particularly level crossings and associated traffic control devices existing within the proposed work site. The likely outcome is inadequate consideration of the possible implications arising from rail and road vehicle interaction or the effect the work might have on traffic control devices currently in place.

## Notification and approval processes

For any work on the road, the chain of responsibility from RCA as principal to the person working on the road can be extensive. When a similar chain exists on the rail side (e.g. from the principal ONTRACK to the rail worker) opportunity for a breakdown in critical communication between the two responsible authorities clearly escalates.

Transit NZ has amended the *Code of Practice for Temporary Traffic Management (CoPTTM)* to highlight the need for the consideration of the safety issues related to works near level crossings and require contractors to notify ONTRACK of their proposed works. ONTRACK has amended their procedures when RCAs or their delegates seek approvals in relation to work planned near the railway corridor, particularly on roads approaching level crossings.

In addition, ONTRACK has defined procedures to be followed by their contractors when work is conducted within the rail corridor, particularly work at level crossings that could affect traffic on a road. This will include requirements to advise and, where necessary, gain agreement of the RCA to a traffic management plan.

## Traffic management plans

Whenever both rail and road corridors lie within a work site any traffic management plan must consider implications of the work and associated controls on the safe operation of each corridor.

It is essential critical features such as railway lines and traffic control devices (such as flashing light assemblies) are included on plans. This will ensure those involved in the design and approval of the plans fully consider the implications of the work on all traffic (including road and rail vehicles) through the site. CoPTTM has been amended to require this.

If work on the road would reduce the effectiveness of traffic control devices, reduce visibility of approaching trains, etc ONTRACK would need to be satisfied there were no alternate treatments and also consider what changes to their normal operating procedures could be justified. This may include reducing train speeds, installing temporary traffic control changes, requiring some positive traffic control at the work site for the level crossing, etc.

Work being carried out by ONTRACK contractors on the rail corridor might likewise affect the road network. Steps the RCA can introduce might readily mitigate these effects and improve worker and public safety. For example, the establishment of a traffic management plan including reduced speed limits and appropriate traffic control.

## Contact details

Transit NZ has further details on CoPTTM at <http://www.transit.govt.nz/technical/copttm.jsp>

Contact details for the ONTRACK Area offices can be found in Contact at [www.ontrack.govt.nz](http://www.ontrack.govt.nz) or phone 0800 Railsafe (0800 724 572).