

**Remarks Prepared for FRA Administrator Amit Bose
Multi-Modal Grade Crossing Symposium
Tuesday, January 16, 2024**

Good afternoon.

Thank you for joining today's gathering and for your engagement on this important topic.

I want to thank Ranking Member Payne for his participation in this grade crossing symposium and the FRA safety personnel responsible for organizing this virtual gathering.

At the start of 2024, I wanted draw attention to grade crossing safety.

We—all of us—must commit to decreasing the number of collisions, injuries, and fatalities that occur at highway-rail crossings and along rail rights of way – whether it's the FRA or our partners at the Federal Highway Administration, railroads, state and local Departments of Transportation, law enforcement. and organizations.

Today is another important opportunity to increase awareness about the seriousness of highway-rail crossing safety, rail trespassing, and persistent challenges in these areas.

It is an opportunity to collaborate and make progress on immediate and long-term actions that will potentially save lives and build the safer communities people need and deserve.

While there has been progress on these topics, train-vehicle collisions remain the second leading cause of rail-related deaths in America, and we cannot accept that reality as the status quo.

With over 200,000 at-grade crossings across the country, improving safety where tracks, roadways, and motor vehicles meet is a priority for FRA.

Our National Roadway Safety Strategy and the Department's ongoing safety programs are working towards a future with zero roadway fatalities and serious injuries.

The Safe Systems approach, included in the strategy very much holds relevance for the events that occur at many grade crossings all too frequently.

At the same time, FRA's Office of Railroad Safety has also doubled its grade crossing team in the past two years, and we are directly funding infrastructure improvements that will make grade crossings safer or eliminate them entirely through our Railroad Crossing Elimination Program and CRISI Program.

These programs are made possible by President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Last June, FRA announced more than \$570 million in Railroad Crossing Elimination grants for 63 projects in 32 States.

This inaugural round of funding will impact more than 400 at-grade crossings nationwide, improving safety for drivers and pedestrians as well as mobility.

And, I am proud to say awards are being made for projects in each of the top five counties for grade crossing collisions nationwide. This includes: Cook County, Illinois; Harris County, Texas; Broward County, Florida; Los Angeles County, CA; and Palm Beach, FL.

In Houston, Texas, in a neighborhood where we receive hundreds of reports of train blockages each year, we are funding a 9,000-foot sealed rail corridor and constructing four underpasses so people can move safely and without delay.

In Broward County, the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization is receiving nearly \$15.5 million to increase safety at 21 grade crossings along Florida's East Coast Rail Corridor that include Brightline Florida. The safety improvements made possible by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will deter motorists from driving around entrance gates by constructing 33 new exit gates and seven raised medians at crossings where at least 27 collisions have occurred over the last five years.

The City of Fort Lauderdale also received \$280,000 for a planning project to study an additional 15 crossings along the corridor.

And, in Los Angeles County, the largest of three awards going to the L.A. area will improve safety and reduce the risk of grade crossing collisions, particularly at Doran Street Crossing, which has one of the highest numbers of safety incidents in Los Angeles County.

These are just a couple of examples of the Bipartisan Infrastructure's RCE awards going to nearly every region of the country.

The U.S. Department of Transportation also has additional sources of funding to advance projects that improve safety and mobility, particularly at grade crossings.

The Reconnecting Communities Program, RAISE Program, and Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program are three examples.

Just last month, Secretary Pete Buttigieg was in Millen, Georgia, to announce a Rural Surface Transportation Grant that will implement three grade-separated rail crossings in an underserved area, which will improve daily access to employment centers, local county schools, and social services while minimizing delays.

With the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we can do more to fund infrastructure improvements—like overpasses and underpasses—to increase safety at highway-rail crossings or eliminate them altogether.

Still, we must take a multifaceted approach and ensure community engagement at all levels to promote safety and decrease risks for people on or near railroad tracks.

FRA has grade-crossing safety inspectors based in territories across the country, and these professionals inspect more than 200,000 grade crossings, perform critical outreach work to educate the public, and work with railroads, state departments of transportation, and communities to ensure compliance with FRA safety regulations.

FRA is proud of our partnership with Operation Lifesaver (OLI), and we will continue to support OLI's lifesaving work.

I do not need to tell you that collisions at grade crossings are deadly and tragic, and events are of the highest consequence for victims, train crews, rail passengers, emergency responders, and eyewitnesses.

Highway-rail grade crossing incidents, together with incidents caused by trespassing along the railroad right-of-way, account for 94% of all rail-related.

Let's all commit to safety at highway-rail crossings and along rail rights of way.

These incidents touch entire communities, and we must continue to take a multifaceted approach to advance safety.

The USDOT and FRA aim to support you and your communities, whether it be through federal funding opportunities I mentioned earlier or programming like today's multi-modal gathering.

I know you will receive important updates from FRA and FHWA today. Know that we are eager to continue working together to raise awareness and advance solutions that will reduce collisions and grade-crossing incidents.

Participation from local leaders like you is essential in this effort.

Again, let's continue to do as much as we can through FRA and our different offices, other agencies, stakeholders, and investments whether federal or non-federal.

Thank you again for joining and for your engagement.