GDOT is required to prioritize use of Section 130 funds. A GDOT objective is to maximize the safety benefits of limited Section 130 funding. The safety benefits of active warning device installations or improvements at one or more crossings are greatly increased when combined with elimination of one or more nearby crossings. An active warning device improvement combined with a crossing elimination approximately doubles the safety benefit, thus significantly increasing the priority of an accompanying active warning device improvement.

GDOT may contact a Local Authority to report a recommendation that a crossing be eliminated as a result of safety study or its process of prioritizing safety improvements. GDOT will work cooperatively with receptive Local Authorities, and consider and evaluate alternatives to its recommended safety improvements. GDOT will consider Section 130 funding of improvements involving crossing elimination provided the improvements meet Georgia Section 130 Program guidelines.

By Petition of the Railroad – O.C.G.A. § 32-6-193.1 directs that GDOT establish criteria by which GDOT and Local Authorities may assess whether eliminating a crossing without construction of a grade separation is reasonably necessary in the interest of public safety. Reasonably necessary in the interest of public safety means that the enhancement of public safety by eliminating the crossing outweighs any inconvenience to the reasonable passage of public traffic.

The Railroad may file a written petition with the authority responsible for the public way to eliminate a crossing without construction of a grade separation per O.C.G.A. § 32-6-193.1. The statute requires the Local Authority to conduct a public hearing prior to deciding to grant or deny the petition. The Local Authority shall use uniform criteria established in O.C.G.A. § 32-6-193.1 in assessing whether elimination of the grade crossing is reasonably necessary in the interest of public safety.

A Local Authority is required to report to the petitioning Railroad and GDOT its written order and findings either granting elimination of a crossing, or denying the Railroad's petition. In event of denial, the report to GDOT shall also include a copy of the Railroad's petition.
The Railroad may request GDOT review the Local Authority's order and findings. GDOT upon review shall issue an order that the crossing remain open, or an order to eliminate the crossing if elimination is reasonably necessary in the interest of public safety. The Railroad is responsible for the cost of the GDOT review if GDOT orders the crossing remain open. The Local Authority is responsible for the cost of the review if GDOT orders the crossing closed.

Other Section 130 Program Improvements – Other Section 130 Program improvements include installation of pre emption (interconnection between crossing signals and public way intersection signals at adjacent intersections), pre signals (highway signals that control public way traffic movement over a crossing), and crossing signal control equipment improvement.

Quiet Zones – Section 130 Program funding is limited to safety improvements only, and will not be used to fund improvements for the purpose of qualifying a Local Authority to apply to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for a Quiet Zone (QZ). A QZ is a location exempt from FRA rules that require the locomotive horn be sounded in approach to public crossings. Section 130 Program safety based active warning device improvements may be used by a Local Authority to seek a QZ on its own however.

Contact the Railroad Crossing Program Manager – with questions or for additional information concerning crossing elimination, or the Section 130 Program in Georgia. See GDOT's Railroad Crossing webpage for more information (including a link to the e mail address of the Railroad Crossing Program Manager) about the Section 130 Program:
http://www.dot.ga.gov/informationcenter/programs/safety/railroad/Pages/default.aspx

Crossing Surface Maintenance – See GDOT's Railroad Grade Crossing Maintenance webpage for general information on crossing surface maintenance:
http://www.dot.ga.gov/informationcenter/programs/safety/railroad/Pages/Maintenance.aspx

The State Highway Rail Grade Crossing Action Plan is available on the GDOT website at:
http://www.dot.ga.gov/doingbusiness/utilities/Pages/HwyRailActionPlan.aspx

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Railroad Crossing Program Manager
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Crossing Elimination and Federal Aid Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety Program

Overview – There are approximately 5,300 public highway rail grade crossings located within Georgia. Roughly 2,100 of the crossings are equipped with flashing lights and gates, and around 200 crossings are equipped with flashing lights only. Crossings equipped with these types of warning devices are referred to as active warning crossings because automatic devices operate to actively warn road users of trains approaching or occupying the crossing.

Crossings not equipped with active warning devices are referred to as passive crossings. The warning devices at these crossings (usually advance warning signs and pavement markings, and stop lines and crossbuck signs at the crossing) warn road users of the presence of a crossing, but the warning does not indicate if a train is approaching or occupying the crossing. There are approximately 3,000 passive public crossings in Georgia.

The Section 130 Program's purpose is to reduce the number and severity of hazards to users at qualified public crossings.

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) administers the federal aid crossing safety program commonly referred to as the Section 130 Program (23 USC § 130). The Section 130 Program's purpose is to reduce the number and severity of hazards to road users at qualified public crossings. There are four general categories of Section 130 Program crossing improvements:

- Active Warning Devices
- Passive Warning Devices
- Crossing Elimination
- Other Safety Improvements or Hazard Eliminations

Active Warning Devices – GDOT uses Section 130 Program funding to install active warning devices at passive crossings, or upgrade existing active warning devices. Examples or upgrades are replacing flashing lights only with flashing lights and gates, or upgrading flashing light signal units.

GDOT usually provides 100% of the funding for active warning device installations or improvements. GDOT typically includes installation or renewal of passive warning devices (advance warning signs and pavement markings, and crossing stop lines) as part of active warning device installation or improvement projects.

Minimum highway, road or street standards must be met in connection with active warning device projects. GDOT is responsible for any supplemental work or improvements on the state highway system required in connection with active warning device projects. GDOT may require the county or municipal government (Local Authority) that is responsible for the local road or city street to be responsible for supplemental work or improvements required to meet the minimum standards on county or municipal public ways. GDOT, at its discretion, may participate in funding, design and construction of supplemental improvements on local public ways however.

Supplemental work may include arranging for relocation or raising of aerial utilities to accommodate gate arms or extending culverts along track in connection with widening and/or paving the public way, or to accommodate crossing signal installation.

Passive Warning Devices – GDOT may use Section 130 Program funds to renew or install passive warning devices such as advance warning signs and pavement markings; center, lane and edge lines near crossings; and stop lines at crossings at active or passive warning device crossings. (Note O.C.G.A § 32-6-50 requires Railroads erect and maintain crossbuck signs at crossings.)

Crossing Elimination – Crossing elimination is the permanent closure of a public grade crossing without the construction an overpass or underpass to replace the grade crossing. Crossing elimination in Georgia may occur by three general means:

- Mutual agreement between the Local Authority and Railroad
- 23 USC - Section 130 Program crossing elimination
- By petition of the Railroad by established procedure of O.C.G.A. § 32-6-193.1

Mutual Agreement Elimination – The Local Authority and Railroad may mutually agree to eliminate a county or municipal public way crossing of their own accord without GDOT involvement. GDOT requests notification of any such closures for the purpose of updating public crossing databases.

Section 130 Elimination – GDOT may use Section 130 Program funds to match up to a $7,500 financial incentive payment by the Railroad to a Local Authority to eliminate a qualified public crossing. The Local Authority may contact GDOT to determine crossing eligibility for GDOT incentive payment for crossing closure. GDOT upon request will provide conceptual crossing elimination and signing and marking plans for qualified crossings.

Class I railroads (CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern) often offer the maximum $7,500 incentive to eliminate a main track crossing. GDOT may and usually does match this amount. In special circumstances they railroads may offer more than a $7,500 incentive to eliminate a crossing. Other railroads may offer financial incentives to eliminate crossings too.

Local Authority use of Railroad crossing closure incentive funds is not restricted by GDOT. The Section 130 incentive funds provided by GDOT must be used for public way safety however. Section 130 incentive funds may be used for removal of approach pavement, and installation of barriers and signage for a closed crossing. Other uses enhancing safety of public ways not associated with crossings are permitted. GDOT requires the Local Authority submit the following prior to GDOT remitting matching crossing elimination incentive funds to the Local Authority:

- A formal resolution signed by a majority of the Local Authority's Council or Commission declaring that the crossing is on its road or street system, and has been or will be permanently eliminated and closed to all traffic
- Documentation that the closure occurred through a public process subject to public input. Documentation of a public hearing, or that the crossing elimination was duly placed on a Council or Commission meeting agenda, and meeting minutes documenting the action taken to eliminate the crossing, fulfill the public process requirement
- Documentation that Railroad incentive funding has been received by the Local Authority
- Execution of an agreement with GDOT that specifies the Local Authority's use of Section 130 closure incentive funds