

## QUIET ZONE UPDATE

Finally heard back from BNSF (Jeremy Wegner). Good news is Belle Plaine is compliant on all 49 CFR Part 222 requirements in our Notice of Intent and can designate a Quiet Zone. Bad news is that BNSF has made an initial offer of only \$40K for the closure of Tenth Avenue/Line Street crossing. That is significantly less than the \$250K mentioned by Kamalah Young.

In 2015, FRA launched a campaign to encourage railroads and state DOTs to improve safety at the 200,000+ rail crossings in America. In May 2017, they published an in-depth analysis of grade crossing accidents. Findings include:

- Rail and traffic volumes have largest influence on accidents
- Higher volume of tracks leads to more accidents
- Having a road intersection near a crossing nearly doubles the risk
- Crossing angle of 30 degrees increases risk by 50%

Freight railroads spend hundreds of millions of dollars annually to maintain and improve grade crossings, including closure of unsafe crossings.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Section 130 funds (administered under Title 23 of United States Code) provides more than \$230 million annually to improve grade crossings. Matching funds from Section 130 are available to a local government if the railroad offers an incentive payment to close the crossing. A minimum of \$1.1 million is provided by FHWA to each state, set aside from that state's Highway Safety Improvement (HSIP) funds. Obligation period is three years. Certain projects can be funded at 100% federal share, including grade crossing closures. This money can be used for any public grade crossing, to fund preliminary engineering, design, and construction costs. In Kansas, KSA 68-509 delineates responsibilities for the elimination of rail grade crossings. Caveat: Section 130 funds cannot be used to fund Quiet Zones.

Soo Lines paid Pennington County commissioners \$75K to close a crossing at County Road 55, south of Hazel MN. Baton Rouge received a \$1.1 million grant from FRA to close six rail crossings used by Kansas City Southern Railroad.

## **BNSF STATISTICS**

United States has about 212,000 highway-railroad grade crossings, over 25,000 of which are on BNSF's network (16,800 public and 8,600 private).

Each state determines the location and types of grade-crossing signals. These crossing signals are under jurisdiction of road authorities (defined by Federal Highway Administration) as highway control devices, not railroad signals.

Federal funds pay about 90% of the cost for signal installation, while local jurisdictions pay the other 10%. The railroads then pay to maintain those signals from that point forward. Recurring maintenance costs over a ten year period typically equal the initial installation cost.

BNSF aggressively pursues grade-crossing consolidation (closure) as part of their safety initiatives. Since 2000, BNSF has closed more than 6,000 crossings.

BNSF annually spends about \$53 million on grade-crossing signal maintenance and repair. Together with grade-crossing improvements and safety programs, they annually spend about \$117 million.