

Grade Crossing Funds Debated

Two-day meeting of AAR Committee on Grade Crossings reveals that railroads believe state and federal governments should participate more fully in sharing the costs of maintaining highway grade crossing protection equipment.

COSTS OF MAINTAINING flashing-light signals with and without gates is a matter of growing importance, said J. M. Trissal, vice-president and chief engineer, Illinois Central. A survey made two years ago on his road showed that it cost \$474 per year to maintain flashing-light signals at a crossing. The maintenance cost per year for flashing-light signals and gates at a crossing was \$785. For 1959 these costs have risen to \$512 for the flashing-light signals alone, and \$855 for the flashing-light signals with automatic gates. Although such maintenance costs are subject to negotiation between state highway departments and the railroads, Mr. Trissal feels that the railroads are not getting a bargain when they must sign a 90%-10% agreement with the state for maintaining a property in perpetuity.

Where crossing protection equipment is damaged by vehicular traffic the railroad must pay for replacing the damaged equipment. The IC chief engineer remarked that this is unfair, and that some federal or state money should be available so that the railroad would have to pay only 10 per cent of this replacement cost.

Aid for Worn-out Equipment

Federal aid is available for replacement of worn-out flashing-light signals and/or automatic gates, as stated in the Bureau of Public Roads Policy and Procedure Memorandum 21-10 (paragraph d under section 20):

"The replacement of worn-out automatic signals previously installed with federal aid fund participation may be considered new projects and the railway share of the costs shall be 10 per cent thereof. Salvage credit will be determined under the provisions of PPM 30-3."

The Policy and Procedure Memo-

randum 21-10 was prepared by the Bureau of Public Roads, Department of Commerce, in cooperation with the Association of American Railroads Committee on Grade Crossings. PPM 21-10 sets standards for grade crossing separation and grade crossing protection projects. This memorandum and problems arising from it were discussed last month at a two-day meeting in Chicago of representatives of railroads, the AAR Committee on Grade Crossings, federal and state highway officials.

Mark U. Watrous, state highway engineer, Colorado Department of Highways, agreed with Mr. Trissal that state funds should be available for replacement of damaged crossing protection equipment at highways where state funds or federal funds were provided for the original installation. If equipment at a highway crossing were knocked down through no fault of the railroad and for which damage the railroad was unable to collect from the responsible party, Colorado is one of a few states that will participate in the replacement costs.

This Bureau of Roads PPM 21-10 recommends that flashing-light signals with short-arm gates are to be installed at:

"All grade crossings of highways with (a) multiple mainline railroad

tracks; (b) multiple track crossings with or without main tracks on which more than one train may occupy the crossing at the same time; (c) single or multiple track crossings where train operating speeds are 70 mph or greater, and sight distances are restricted."

In commenting on this section of the memorandum, Mr. Trissal said that the sole function of gates is to protect motorists from a train approaching on another track, and therefore questioned the use of gates at single-track crossings.

He also wondered why 70 mph was taken as the breaking point to decide whether gates or flashing-light signals and gates are to be installed. He was concerned because the Interstate Commerce Commission breaking point for signal devices is 79 mph. His comment was that if the state commerce or public utility commission should decide that flashing-light signals only are required at a crossing where the speed is less than 70 mph, then federal aid would not be applicable (even though this crossing was a federally financed project). In such a case the railroads will find themselves in a position of being required to pay a higher proportion of the costs of grade crossing protection equipment.

The Bureau of Public Roads has no responsibility or authority for paying any of the costs of maintenance of highway grade crossings, commented H. H. Hale, assistant to vice-president, highways, AAR. As no federal funds have been provided, he said that railroad men must work at the state level to be relieved of any of this maintenance expense.



Maintenance costs of crossing protection equipment go on long after original cost is paid.