EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2014

The Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Rail Crossing Recommendations for the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) establishes regional recommendations that may be applied to both existing and future pedestrian and bicycle shared-use path crossings at active railroad lines. Within Maricopa County there are currently several existing and planned pedestrian/bicycle shared-use paths that cross railroad tracks not located on public streets or at intersections. At present, no regional guidelines exist for the treatment of these unique pathway crossings of railroads.

Study Stakeholders

The following stakeholders participated in development of these Guidelines: Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), City of Chandler, Town of Gilbert, City of Tempe, Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), Salt River Project (SRP), Roosevelt Water Conservation District (RWCD), Arizona Operation Lifesaver (AZOL), Arizona Bicycle Club (ABC), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) – Railroad Safety Division and Arizona Depart of Transportation (ADOT) – Utilities and Railroad Engineering. The Guidelines are applicable to non-motorized shared use path crossings throughout Maricopa County.

Study Sites

Seven (7) crossings, in Gilbert, Chandler and Tempe, were identified for specific focus of this study. Safety concerns at site 7 prompted the Town of Gilbert to pursue a grade-separated solution.
Improvement Crosshocking Checklist

This checklist was developed to guide the process. Before beginning a dialog with the railroad, a comprehensive inventory of existing railroad crossing environment and infrastructure is suggested. Collect detailed information about the railroad crossing location and type, crossing #, crossing surface and approach material, types of warning devices and signage present, location of nearest mass transit and schools, nearby development and current railroad activity. Contact the railroad directly or visit the FRA website for specific railroad data such as train speed, branch and movements. Reference ‘At-Grossing Infrastructure Flowchart’ to determine recommended safety treatments. Once the budget and preliminary cost of safety improvements have been established, contact with railroad and all agencies involved can be initiated.

**STEP 3: Determinative Recommended Crossing Infrastructure**

**1. Intensive Management Crossing Elements**

Apply the Crossing, Intensive Management Flowchart to determine the appropriate Pedestrian/Railroad Crossing Recommendations.*

*For the sake of clarity, this section is not fleshed out further in this document.

**2. Consider the Flowchart recommended Treatments:****

Traffic/Land Use: Follow the “Flowchart” to determine recommended infrastructure. This flowchart will help in determining a base point of expected level of improvements at the pedestrian/bike pathway crossing with a railroad. The flowchart begins with a review of warrants for crossing infrastructure.

**Legal Context and Framework**

The seven pathway/private railroad crossing locations in this study exist in a unique legal realm still being formed and explored by several parties. The lack of legal clarity needs to be recognized by municipalities as they consider making improvements to pathway/private railroad crossings.

There are four entities that have vested interests in and legal history with these specific study location crossings. 1) The Union Pacific Corporation is one of the largest and oldest transportation companies in the United States, having prior rights since the late 1880’s in Arizona. Recreational pathway users crossing a non-recognized railroad or private crossing are trespassing on UPRR property. Currently, UPRR recommends each crossing obtain a Private Use Agreement between the City and the UPRR. 2) The Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) is the state agency charged with oversight and regulation of public utilities. Oversight includes railroads when they intersect with City streets and public spaces. The regulatory authority of the ACC has not yet applied to multi-use pathway railroad crossings. Trail and pathway crossings are built for non-motorized vehicles, and therefore don’t fall into the ACC jurisdiction of “public highway or street[s].” 3) Salt River Project (SRP) is a quasi-governmental utility serving Central Arizona, providing approximately 1 million acre-feet of water annually to a 375-square-mile service area. SRP manages an extensive system of reservoirs, wells, canals, and irrigation laterals and has been supportive of recreational use on their canals banks for a number of years. The study locations are at canals or sidewalks that intersect UPRR lines. 4) To respond to demands and needs of their citizens, East Valley incorporated cities and towns are looking at existing infrastructure (canals and railroad corridors) for opportunities for enhanced recreational bicycle and pedestrian facilities. A systematic, predictable, and regionally approved approach to safe and approved recreational pathway/private railroad crossings is warranted.

**Improvement Crosshocking Checklist**

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**At Grazing Crossing Infrastructure Selection Flowchart**

This flowchart will help in determining a base point of expected level of improvements at the pedestrian/bicycle pathway crossing with a railroad. The flowchart begins with a review of warrants for crossing infrastructure.