



ODOT Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program Guide

1. Overview

In 2019, Congress appropriated special funding that was made available for rail crossing safety improvements. These one-time-only funds are a unique opportunity to address safety concerns at crossings by upgrading aging infrastructure for the benefit of both the traveling public and the railroads' employees. The ODOT Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program will make funds available to Railroads for the purchase of:

- Equipment replacement/upgrades such as crossing masts, lights, gates, equipment cabinets, etc., to upgrade and/or replace aging and unreliable apparatus.
- Signage replacement/upgrades that warn vehicle, pedestrian, and bike traffic of a railroad-highway grade crossing that are faded, vandalized, missing, or otherwise damaged.

Available funds will be split between two eligible project groups: crossing projects that serve populations under 5,000 and crossing projects that serve populations between 5,001 – 200,000.

This use of the funds serves two key purposes:

- Through the population-based eligibility, helping ensure that the money is distributed fairly to those areas that are in need of safety upgrades.
- Realizing benefits to public safety that come from properly equipped railroad-highway grade crossings.

This Program Guide includes information on eligibility, the application process, the evaluation and award process, funding match requirements, and other information that will help Applicants plan their projects and apply for funding. As shown in the timeline below, the turnaround time for application, award, execution, and reimbursement is condensed. To help Applicants successfully plan project timelines, this Program Guide includes a draft Subrecipient Grant Agreement template¹ as well as information on reimbursement. Applicants are strongly encouraged to read this Program Guide in full before completing their applications.

Program Timeline	
Applications Due	11:59 p.m. May 1, 2026
Awards Announced (estimated)	June 1, 2026
Project completed	June 15, 2027
All invoices submitted	June 30, 2027

¹ The Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program Federal Subrecipient Grant Agreement provided in this Guide is a draft and is subject to change.

2. Attachments and Reference Documents

This Program Guide includes a number of links to additional resource documents. For convenience, all links are also listed here.

- [11th Edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices \(MUTCD\)](#).
- [Oregon Supplement to MUTCD 11th Edition](#).
- [OAR Chapter 741 Divisions 100, 110, and 115](#).
- [Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program Application](#).
- Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program [Federal Subrecipient Grant Draft Agreement Template](#). Template is subject to change.
- Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program [Subrecipient Procurement Checklist](#).

3. Eligible Projects

3.1. Eligible Equipment and Signage Purchases

Program funds are available to Railroads for the purpose of purchasing equipment and/or signage for the improvement of rail crossings as outlined in the Overview. Further details can be found in Appendix A, which lists example crossing equipment and signage eligible in the Program. While ODOT anticipates that project requests will include items from this list, Applicants are not limited solely to these items. In their project description, Applicants must provide a rationale for items requested that are not included in the example list.

3.1.1 Materials Purchasing and Installation Requirements

Subrecipients of Program funds must follow federal procurement requirements in making their purchases. In support of this requirement, a [Subrecipient Procurement Checklist](#) must be completed and approved by ODOT prior to reimbursement.

Installed materials must be in compliance with the requirements of the [11th Edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices \(MUTCD\)](#) and the [Oregon Supplement to MUTCD 11th Edition](#). Installation must also be in compliance with [OAR Chapter 741 Divisions 100, 110, and 115](#). Requirement documents are available above in Section 2.

All installations will be reviewed for compliance by ODOT's Rail Crossing Inspector.

3.1.2 Materials Installation Completion and Compliance

Eligible projects must be able to be completed by June 15, 2027. Non-compliant issues must be resolved no later than June 30, 2027; costs for remedies for noncompliance will be the responsibility of the subrecipient.

3.2 Requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) apply to all projects that receive federal funds (directly or through the State) or that need a federal approval or permit.

3.2.1 ODOT Environmental Services Project Support

As part of the program award, ODOT will address compliance with NEPA with the cooperation of Subrecipient. The process of addressing compliance is referred to as the "environmental review process."

3.2.2 NEPA Project Cost Estimate

As an estimate of the cost for ODOT's conduct of the environmental review process, the online Application form automatically adds \$25,000 to the project cost estimate. The scope of ODOT's work will be based on factors such as project location and type of equipment and will be determined after award in a Project Kick-Off Meeting with the subrecipient and ODOT Environmental representative. Environmental review costs that exceed the estimated \$25,000 will be the responsibility of the subrecipient.

3.2.3. Coordination with ODOT

Subrecipients will be responsible for coordinating with ODOT to complete the environmental review. Subrecipients will be responsible for submitting to ODOT all documentation required to comply with the review process. Prior to incurring any procurement costs, projects must meet requirements for complying with the environmental review process and subrecipients must receive a Notice to Proceed from ODOT.

3.2.4 NEPA Completion

NEPA work will vary by project, ranging from up to two weeks for installations with no ground disturbance, to up to six months if field survey and clearances are needed.

An ODOT environmental review expert will monitor the project site to ensure compliance. Non-compliant issues must be resolved; costs for remedies for noncompliance are the responsibility of the subrecipient at 100% of cost.

Eligible projects must be in compliance with all NEPA requirements by June 15, 2027.

3.3 Ineligible Costs

Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program funds can only be used for the purchase of equipment and/or signage, and for paying ODOT for services in support of the environmental review process. They cannot be used to pay for labor or administrative costs, nor any other project development costs such as design, preliminary engineering, or construction.

3.4 Match Share

Subrecipients of Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program funds are required to provide a match equal to 10.27% of eligible project costs, as authorized by an agreement between the subrecipient and ODOT.

3.4.1. Environmental Review

At the time of application, an estimate of \$25,000 in program funds is automatically added to the project cost estimate for ODOT's work on the environmental review process ("NEPA costs"). Subrecipients will be billed directly on a monthly basis for their 10.27% match requirement as NEPA costs are incurred. Note that any NEPA costs in excess of the \$25,000 estimate are the responsibility of the subrecipient, at 100% of cost.

3.4.2. Equipment and Signage

ODOT will provide funds for purchases of eligible equipment and signage to subrecipient on an expense-incurred reimbursement basis. The required 10.27% match will be deducted from the subrecipient's invoiced amount for those eligible purchases.

4. How to Apply

The [Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program Application](#) is web-based and produced using the Cognito platform.

4.1 Application Due Date

All applications must be submitted electronically by 11:59 p.m. on May 1, 2026.

4.2. Application Content

The application consists of information entered directly into the Cognito platform and attachments uploaded to it by the Applicant. Applicants will be able to save unfinished applications on the system prior to submitting their final to ODOT. Brief instructions on how to use the application and explanations of the content can be found in the online application.

Required information for the application includes:

- Applicant Contact Information.
- Project Location and Population Category.
- Project Description:
 - Problem statement and proposed solution.
 - Project scope, including an aerial photo of the location.
 - Project schedule.
 - Risk mitigation.
- Cost Estimate, including a line item budget.

5. Application Evaluation

The Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program awards funding on a competitive basis. Project selection criteria for evaluating applications were developed based on the federal requirements for Section 133 funds and the goals of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan.

5.1 Project Eligibility Review

Prior to application evaluation and scoring, the Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program Coordinator will ascertain that the applicant's request meets the following eligibility requirements:

- The population of the project location fits with the funding request category
- The intended purchase is in alignment with the rail crossing equipment and/or signage as listed in the Rail Crossing Equipment and Signage Materials reference document provided in Appendix A of this Program Guide
- The applicant is prepared to meet required Railroad matching funds

ODOT's Program Coordinator will alert the Applicant within three business days of receipt if the project application has not met eligibility requirements.

ODOT reserves the right to contact an Applicant after the submission of an application for the purpose of clarifying the application to ensure mutual understanding. ODOT will not consider information received if the information materially alters the content of the application. Failure to comply with requests for additional information may result in the rejection of the application as non-compliant.

5.2 Criteria for Selection

Eligible projects will be scored by the ODOT Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Evaluation Committee using the criteria below. The Committee will finalize all award recommendations.

5.2.1 Safety Improvement (45 points)

Does the rail crossing location have a history of incidents or failures that this project can mitigate or eliminate for improved safety?

- Projects that can show a probable reduction in safety concerns will receive more points.
- Applicants should include data and information regarding factors that increase the importance of safety mitigation such as vehicle and train speed, multi-modal traffic levels, hazardous materials routing, etc.

What is the urgency for upgrading the current equipment or signage, e.g., in terms of the age, condition, or technical capabilities?

- Projects addressing older equipment with more significant capability gaps compared to currently available equipment designs and technology will receive more points.
- Applicants should provide information on:
 - The model numbers, age, installation date, and current condition of all equipment targeted for upgrade, including batteries, predictors, etc.
 - Reasons that equipment or signals are considered inadequate to needs.

5.2.2 Readiness (15 Points)

Given the short timeframe available for this program, have potential risks to scope, schedule, and budget been described and addressed in the project plan?

- Thorough project schedules that address plans for the procurement process, staff availability, installation resources, and quick turnaround times will receive more points.

Has the project schedule provided sufficient time for the environmental review process as required to comply with the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA)?

- Applicants are encouraged to consider installation factors such as whether the project requires new ground disturbance, or whether it is within a previously disturbed gravel or paved area.

5.3 Award Notification

Awards are estimated to be announced on June 1, 2026. ODOT will notify all Applicants of their results via email.

6. Grant Agreement Template

In order to streamline the process for project delivery, ODOT has created a [Federal Subrecipient Grant Draft Agreement Template](#) (“Draft Agreement”). The Draft Agreement does not need to be signed at the time of application; however, Applicants should thoroughly review it as a key source of information for their project timeline, plan, and cost estimate.

The Draft Agreement is subject to change prior to final Program awards. Note that any post-award changes made to this template by the subrecipient will increase turnaround times for agreement execution.

7. Post-Award Invoicing and Reimbursement

The Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program is an expense-incurred reimbursement program.

7.1 Invoice Requirements and Timing

Important to note: Purchases of eligible materials may not be made until after the environmental review process has been successfully completed at the project site, and ODOT has issued a Notice to Proceed.

Subrecipients may only submit invoices for reimbursement after they have expended funds (paid bills) on eligible materials. Invoices must include supporting documentation such as itemized receipts and proof of payment to vendors.

ODOT will deduct subrecipient's matching cost of 10.27% from each eligible invoice and will reimburse 89.73%.

Accurate and complete invoices must be submitted to ODOT no later than June 30, 2027.

7.2 ODOT Environmental Review Process Billing

NEPA costs will be billed directly to the Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program. Services will be billed to the Program monthly as delivered throughout the duration of the project.

In turn, the subrecipient's match of 10.27% will be billed to the subrecipient on a monthly basis until NEPA activities are completed. Bills for NEPA costs must be paid within 45 days of receipt.

All NEPA billing must be completed by June 30, 2027

8. Program Questions

Applicants who have questions regarding the Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program can submit them to the Program Coordinator using the email below. Submitted questions will be answered within two business days.

Ruth Price, Rail Crossing Program Coordinator

Oregon Department of Transportation

Commerce and Compliance Division

Email: [CCD Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Program](mailto:CCD.RailCrossingSafetyImprovementProgram@odot.gov)

Exhibit D (from Subrecipient Draft Agreement):

Examples of Eligible Equipment and Signage for Reimbursement

This is a list of examples and is not all inclusive. In their project description, Applicants must provide a rationale for items requested that are not in the example list.

Equipment

Additional Flashing Lights
Another Train Coming Blank Out Sign
Automated Horn System and Indicators
Automatic Gate <= 26 feet in length
Automatic Gate > 26 feet in length
Automatic Gate, Unknown Length
Batteries
Bungalow (Crossing Cabinet)
Cantilevered Flashing-Light Signal
Crossbuck Post Reflective Tape
Crossing Predictor/Crossing Analyzer Upgrade
(Example: GCP3000, PMD-2, HXP-1, 3 track circuit crossing)
Dwarf Railroad Signals
Flasher For Sidewalks (TriMet)
Flashing-Light Signal
Gate Closure Device
Led Lights
Operations Recorder (Data Logger)
Pedestrian Flashing-Light Signal
Push Button To Turn On Warning Lights
Queue Activated Do Not Stop On Tracks
Rectifier
Relays: Update old relays, shelf relays to new plug in style
Traffic Signal Preemption Control
Train-Activated Advance Warning Device
TSPC Interface Box On RR Signal House
VTS Backup Power Supply
Wigwag

Signage

Crossbuck
Crossbuck/Stop Sign Assembly
Crossbuck/Yield Sign Assembly
Emergency Notification System Sign
Exempt Sign
Look Sign
No Train Horn Plaque
No Train Horn Sign
No Trespassing Sign
Number Of Tracks Plaque
Number Of Tracks Sign
Plaque For W10-5 Sign
Private Crossing Sign
Railroad Stop Sign
Signposts (Material Only)
Tracks Out-Of-Service Sign