Appendix K

Crossing Closure Exception Memo

NDOR
Nebraska
Department of Roads

Memorandum

DATE September 3, 2014

TO Randall D. Peters, P.E.
Director-State Engineer

FROM Todd Palmer, Railroad Liaison Engineer TP

THRU Ryan Huff, Rail & Public Transportation Engineer RHH

SUBJECT Bridgeport Viaduct Study NH-26-1(161) CN 51299
Request for Exception to Rules and Regulations for Highway-Rail Grade Crossing
Title 415, Chapter 5, Paragraph 004.05
Number of Public At-grade Crossings Closures

We request an exception to the Rules & Regulations for Highway-Rail Grade Crossings (effective date December 14, 2004) which requires closing a minimum of two public at-grade crossings when building a grade separation. If NDOR builds a viaduct to span over railroad tracks at or near BNSF Railroad grade crossing 089-081-B, US-26, Reference Post 60+92 on the west edge of Bridgeport, it is reasonable to close only that one crossing.

NDOR is in the early stages of studying the possibility of building a viaduct over BNSF tracks on the west edge of Bridgeport. An environmental assessment is being prepared. For project details, see the attached fact sheet.

Title 415, Chapter 5, paragraph 004.05 states the following: "new grade separation project will require closing a minimum of two public at-grade crossings: one at or near the location of the structure and one or more others as selected and approved by the Department and the political subdivision. " Per paragraph 004.05A "Exceptions to the conditions of 004.05 may be granted only upon a finding of unique or unusual circumstances by the Director or Deputy Director-Engineer of the Nebraska Department of Roads."

The request for exception is based on a review of the surrounding highway-rail crossings. To the north and east, NDOR has a viaduct over railroad tracks at US-26, Reference Post 62+22 (US-26 is common with US-385 along this segment) at Northport just north of Bridgeport. Farther to the north (and west) there is a viaduct over BNSF tracks at US-385, Reference Post 76+52.

To the south the next crossing is approximately 0.67 miles away. This is BNSF grade crossing 089-080-U located at N-88, Reference Post 58+80. At this location, the average train traffic is currently 26 trains per day while the highway traffic volume is currently 1,305 ADT. The exposure factor is about 34,000. This is less than the 50,000 required by Title 415, Chapter 5, Paragraph 004.04A for a new grade-separated structure.

In lieu of a new grade separated structure, the N-88 grade crossing could be closed if N-88 were to be re-aligned and connected to US-26 west of the proposed viaduct. This idea has been brought up by some in the community, and was commented on at our recent public information meeting. A re-alignment was suggested as less expensive than building a separate viaduct at the N-88 crossing.

Despite being less expensive than a grade-separated structure, we recommend that NDOR not pursue a re-alignment of N-88 at this time for the following reasons:

1. Traffic volumes at the N-88 crossing do not appear to be an issue. Future highway traffic volumes at this location are not expected to increase significantly (1,805 ADT in 2040). In addition, the railroad does not project a significant increase in future train traffic.

2. Crash mitigation does not appear to be an issue based on crash records. In the period 4-1-2011 thru 3-31-2014 there was one reportable property damage accident at the junction of N-88 with US-385 and one non-reportable property damage crash at the highway-rail crossing. The circumstance of the latter was vehicles stopped for a train when one vehicle backed up hitting the vehicle behind it and leaving the scene without providing information. Further review of a 10-year crash history revealed that there were no other crashes at the highway-rail crossing.

3. Additional funding would have to be secured for this added capital improvement. Although re-aligning N-88 has not been studied by NDOR, the shortest path to reasonably connect to US-26 (about ¼ mile west of the corporate limit) is approximately one mile of new two-lane alignment. Assuming $1 million per mile, the cost would be $1 million. If the new roadway had to avoid impacts, the alignment would become longer and cost more.

4. It does not meet the purpose and need of the project. The current study would need to back up, and in a sense start over, by changing the purpose and need.

Furthermore, at a recent public information meeting, some respondents expressed opposition to closing the N-88 crossing because in their opinion it would be detrimental to the business district and damage the Bridgeport economy. Another public information meeting is being planned for early 2015.

To conclude, we request an exception to the rules and regulations and ask that you approve the closure of only one public at-grade crossing for the Bridgeport Viaduct project.

Concurrence:

Randall D. Peters, P.E.
Director-State Engineer

9/3/14
Date

RH/TP/RPT19-NZ

Attachment

cc: Craig Lind, District 5 Engineer
Jim Wilkinson, Planning & Location Studies Engineer
Jim Knott, Roadway Design Engineer
Mike Owen, Planning & Project Development Engineer