



Transport Accident
Investigation
Commission

Watchlist 2026

The road-rail interface

What is the problem?

In recent years, rail industry participants have made some progress towards resolving the safety issues in relation to the safety of level crossings. However, we continue to receive high numbers of level crossing accident and incident notifications. Even when accidents cause limited train damage or minor injuries, such events can be traumatic for all involved.

What is the solution?

The ideal solution is the separation of road and rail infrastructure. But in many cases, this is not economically practical. In the absence of physical separation, the regulator, business operators, and road controlling authorities need to work closely to ensure safety through other means. The interface between rail and surrounding infrastructure must provide the appropriate level of protection for road vehicles, trains, and those on board.

Previous Transport Accident Investigation Commission inquiries highlighted safety improvements for road vehicles at level crossings. We found ambiguities in who is responsible for the safety at the interface of the roading and rail networks; and changes to rules and standards for road vehicles, such as permissible lengths and clearances, are incompatible with the conditions at some level crossings such as sight lines and road camber. The response to our recommendations has been positive, but with growing patronage and frequency of trains in metropolitan areas especially, we consider the potential remains for serious accidents to occur. We continue to monitor the situation.

How is safety at the road-rail interface managed?

When vehicles use level crossings, the potential exists for serious accidents to occur. Safety measures depend on infrastructure, technology, systems, and users working together. For this to happen, the responsibilities of the regulator, business operators, and road controlling authorities – and how they co-operate – must be clear.

What recommendations have we made?

A train colliding with a road vehicle, especially a heavy vehicle, is a serious safety issue. The Commission has inquired into several such collisions, sometimes fatal. We made findings and recommendations about the need for collective action and clear responsibilities to ensure the design of rail infrastructure keeps pace with changes in vehicle technology, sight lines at level crossings remain clear, and there are effective traffic management plans in place where there are road works close to a level crossing.¹

Why is the Commission concerned?

The Commission acknowledges the progress that recipients of recommendations have made towards implementing them. However, the number of notifications for level crossing accidents and incidents remains high and increases in road traffic and the expansion of the rail network in metropolitan areas means that we remain concerned that a serious accident will occur. We intend to continue monitoring the situation.

References to reports and recommendations

¹ RO-2014-101: *Collision between heavy road vehicle and the Northern Explorer passenger train, Te Onetea Road level crossing, Rangiriri, 27 February 2014*
[RO-2014-101 | TAIC](#)

Safety recommendation 013/16 implemented

RO-2011-104: *Freight Train 261 collision with bus, Beach Road level crossing, Paekakariki, 31 October 2011*

[RO-2011-104 | TAIC](#)

Urgent safety recommendation 030/11, Safety recommendation 031/11 implemented/ implemented

RO-2002-113 *Passenger express Train 700 TranzCoastal and petrol tanker, near collision, Vickerman Street level crossing, near Blenheim, 24 April 2002*

[RO-2002-113 | TAIC](#)

Safety recommendation 036/02 implemented

RO-1996-106 *Express passenger train T903, collision with motor vehicle, Templeton, Canterbury, 17 May 1996*

[RO-1996-106 | TAIC](#)

Safety recommendation 064/96 implemented

RO-2017-105: Collision between freight Train 353 and heavy motor vehicle, Lambert Road level crossing, near Kawerau, 6 October 2017

[RO-2017-105 | TAIC](#)

Safety recommendations 031/18, 032/18, 033/18, 034/18 all implemented

RO-2019-108: Level crossing collision, Piako Road, Morrinsville, 7 December 2019

[RO-2019-108 | TAIC](#)

Safety recommendations 006/21, 007/21 implemented/ implemented

RO-2020-103: Collision between bus and locomotive, Clevely Line level crossing, Bunnythorpe, 16 September 2020

[RO-2020-103 | TAIC](#)

Safety recommendation 008/21 implemented

RO-2020-101: Level crossing collision, Mulcocks Road, Flaxton, 10 February 2020

[RO-2020-101 | TAIC](#)

Safety recommendation 012/21 implemented

RO-2022-103: KiwiRail W6 shunt and Metro (Go Bus) Route 60 bus, near miss at Selwyn Street level crossing, 8 August 2022

[RO-2022-103 | TAIC](#)

Safety recommendations 031/23 and 032/23 under consideration/ under consideration

RO-2022-104: L1 shunt train and heavy goods vehicle, level crossing collision and derailment, Whangārei, 7 December 2022

[RO-2022-104 | TAIC](#)

Safety recommendations 001/24 and 002/24 (The Commission also gave notice of these recommendations to all road controlling authorities in New Zealand) under consideration/ under consideration

This safety concern was first published as a Watchlist item 2016 as part of another item and first re-published in this form in 2024.

Te Kōmihana Tirotiro Aituā Waka

Transport Accident Investigation Commission

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The Transport Accident Investigation Commission is an independent Crown entity established to determine the circumstances and causes of accidents and incidents with a view to avoiding similar occurrences in the future rather than to ascribe blame to any person.