



Memorandum

**U.S. Department of
Transportation**

Office of the Secretary
of Transportation

Office of Inspector General

Subject: INFORMATION: Audit Announcement—
Notification of Audit of Highway-Rail Grade
Crossing Inspections, Accident Reporting, and
Investigations
Project No. 04M3016M000

Date: August 31, 2004

From: Debra S. Ritt 
Assistant Inspector General
for Surface and Maritime Programs

Reply to JA-40
Attn of:

To: Acting Federal Railroad Administrator

At the request of Representative James L. Oberstar, Ranking Democratic Member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure; Representative Corrine Brown, Ranking Democratic Member of the House Subcommittee on Railroads; and Senator Ernest F. Hollings, Ranking Democratic Member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation; we are initiating an audit of highway-rail grade crossing inspections, accident reporting, and investigations. The focus of this audit will differ significantly from the grade crossing safety report we issued on June 16, 2004. Our recent report focused on the Department of Transportation's progress in implementing its Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety Action Plan (Report No. MH-2004-065), highlighting accident trends for targeting future grade crossing improvements. We also reported on how states have used Federal safety funds to close or equip crossings with automatic warning devices, such as flashing lights and gates.

Our new audit planned for August 2004 will address safety issues identified by the *New York Times* July 11 and July 12, 2004 articles and focus on the laws and regulations governing grade crossing safety inspections, accident reporting requirements, and accident investigation procedures. Our specific objectives will be to assess the adequacy of FRA's oversight of highway-rail grade crossing inspections, accident reporting, and accident investigations. Since the audit

work will address many issues, as shown in the attached congressional request letter, we plan to issue a series of reports to expedite communication of our audit results.

We will contact your audit liaison to schedule a formal entrance conference to discuss the planned audit. We plan to conduct audit work at the headquarters offices of FRA and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which provides funding for grade crossing safety programs, in addition to selected FRA regional offices, FHWA division offices, and state highway agencies. The Program Director for the audit is Michael E. Goldstein and the Project Manager is Brenda R. James. For any additional information, please contact me at (202) 493-0331 or Mr. Goldstein at (212) 264-8701.

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Attachment

cc: FHWA Administrator, HOA-1
Martin Gertel, M-1
Debra Steward, RAD-20
Cynthia Thornton, HAIM-13