Presentation to House Transportation Committee Hearing on HB 4757

Related to Funding for Public Roadway Grade Crossing Surfaces

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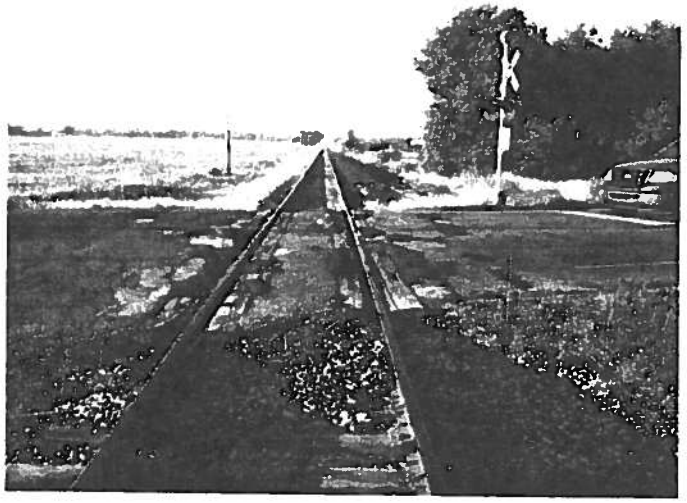
Highway Rail Grade Crossing Surfaces

Railroads are statutorily required to maintain smooth surfaces when the track crosses public roadways. This requirement was established in the 1800's long before automobiles and trucks were invented. Railroads are still responsible for the expensive maintenance of the crossing surfaces, even though motor vehicles and heavy trucks do the majority of the damage.

We support the legislature establishing a public roadway/railroad grade crossing surface repair fund where the railroads can match state resources to repair and rehab crossing surfaces.



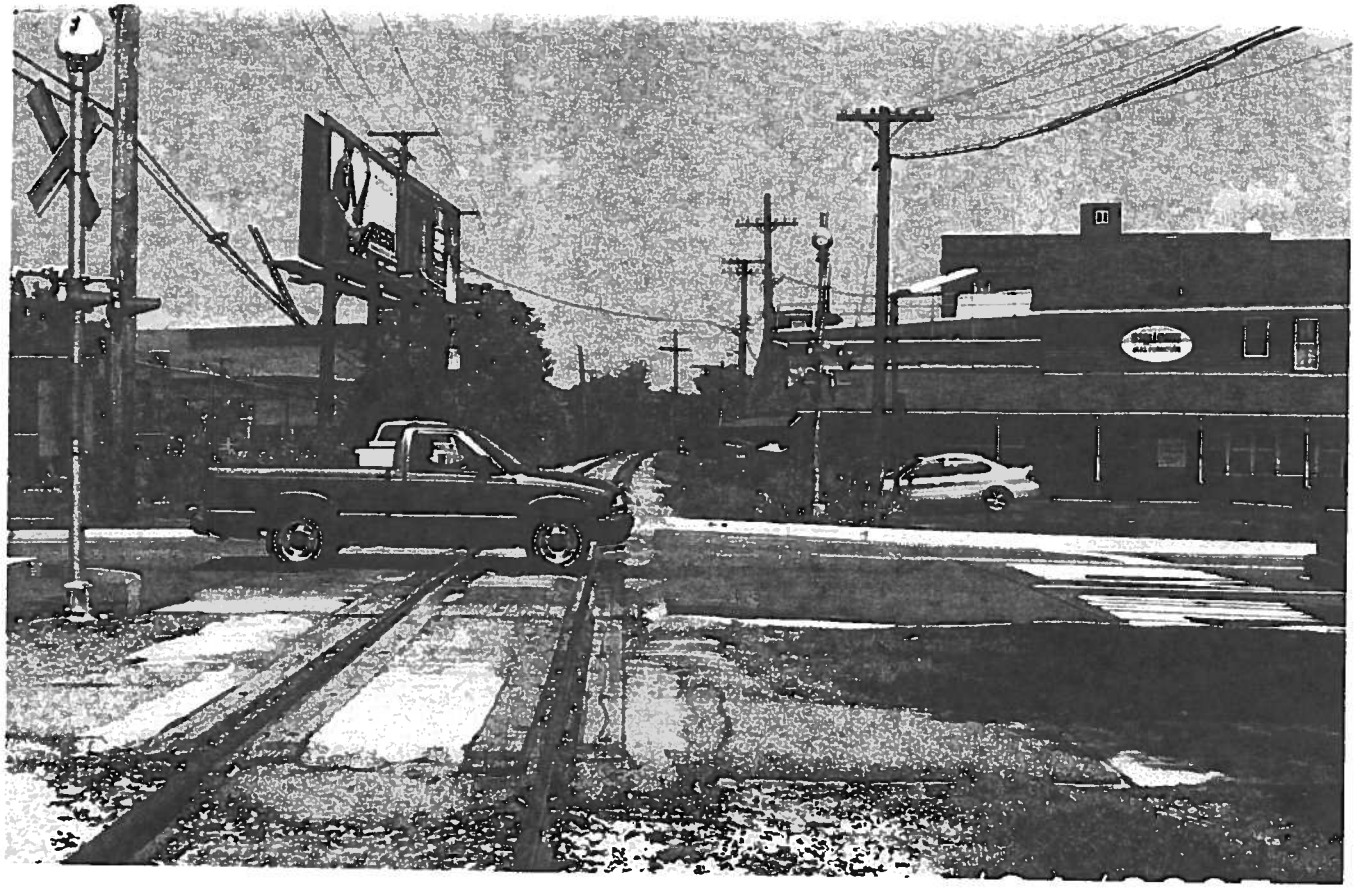
Short Line Challenges

Railroading is an extremely capital intensive business. Railroads spend nearly 18% of their revenue on capital investment including their track structure. This compares to the approximately 3.4% the average manufacturer spends on its capital investment. So it comes as no surprise that short lines are often cash strapped.

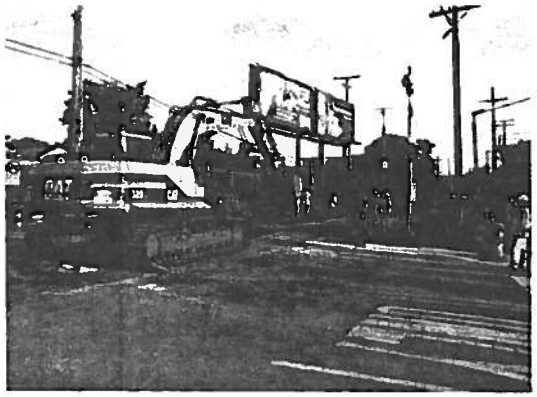
At some locations we have had assistance by the road authorities with funding premium crossing surface materials or furnishing the asphalt paving in the track area, approach paving and road closure detour signage during crossing surface reconstruction projects. As they recognize the public benefit the smooth surface brings to the roadway.

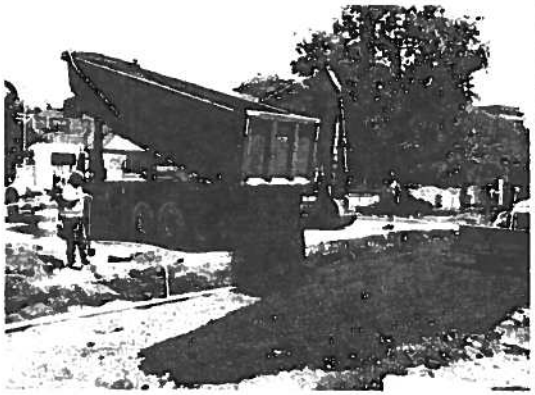
In 2005 MDOT had a limited Pilot Crossing Surface Program in which two of the Ann Arbor Railroad's crossing surfaces were reconstructed.

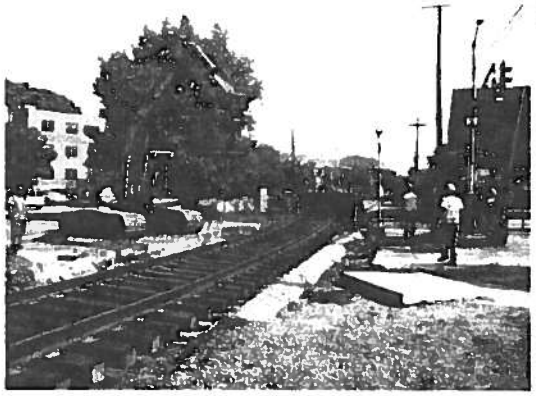
- Liberty Street crossing (72 ft.) in Ann Arbor cost $68,000 to reconstruct and of that amount the MDOT pilot program paid $32,000 to cover the material costs.
- The traffic count at the Liberty Street crossing is 6,000 vehicles and 2 trains per day.
- State Street crossing (240 ft.) in Ann Arbor cost $186,000 to reconstruct and of that amount the MDOT pilot program paid $112,000 to cover the material costs.
- The traffic count at the State Street crossing is 19,000 vehicles and 2 trains per day.

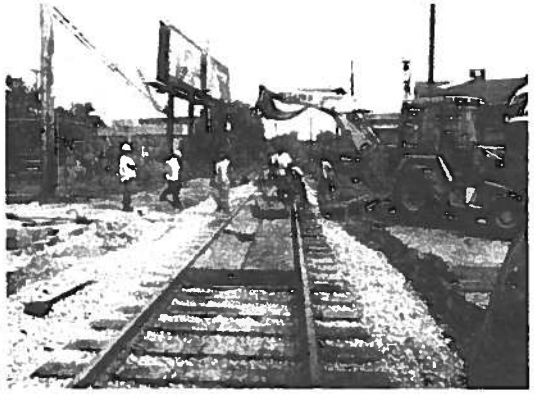


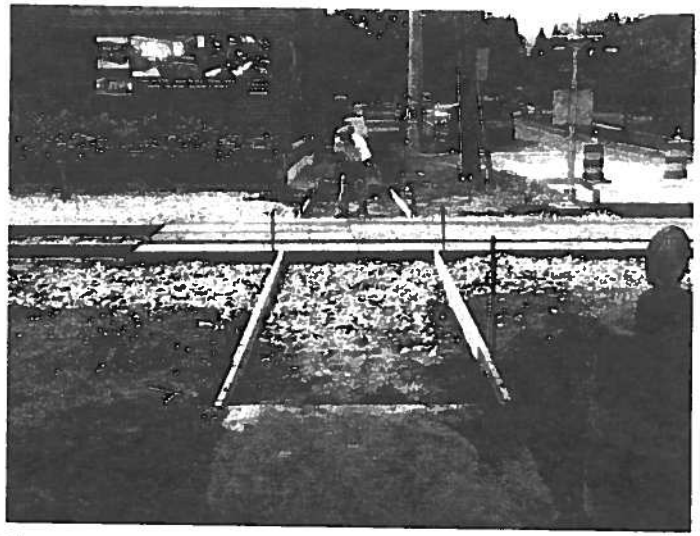
Liberty Street Crossing at Ann Arbor, Michigan was reconstructed under an MDOT Pilot Crossing Surface Program in 2005.
(The following 2 slides show the process or stages of the reconstruction)





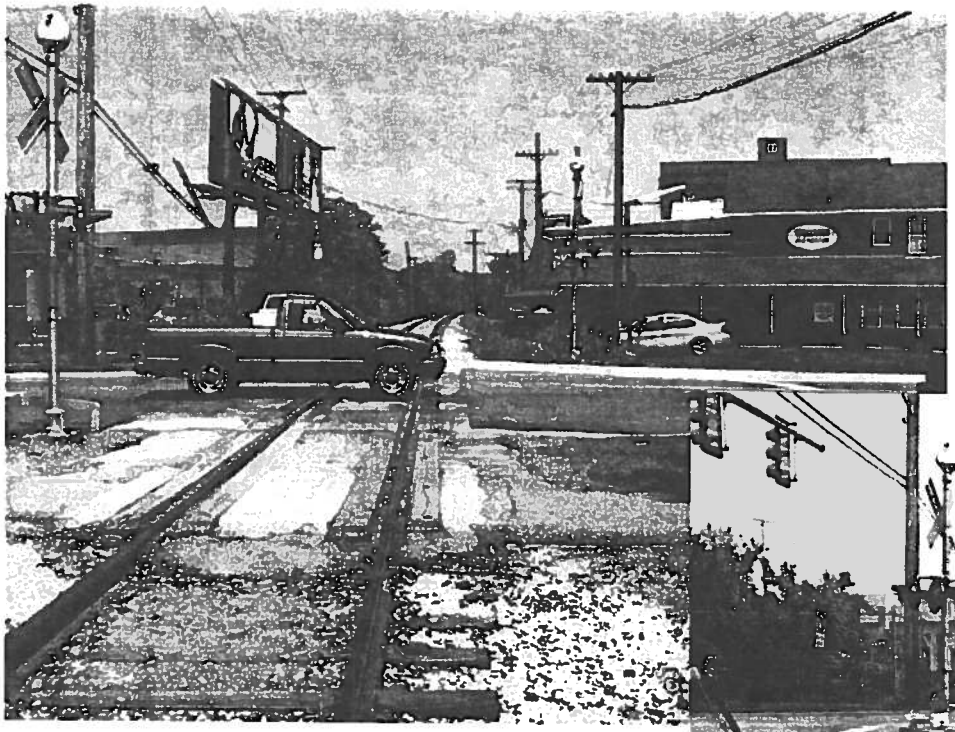






07/14/2005

Before

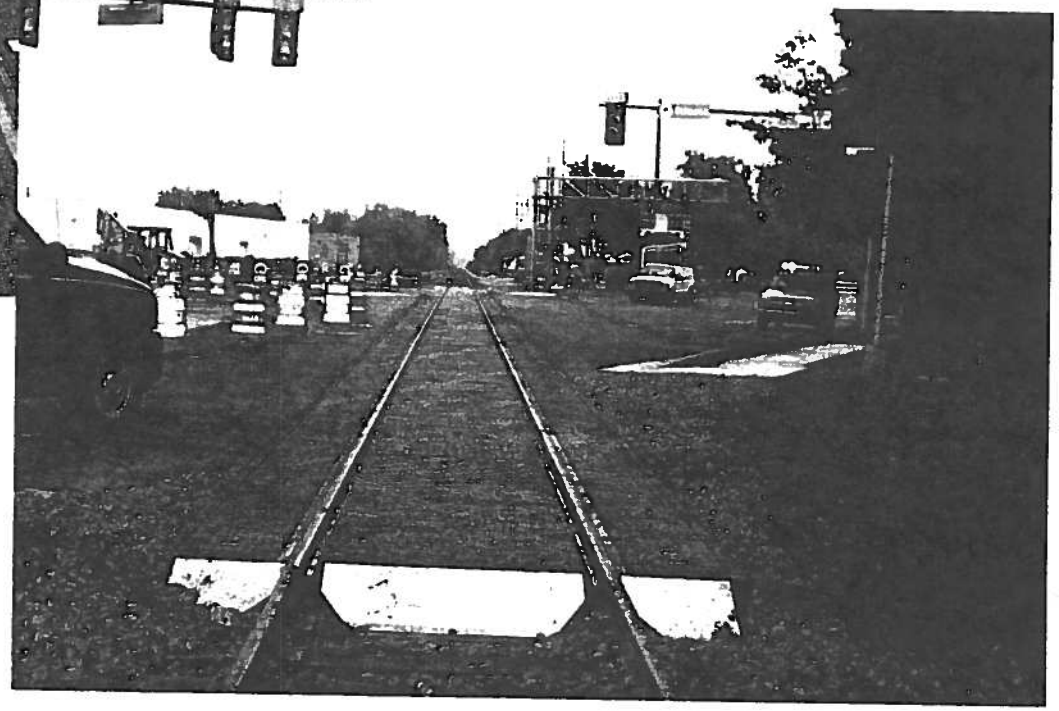


Liberty Street

Ann Arbor, Michigan

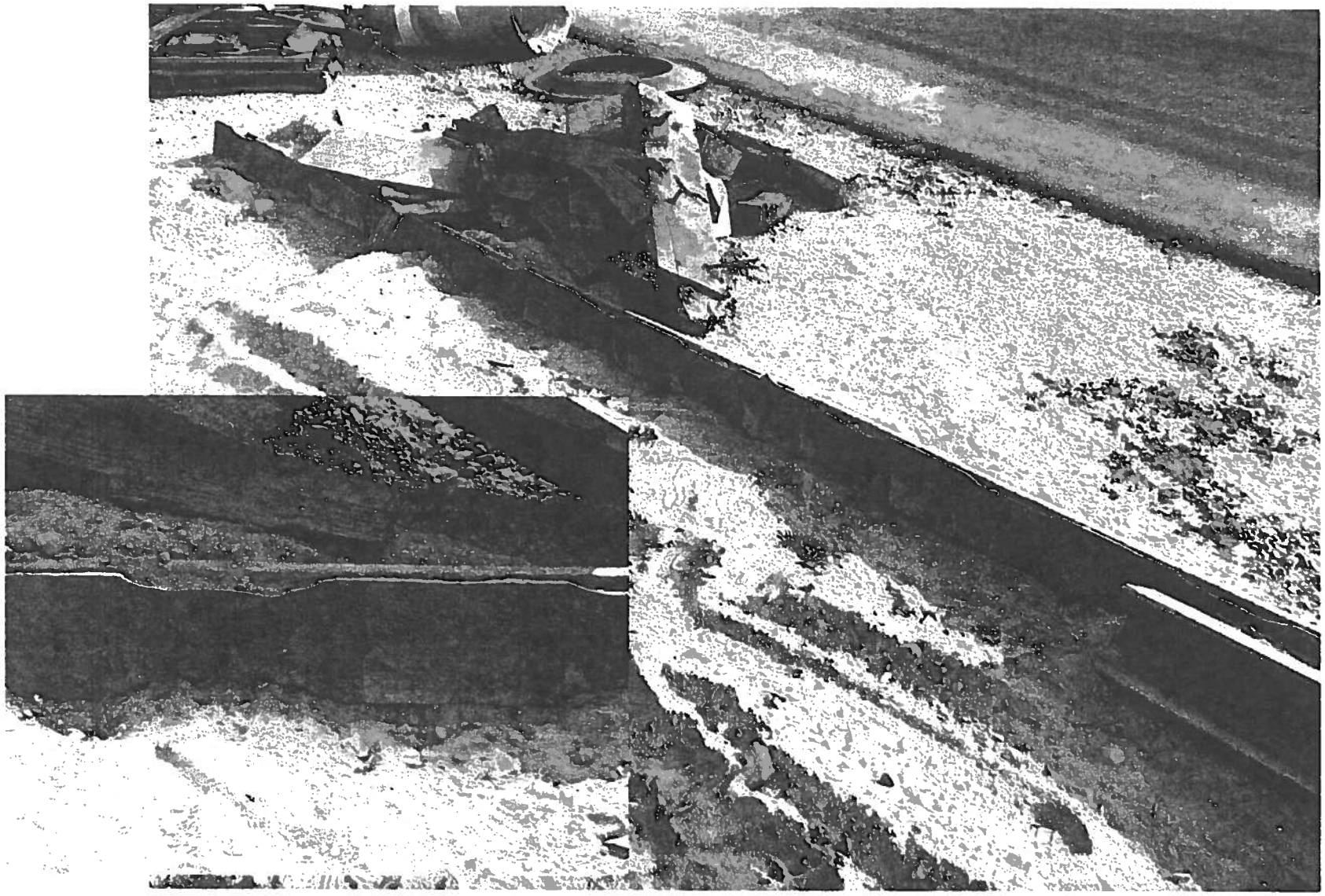
After

Before



State Street,
Ann Arbor, Michigan

After



Example of Rail Deterioration from Road Salt and Highway Traffic that was removed from the State Street Crossing in Ann Arbor, Michigan

Comparison of Maintenance Costs

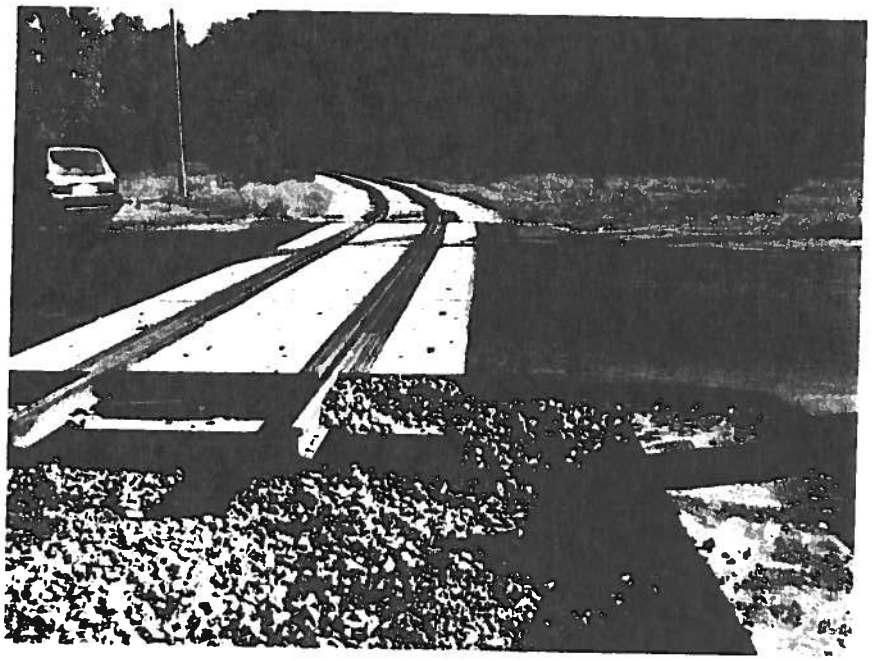
Public Roadway Grade Crossing Surface Reconstruction

- The 240 foot long State Street crossing in Ann Arbor cost $186,000 to reconstruct .
- Average life of our crossings is approximately 20 years.
- Crossings usually must be completely reconstructed and all track and crossing surface materials replaced each time. All used steel material, rail, tie plates must be scrapped because of corrosion caused by roadway salt.
- Must detour highway traffic and arrange to completely close road for approximately one week to complete the work.

Standard Track Maintenance (outside of crossing areas)

- During typical track maintenance we replace ties as needed, usually 100 ties per mile per year based on a 32 year average life. Usually in 5 year intervals installing 500 ties per mile on a programed basis.
- Average installed cost is around $100 per crosstie. So for $186,000. we can renew ties over 3.7 miles of track or 1,860 ties.
- Rail on our railroad usually lasts 50 to 100 years before needing to be replaced .
- Stone ballast can also be added and track surfacing work preformed as necessary.
- Work is usually done without interruption of rail or highway traffic.

Statutory responsibility for railroad
12" from end of railroad tie



Michigan Railroads Association