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Sioux Falls Railroad Corridor Analysis and Crossing Safety Study

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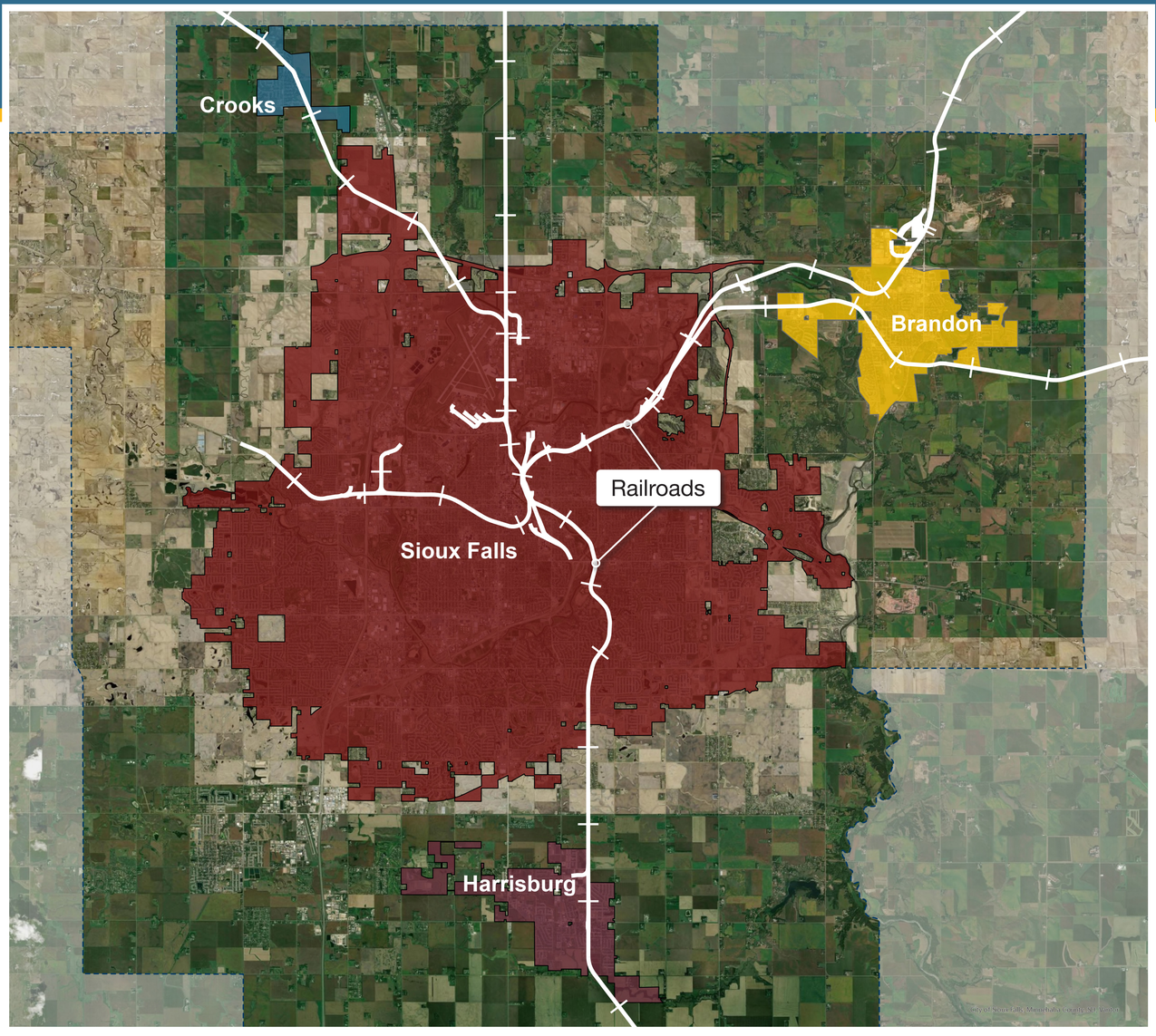
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U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

Study Overview



SDDOT and local partners are studying 130 public railroad crossings in the Sioux Falls area to make them safer and more reliable.

STUDY PURPOSE

The Study team is evaluating all the grade crossings in the study area to improve safety, mobility, and traffic flow.

The study will consider:

- **Potential crossing closures**
- **Safety improvements**
- **Ways to reduce traffic delays and backups**

Recommendations will focus on prioritizing future improvements and identifying next project development steps. No immediate construction action will be taken from this study.

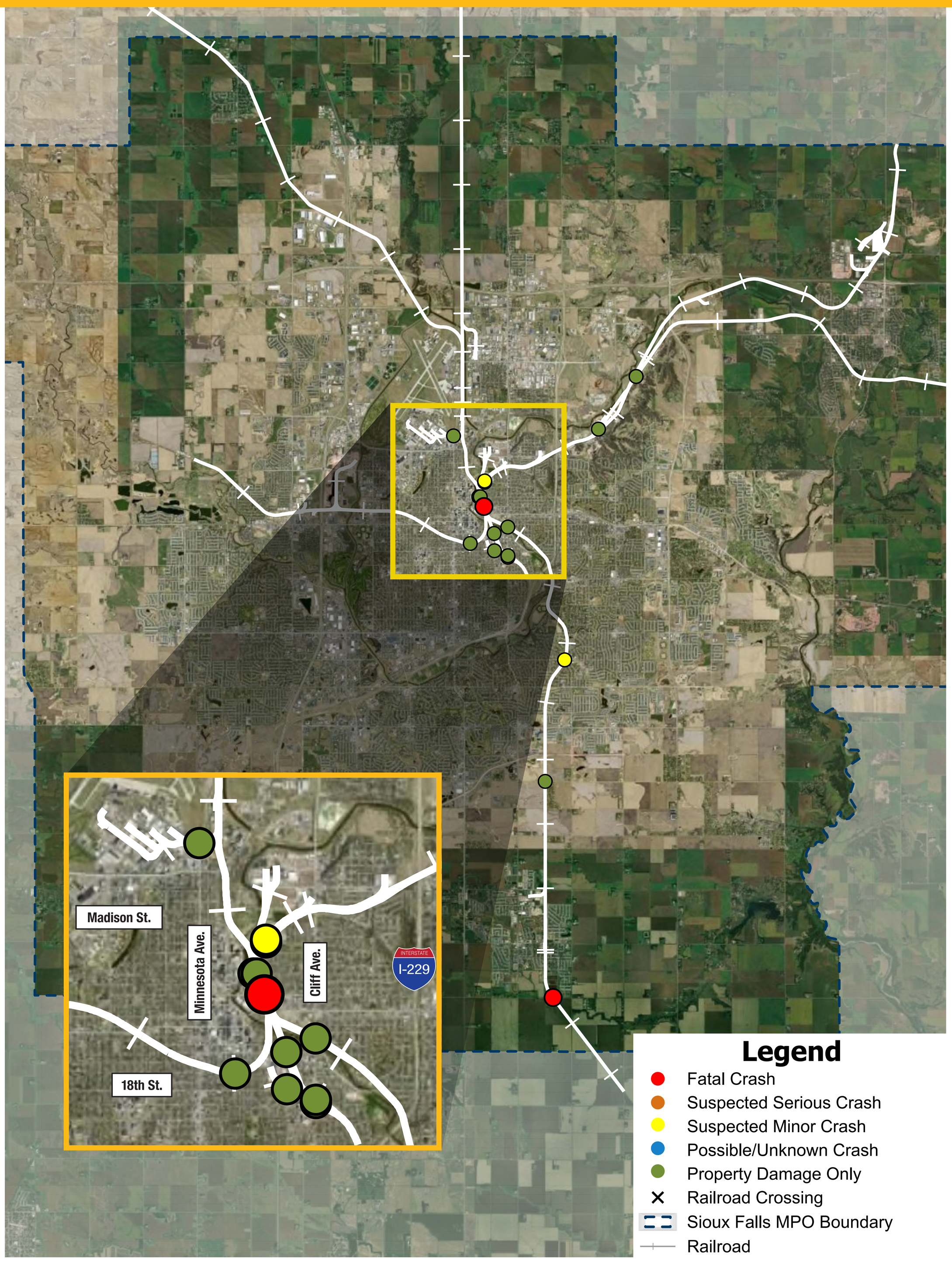
STUDY COMPLETION: Summer 2027

STUDY PARTNERS:

- SDDOT
- City of Sioux Falls
- City Brandon
- BNSF
- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
- City of Harrisburg
- City of Crooks
- Ellis and Eastern Rail

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Safety Analysis



Summary Crash Analysis - 2016 through 2025

- 23 Railway Vehicle (Train crashes)
- Two Fatal Crashes:
  - 2022 in Harrisburg (Crossing ID: at 274th St.)
  - 2024 in Sioux Falls (Crossing ID: 075587Y 8th Street and N Weber Ave). The crash involved a pedestrian.

Crossing Types



Passive

A passive crossing uses signs and pavement markings to identify the railroad crossing location. The “crossbuck” sign acts like a yield sign for motorists and pedestrians.This image is from Louise Avenue in Sioux Falls.



Active - Flashers

A next step up from a passive crossing is often the addition of “cantilevered signal” at a crossing. This includes an overhead metal arm over the roadway with flashers that indicate an approaching train. This is currently used at the Cliff Avenue railroad crossing by Avera Mckennan Hospital.



Active - Gates

Addition of gates provide a physical barrier that lowers as trains approach. This image shows the crossing at 274th Avenue in Harrisburg, where gate were added. Medians can also prevent motorists from driving around the gates.



Grade Separated Crossing

Grade-separated crossings are considered the safest crossing treatment because they completely separate train and roadway traffic. These improvements are often costly and may require additional right-of-way or result in land use impacts. This image shows grade-separated crossing at 26th Street and Southeastern Avenue in Sioux Falls.

How is an At-Grade Crossing "Eliminated"?

Elimination of an at-grade railroad crossing involves removing any interaction between the train and other vehicular traffic. FRA considers a Safe Crossing as the one that doesn't exist. Eliminating a crossing is the best way to ensure safe traffic operations. These are three typical methods for eliminating a rail crossing:

1 Close the roadway

The most common method for eliminating a crossing. This involves preventing vehicle traffic from crossing the railroad by use of a barrier, cul-de-sac, or other similar method of road closure.

Features:

- Can be done more quickly than other options
- Results in rerouting traffic to other crossing locations and roads.

Example Crossing Elimination - Before an At-Grade Crossing in a Residential Area



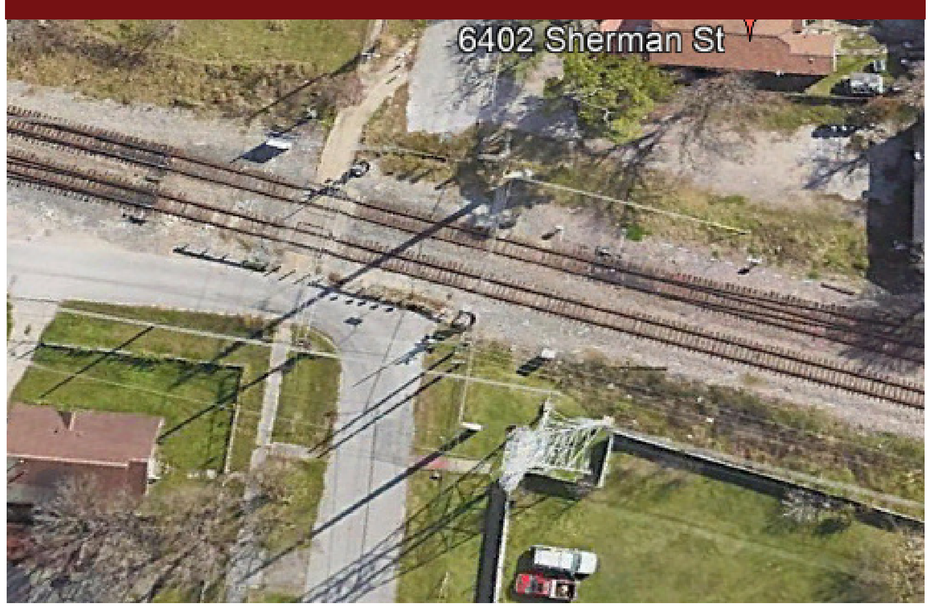
2 Remove Railroad Tracks

Permanent removal of tracks from a crossing is a less common option. Changing land uses (like a switch from industrial to residential) can result in no longer needing railroad tracks to serve an area. Or tracks could be relocated as part of a larger railroad realignment.

Features:

- Can be very cost effective when tracks are no longer needed
- Realignment of tracks can be expensive with many impacts. Tracks are planned for removal as part of redevelopment around Falls Park, including some existing crossings.

After: Road Closure Change made to Eliminate the Crossing



3 Grade Separation

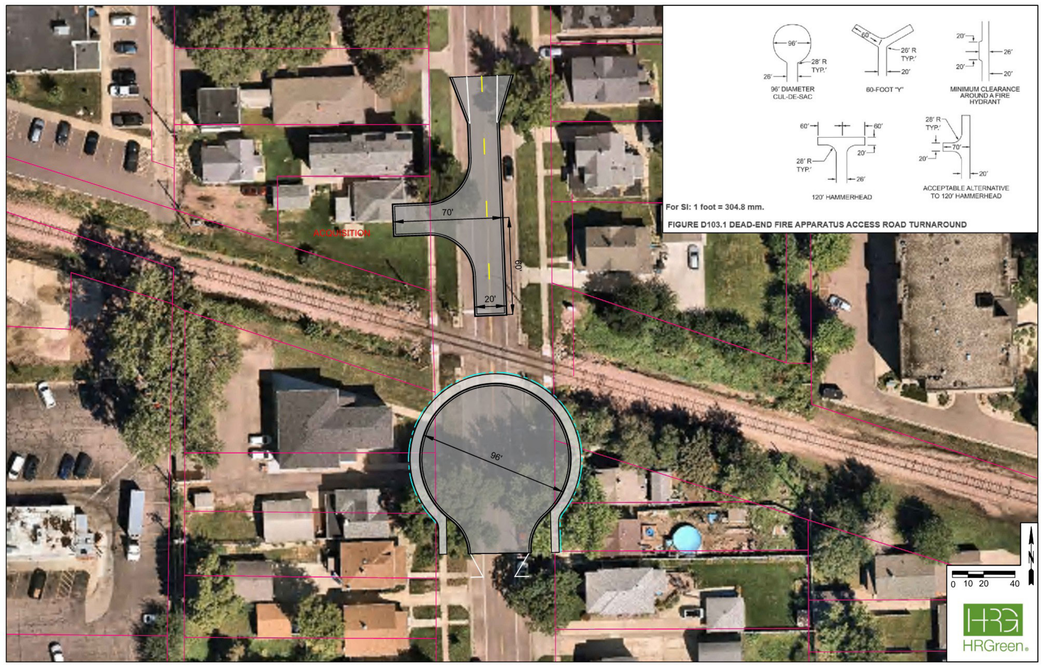
Construction of a structure - often a bridge but can be a tunnel also - can be used to physically separate the roadway and railroad intersection. Due to the potential impacts, costs, or challenges with maintaining traffic operations during construction, this method is the least common option. Additional information about grade separation is provided on another board.

Factors in Railroad Crossing Elimination Decisions

The project team will be weighing a variety of factors when making recommendations about potential railroad crossing eliminations. Among the factors to be considered are the following:

A. **Safety:** Previous crash history or identified crash risks
B. **Mobility:** Available alternate routes for traffic and pedestrians
C. **Security:** Maintain reliable access to emergency services
D. **Property impacts:** New right of way needs or utilities impacts
E. **Environmental resources:** for example: impacts to wetlands, historic resources, or parklands

An example road closure is shown here. In some cases improvements are necessary to maintain safe traffic operations. The potential impacts of those improvements would be considered as part of a recommendation for any location.



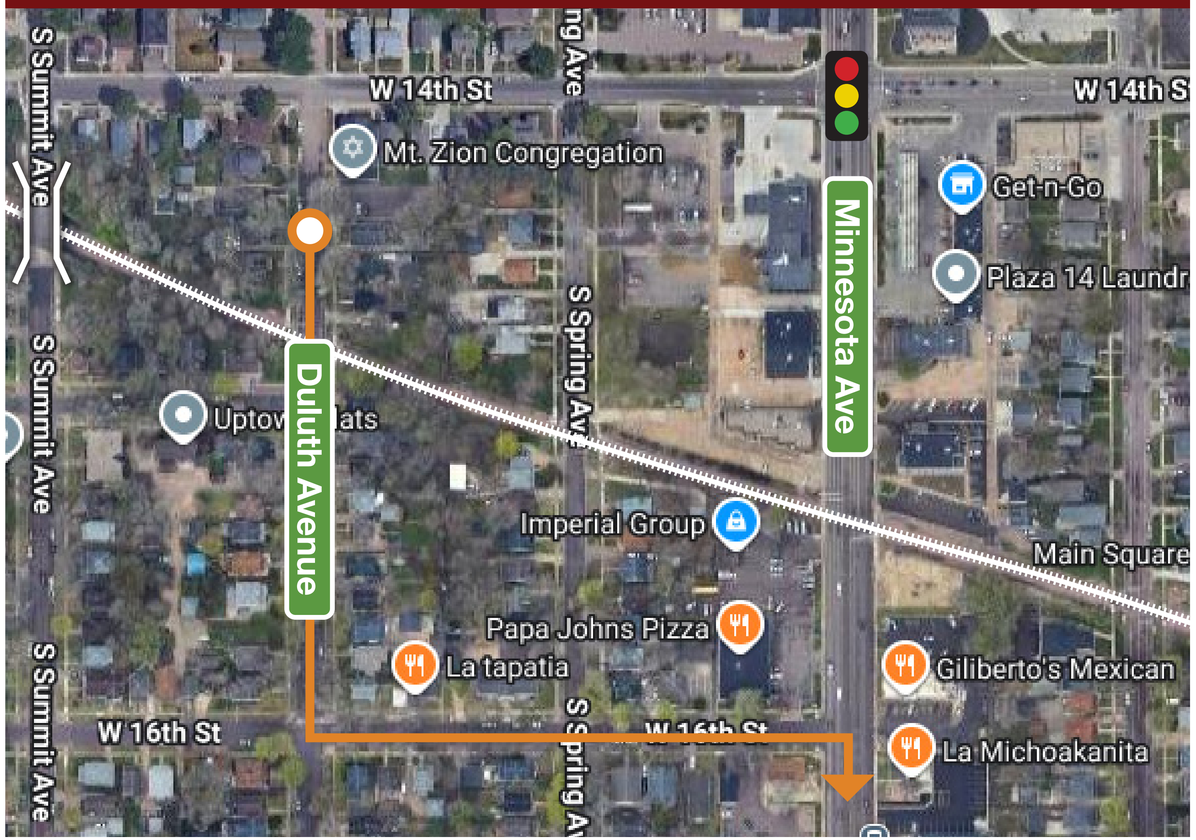
Note: This visualization is for illustrative purposes only and does not represent specific proposed plans for a crossing elimination.

If a Railroad Crossing Elimination is not Feasible, Other Safety Improvements Might be possible, such as:

- Use of Dynamic Message Signs to alert Drivers about the presence of trains or temporary closures and advising alternate routes,
- Interconnecting traffic signals adjacent to crossings for coordinated timing of signals,
- Installing gates and medians for vehicles and pedestrians, or
- Sign or lighting improvements.

Crossing Closure Detour Example

Original Route



With the railroad crossing in place, a more direct route is feasible. Direct routes might not be the most efficient or safe depending on factors like traffic signals or challenges making left turns.

Feasible Re-Route Paths with Crossing Closure



Note: This example is for illustrative purposes only to demonstrate analyses the project team will conduct.

Elimination of that crossing would result in different possible routes for traffic, each option could involve a slightly longer travel time. The re-route could potentially add traffic volumes to an already busy road and create new or different safety and mobility challenges. **The detour would also affect pedestrians, particularly by increasing their travel distance.**

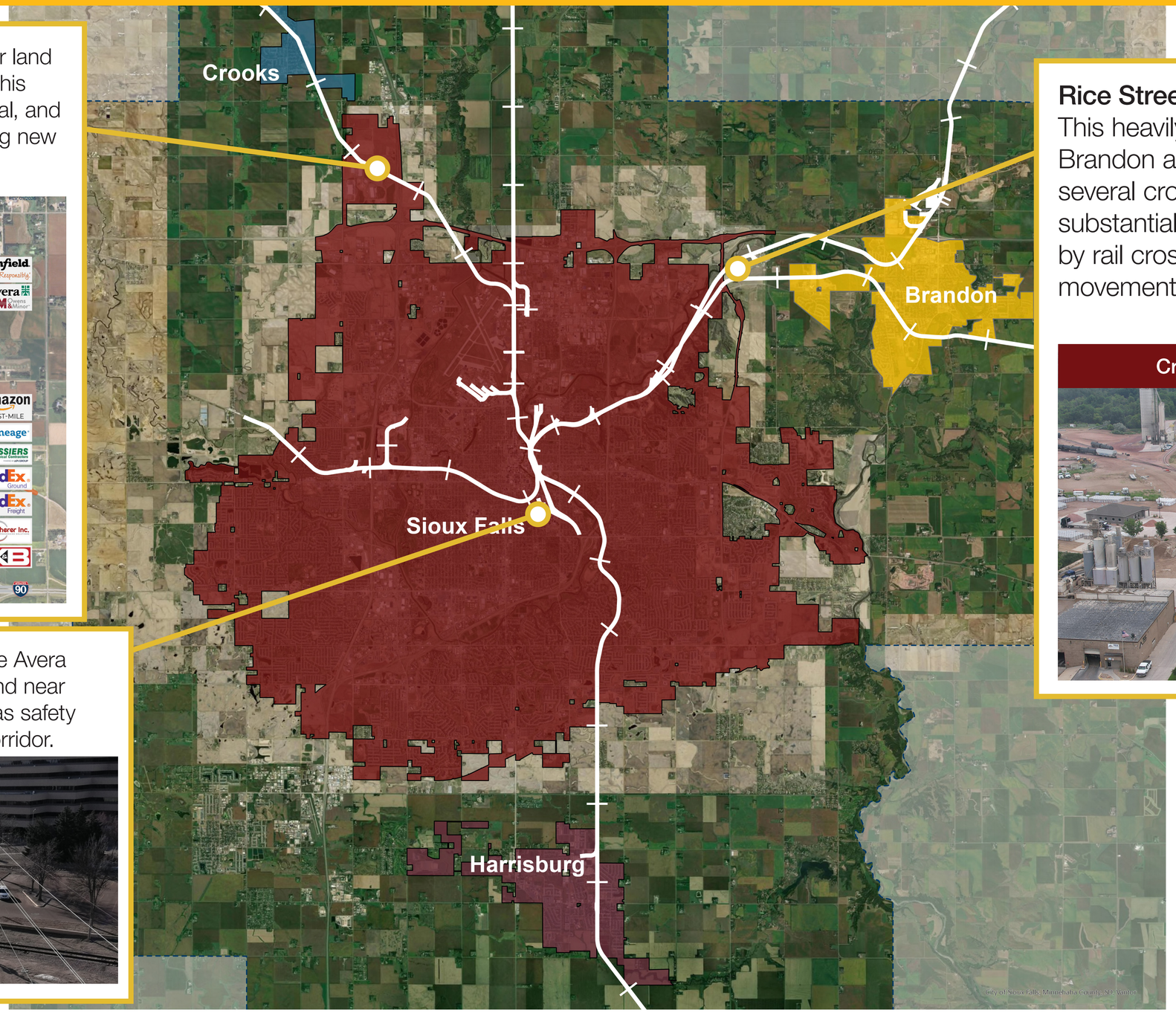
Initial Areas of Interest

Foundation Park Area - Major land use changes are proposed in this area, with industrial, commercial, and distribution center uses creating new transportation needs.



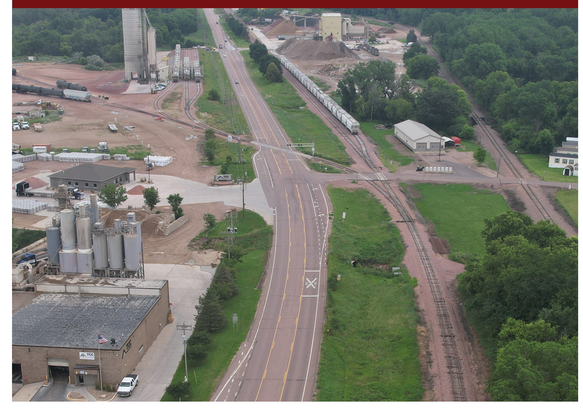
Cliff Avenue - Crossings at the Avera McKennan hospital campus and near the Big Sioux River stand out as safety risks on a high volume road corridor.





Rice Street/Holly Blvd Corridor - This heavily used corridor between Brandon and Sioux Falls features several crossing conflicts and substantial travel delays caused by rail crossings and switch yard movements.

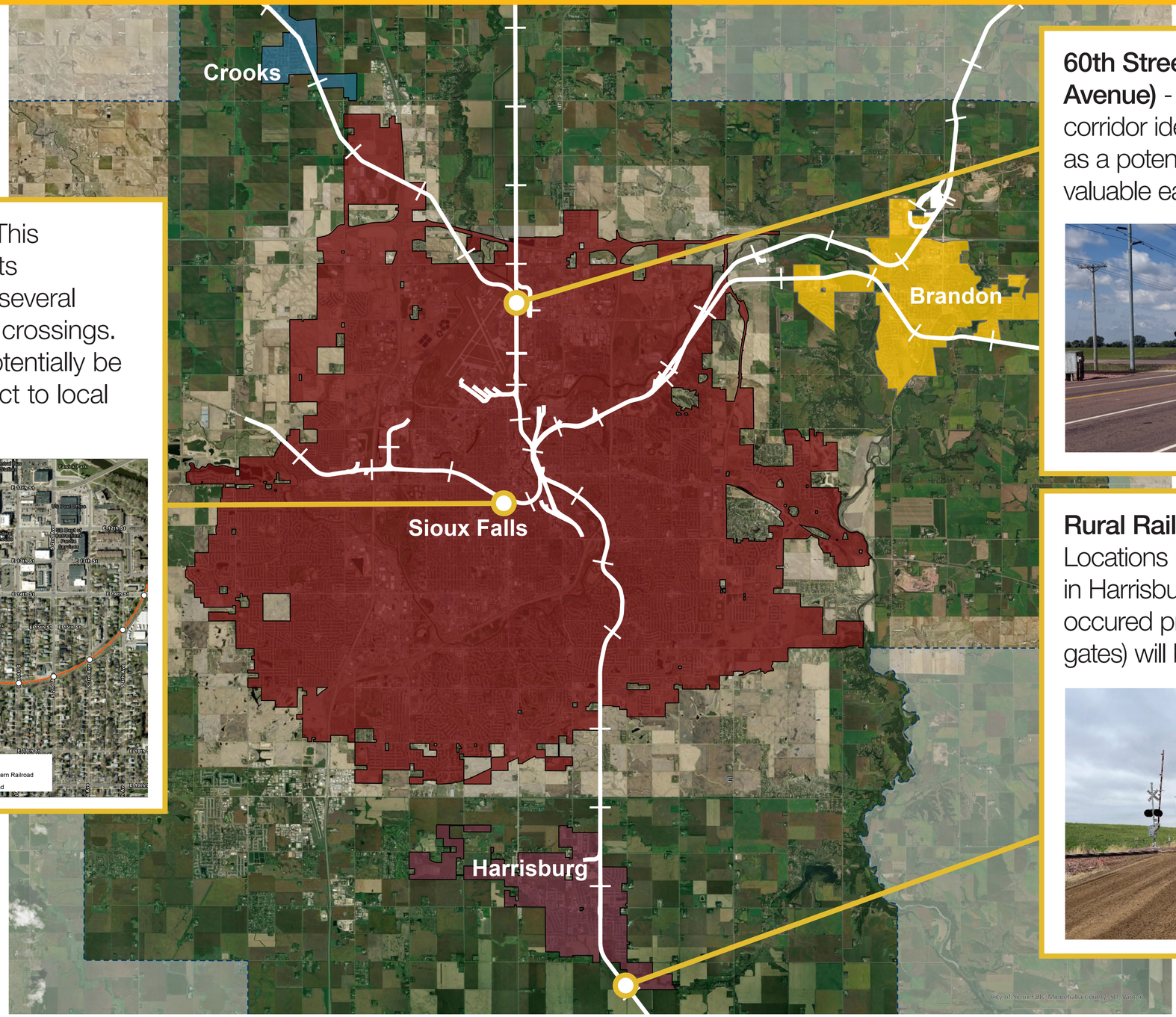
Crossing on Rice Street



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Initial Areas of Interest



South of 12th Street - This residential area (All Saints Neighborhood) features several closely spaced at-grade crossings. Select closures could potentially be made with minimal impact to local travel patterns.



60th Street (near Minnesota Avenue) - Previous studies of the corridor identified grade separation as a potential improvement for this valuable east-west corridor.



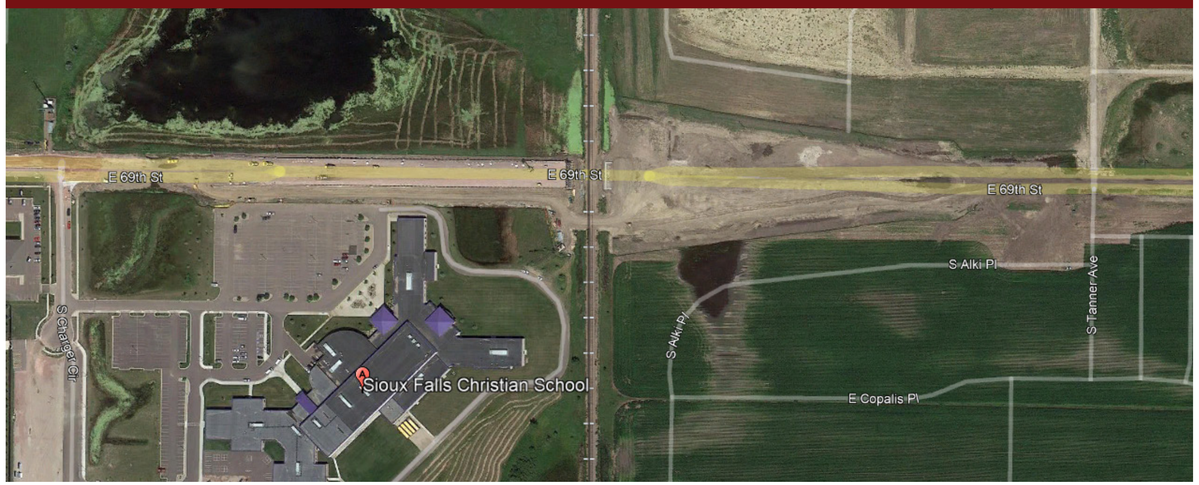
Rural Railroad Crossings - Locations like this one at 274th Street in Harrisburg (where a fatal crash occured prior to the installation of gates) will be reviewed for safety risks.



Considerations for New Grade Separated Crossings

69th Street Example of Grade Separated Crossings in Sioux Falls

69th Street - 2012

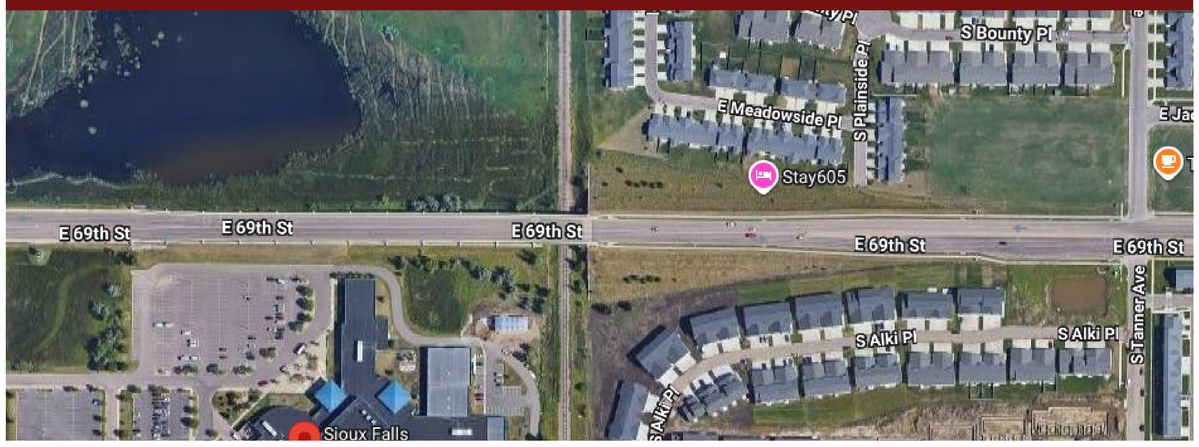


Conditions are not always ideal for a new crossing. The 69th Street bridge over the railroad was able to happen in part because development and transportation system conflicts were minimal.

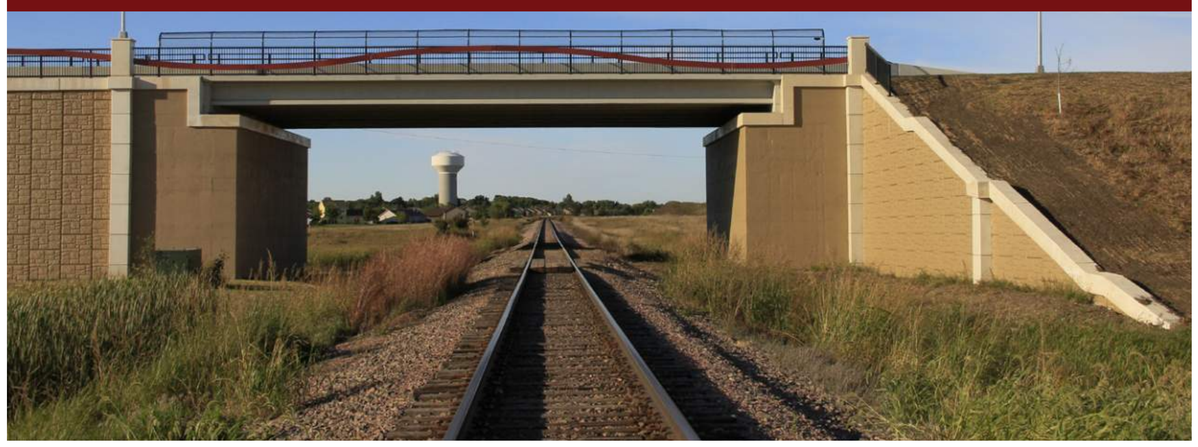
All grade separations must provide 23 feet of vertical clearance for the railroad. This creates a large structure (1,900 feet long!) and footprint for potential impacts.

Depending on the setting, a typical grade separated crossing project can cost between $10 and $20 million.

69th Street - 2026



69th Street - Bridge over BNSF tracks



FAQs

Who is paying for the study?

The study is funded through the Federal Railroad Administration's Railroad Crossing Elimination Program, with SDDOT and local partners involved.

When will construction occur?

At this time there is no funding for construction of the proposed improvements. However, SDDOT and partner communities are continually reviewing and upgrading crossings to improve safety. For example, crossings in downtown Sioux Falls have been and will be improved with the addition of a median for safer operations when gates are lowered and trains are passing through the crossing. Results from this study will help to prioritize additional locations.

What happens after this project?

The project team expects to complete this study in the Summer of 2027. SDDOT and other project partners will have a list of project priorities for their use in funding projects, applying for grants, and collaborating with others to make future improvements.

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YOU CAN SUBMIT QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS TO:

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