



Removal of level crossings on the Belgian rail network



Description

In response to the desire to reduce the number of accidents at level crossings, Infrabel established a strategic plan for 2008-2015. It aims to structurally improve safety at railway crossings and to reduce the number of injuries and deaths due to accidents at level crossings by 25 % compared to 2007.

Infrabel's plan provides for the removal of 200 level crossings throughout the Belgian rail network. To do this, rail infrastructure manager Infrabel has entrusted TUC RAIL with responsibility for overall project management and the design and execution of a number of removal projects.

Depending on the importance of the level crossing and local conditions, a removal project usually includes the following elements:

- a parallel road running to an adjacent level crossing;
- an underpass for pedestrians and cyclists;
- a bridge over the tracks;
- a tunnel under the tracks.

The removal of level crossings is a long and complex process in which all permits must be obtained. For each of

the proposed removals TUC RAIL must take the following steps:

- preparatory assessment and preliminary surveys and transport surveys where necessary;
- negotiations with the municipalities and preliminary design;
- compulsory purchases;
- planning permission;
- drawing up of specifications and awarding of contract;
- execution of the works.

Assignment of TUC RAIL

The assignment entrusted to TUC RAIL under the program for the removal of level crossings is a comprehensive contract, which includes the following tasks:

- ensure Program Management (monitoring scope, budget, planning, communication...) of all projects for the removal of level crossings;
- identify priority projects for the removal of level crossings according to available budgets and risk factors for each level crossing;
- carry out preliminary studies and negotiate with all stakeholders (city, region, residents, buses, fire fighters, associations, schools...) in order to find alternative solutions to removed level crossings, that are coherent and acceptable in terms of mobility, urban planning and implementation cost;
- take all administrative steps for obtaining the necessary permits for carrying out the works;
- in accordance with the Purchasing Committee, manage the necessary expropriations, amicably or through a royal decree of expropriation for public interest;
- carry out execution studies for all works;
- manage all contracts (award of contracts, monitoring of works...).

TUC RAIL's solutions for limitations that are inherent to this project

TUC RAIL proposes solutions that minimise the impact on residents and users of level crossings to be removed, particularly by taking into account the following constraints:

1. Minimise the impact of removing level crossings on local mobility, whatever the mode of travel. We order mobility studies to validate the relevance of proposed solutions or to consider alternatives;
2. Propose a comprehensive and coherent overall plan for the removal of a series of consecutive level crossings. Reduce costs through this overall view (e.g. 2 structures for the removal of 5 level crossings);
3. Ensure the safety of new roads and structures built to replace level crossings in consultation with the police and fire departments;
4. Minimise expropriations in densely populated neighbourhoods;
5. Build durable constructions using graffiti resistant materials;
6. Carry out works while minimizing the impact on neighbouring areas / districts, environment and railway operation;
7. Support local residents through information and consultation sessions;
8. Phase works according to local constraints: schools, harvest season in farming areas;
9. Minimise costs.