

Policy No.: MDOT 645
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Approved by: 
Secretary

Date: 2/25/25

Management of Freight Railroad Corridors

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is:

1. To establish common processes, specifications, and methods for the management of freight railroad corridor assets under Maryland state ownership through *Railroad Information Manual for Freight Rail Assets under Maryland State Ownership* (RIM).
2. Intended to apply only to Maryland-owned railroad properties which are part of the General Railroad System; and
3. To secure or promote economic development, to secure or promote sustainability goals, or to preserve the railroad corridor for future interim or non-railroad use.

Reference(s)

- [Maryland Transportation Code §7-204](#)
- [Maryland Transportation Code §7-901](#)
- [Maryland Transportation Code §7-903](#)
- [Maryland Transportation Code §8-639](#)

Scope:

This Policy is applicable to all MDOT employees, contract employees, contractors, and consultants.

Definitions

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Responsible Party:

Assistant Secretary of Planning and Project Development

POLICY

I. Policy Statement

- A. MDOT and MTA hereby adopts the *Railroad Information Manual for Freight Rail Assets under Maryland State Ownership* to establish common processes, specifications, and methods for the management of the State's railroad corridor assets.
- B. The RIM is for the use of the general public, municipalities, counties, state agencies, contractors, railroads, landowners, and other interest groups and stakeholders.
- C. In order to protect the communities served by light density railroad corridors and continue to realize the full potential of the current and former railroad corridors, the State of Maryland seeks to ensure the continuity of these corridors, their continued safe rail operation where practicable, and their effective management through interim use where rail service has ceased.

- D. MDOT seeks to support continued private railroad operations as long as possible.
- E. MDOT may choose to directly administer a railroad corridor or enter into a contract with another party to manage, maintain, and/or operate, the corridor on its behalf.
- F. MDOT and MTA seek to ensure the safest possible conditions on all state-owned railroad corridors and are committed to continuous improvement of conditions on both active railroad corridors, and inactive or rail-banked railroad corridors.
- G. Any construction or improvement project located on or within 50 feet of state-owned railroad property must be reviewed by MTA.
- H. Projects undertaken on Maryland-owned railroad properties must meet the standards and specifications set forth in the RIM, or policy exemptions must be granted for individual cases where those standards cannot be met.
- I. The RIM is to be reviewed at least annually for any changes or updates which have been deemed necessary by MDOT and the MTA.
- J. Exceptions to any of the policies in the RIM may be granted by the Director of Rail and Intermodal Freight.

II. Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy, the following words have the following meanings:

- A. Railroad means “*carrier of people or property on cars that are operated on stationary rails*”
- B. General Railroad System means *network of standard gage track over which goods may be transported throughout the Nation and passengers may travel between cities and within metropolitan and suburban areas...* and does not include mass transit or rapid transit systems owned or operated by the State.
- C. MDOT means Maryland Department of Transportation, a departmental agency of the State of Maryland which is tasked with direct and indirect management of Maryland Transportation infrastructure.
- D. MTA means Maryland Transit Administration, a modal division of the Maryland Department of Transportation which is empowered to operate some transit and passenger services in Maryland.
- E. Active means railroad rights-of-way where railroad operations routinely occur or may occur depending on variabilities in economic activity.
- F. Inactive means railroad rights-of-way where no rail activity is currently occurring but for which formal abandonment authority has not been received from federal regulators are considered inactive.
- G. Railbanked means a status of railroad corridor that is described by the National Trails System Act of 1983 (NTSA) and approved by the STB which provides protection for the continuity of the railroad corridor such that a return to routine railroad use is possible.

III. Authorized/Supporting Documents

MDOT 645.1 Rail Information Manual