

RAIL RELOCATION IN CANADA

BACKGROUND

Rail relocation is the practice of moving rail lines and facilities out of urban areas. In all cases, it is an extremely complex and costly process that involves numerous stakeholders. Railways rely on their massive infrastructure to provide safe and efficient service in a competitive marketplace. In cases where existing rail facilities may not be suitable for upgrading or expansion, railways will explore relocation. However, railways will not commit to relocations that in any way impair their ability to serve their customers.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is relocation a reality?

The simple answer is “yes.” In Canada, there is federal legislation designed to facilitate the relocation of rail lines or the rerouting of rail traffic in urban areas. The [Railway Relocation and Crossing Act](#) (RRCA), administered by the Canadian Transportation Agency, references the complexity and cost of rail relocation, and the need for railways to maintain cost-effective service to their customers. In all cases, rail relocation requires a sound plan and robust funding.

Who plans and pays for rail relocation?

A common principle is that every stakeholder who benefits from a rail relocation project will pay their fair share of the expense, which is significant for all parties. Municipalities promoting rail relocation to address proximity concerns are often the major beneficiaries of the initiative and will be expected to assume a proportionate percentage of the total costs. Railways will contribute, but only in proportion to their net benefit. The percentage that each stakeholder will pay is usually determined by negotiation. Because of the major costs involved, the negotiation process can be long and onerous.

Is funding available to support rail relocation?

The federal government has funding available for a proportion of relocation expenditures, but not for the entire project. The RRCA states that other levels of government are responsible for a substantial share of the overall cost. [The Canada Transportation Act review report](#) recommends that the federal government facilitate the relocation of rail lines or the rerouting of rail traffic in urban areas.

DID YOU KNOW?

- When a railway company relocates all or part of a facility, the rail line often remains active and train traffic continues on that track.
- The Canadian Transportation Agency provides a mechanism to try to resolve relocation issues, and can order railways to take certain measures under the RRCA. See this helpful [resource tool](#) for more information.
- The Agency has the authority to order a rail line to be moved, but only at no net cost to the railway. The process is described in the RRCA.

Examples of costs paid for by the major beneficiaries of rail relocation projects:

- Land expropriation
- Rezoning
- Environmental assessments and remediation
- Feasibility studies
- Unforeseen issues
- Physical defences (berms, fences, crossings)