

METRO News Release

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Status of METRO investigation on Jan. 5 incident

PHOENIX — METRO is in the process of investigating the collision between a pick-up truck and a light rail vehicle at the University Dr. crossing on Monday, Jan. 5 around 4:15 p.m. A police report has been filed by the Tempe Police Department related to this incident citing the pick-up driver with entering a railroad crossing before the cross arms were up. METRO's investigation is to address the movement of the crossing arms at the time of the collision.

Immediately following the collision, METRO instituted a "slow order" at the University crossing to ensure public safety. Trains are required to slow to no more than 15 mph when approaching and through this crossing to assure that arms are down and pathway clear. The slow order will continue until any technical issues are resolved.

As part of METRO's incident protocol, the train operator involved in the incident was placed on leave, drug tested, interviewed by management and asked to complete an incident report. The operator has since been found to have conformed with all rules and procedures and cleared to return to work.

METRO CEO Rick Simonetta convened an ad hoc Accident Investigation Board (AIB) to assess the situation, determine what occurred and how resolution will be implemented. The board consists of METRO and contract safety managers, operational staff and technicians. Final results of the AIB will be shared at the completion of the report.

Video taken from the light rail vehicle shows that the crossing arms began to rise after an eastbound train cleared University and a westbound train approached the crossing. Preliminary findings from computerized data recorders indicate that the crossing arm signal lost electrical contact with the train for approximately seven (7) seconds which resulted in the arms beginning to rise. Once the train reestablished contact, the arms returned to the down position. The red flashing lights and bells warning drivers of a train continued to operate throughout the event.

Also as part of the AIB's evaluation, the other four grade crossings will be examined for any potential issues. Below are all crossing locations:

- Yard lead (52nd St./Washington; eastbound Washington traffic only), Phoenix
- 1st St./Ash Ave., Tempe, which is a crossing shared with Burlington Northern Railroad
- Macayo's parking lot, Tempe
- Mission Palms Hotel parking lot, Tempe
- University Dr., west of Rural Rd., Tempe

METRO remains focused on providing a safe and reliable system and asks motorists to continue to be mindful of traffic signals.

