

Who we are:

Transportation is so basic that many of us overlook its overwhelming importance in our daily lives. Practically everything used in our homes, offices, or schools across Tennessee – from furniture to food items to clothing – requires a large and complex transportation network. The Tennessee Department of Transportation provides citizens of Tennessee and travelers with one of the best transportation systems in the country. TDOT is a multimodal agency with responsibilities in building and maintaining roads, aviation, public transit, waterways, railroads, cycling and walking. Our involvement ranges from airport improvements to funding transit buses to planning for river ports. The Department of Transportation has approximately 3,500 employees with four statewide region facilities in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, and Jackson.



Rail Coordination Technical Specialist

Passenger Transportation, Rail and Freight Division – Rail Coordination Section

\$60,600 - \$70,680 annually

Job Overview

The Rail Coordination Technical Specialist is a subject matter expert overseeing complex railroad coordination activities across TDOT highway and infrastructure projects. These projects will range in complexity and risk from simple to highly complex. This position requires critical thinking to solve problems and make well-informed decisions that increase Tennessee's transportation system's safety, performance, sustainability, and efficient delivery.

This position ensures that all railroad-related elements—including agreements, safety devices, and project integration—comply with Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements, and State of Tennessee policies, while operating within a matrix organization. This position serves as a technical lead, provides training and mentorship to junior staff, and represents TDOT in coordination with Class I and short line railroads, local governments, and internal project teams. This position supports TDOT's mission by promoting continuous improvement and consistency in railroad coordination practices statewide.

This position assists in implementing the Quality Assurance Program as part of the Division's activities. The Rail Coordination Technical Specialist III ensures that Department policies, technical guidance, procedures, software, websites, and systems related to railroad accommodations are current and accurate for incorporation into the project delivery, operation, and maintenance processes. This position must effectively articulate technical concepts through training, mentoring, and collaboration.

Essential Job Duties of the Technical Specialist 1, 2, and 3 include:

Assist in identifying TDOT projects that involve railroad facilities. Support reviewing project plans for potential rail conflicts, utility impacts, or access issues. Help gather and prepare documentation for: Standard Railroad Agreements, Force Account Estimates (FAEs), and railroad Certifications required by FHWA, and FRA. If applicable Provide support to project teams during project scoping and environmental clearance milestones.

Read, interpret, and apply statutes, regulations, policies, plans, specifications, standards, including 23 CFR 646.214 (railroad-highway projects), and the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) for rail safety devices. Ensure that basic compliance checklists are completed for each railroad-affected project phase.

Maintain organized records of coordination activities, agreements, and approvals. Assist in developing contract special provisions related to railroads (e.g., SP105C). Assist in tracking project schedules to ensure rail-related deliverables are completed on time. Prepare reports, charts, and graphs used in the presentation of data to support internal coordination and decision making.

Provide exceptional customer service to internal and external customers by exercising effective listening skills, providing prompt responses, maintaining complete and accurate documentation, and communicating effectively. Coordinate with TDOT Divisions (e.g., Environmental, ROW, Project Management) to relay railroad requirements and updates. Assist with scheduling meetings, taking meeting notes, and updating team logs. Attend site reviews with railroads, contractors, and TDOT Regions, and operate light-duty vehicles as needed.

Additional Job Duties for the Technical Specialist 2 and 3 include:

Identify railroad-related issues during early project planning and environmental review stages. Evaluate project plans to determine the scope of railroad impacts (e.g., crossings, signals, property). Assist in the development, review, and processing of: Standard Railroad Agreements, crossing agreements, Force Account Estimates (FAEs), Right of Entry, and Railroad Certifications per FHWA regulations. Ensure proper coordination with the Project Delivery Network (PDN) milestones.

Monitor and document compliance with railroad coordination policies. Recommend improvements to internal processes, templates, and coordination timelines. Maintain accurate and timely project documentation for records retention and audit compliance.

Communicate with external stakeholders, local government agencies, contractors, consulting and regulating agencies (e.g. FRA, FHWA, etc.), and consultants to address issues involving prequalification, contracts, compliance, and invoice processing. Support team members and share insights on the best practices and standards of railroad coordination.

Perform consultant prequalification, selection, invoice processing, and performance assessments. Coordinate and facilitate agreements with governmental agencies, consultants, contractors, and external partners to address and resolve impacts that support the effective development and execution of grants, contracts, projects, and programs.

Additional Job Duties for the Technical Specialist 3 include:

Serve as the technical lead for railroad coordination on complex federal-aid and state projects. Identify and address rail impacts during early project planning and design stages. Oversee the development and execution of: Standard Railroad Agreements, Railroad Force Account Estimates (FAEs), and Railroad Certifications in compliance with FHWA requirements. Collaborate with Project Teams and local agencies to integrate railroad elements within scope, schedule, and budget.

Ensure compliance with FHWA railroad coordination rules (23 CFR Part 646) and TDOT standards to all project phases. Ensure compliance with MUTCD requirements for rail-related traffic control devices. Provide guidance on rail property rights, utility conflicts, and railroad safety protocols.

Develop, review, and approve railroad coordination sections project plans and NEPA documentation, contract special provisions related to railroads (e.g., SP105C), and technical documentation for consultant and contractor oversight.

Act as a liaison between TDOT and Class I railroads (e.g., CSX, Norfolk Southern), short-line and regional freight operators, Amtrak, and local municipalities, MPOs, and RPOs. Participate in peer exchanges and industry groups (e.g., AASHTO, Council on Rail Transportation (CORT), TRB, FRA technical sessions.)

Mentor and provide technical guidance on railroad coordination procedures. Perform quality reviews of railroad agreements, funding documentation, and coordination plans. Contribute to developing and revising statewide railroad coordination policies, standards, and training materials. Support the training, mentoring, and quality assurance of work performed by team members.

Collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to identify and address moderately complex challenges. Communicate with Regions, railroads, local agencies, consultants, contractors, and legislators to offer guidance and help resolve grants, projects, and programs issues.

Qualifications

TDOT Technical Specialist I

- Bachelor's Degree

TDOT Technical Specialist II

- Bachelor's Degree
- 1 year of demonstrated competency in railroad coordination, transportation planning/design, infrastructure project delivery, or related field.

TDOT Technical Specialist III

- Bachelor's Degree
- 2 years of demonstrated competency in railroad coordination, transportation planning/design, infrastructure project delivery, or related field.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation reserves the sole right in determining the level of position based on the applicant's work experience, education, skill level, level of FTA public transportation safety certification, and all other appropriate factors, including business needs. Within 6 months of hire, employees must demonstrate successful mastery of corresponding work competencies and skill blocks of the Technical Specialist Competency Program for the level of worker for which they were hired. If skills and competencies are not met during that period, the employee can be demoted to the level of worker for which he/she is qualified.

Ideal Candidate

The Rail Coordination Technical Specialist is a curious and motivated professional who thrives in collaborative environments and values public service. They approach their work with a strong sense of responsibility, attention to detail, and a commitment to continuous learning. Naturally inquisitive, they are eager to grow in their understanding of how their contributions impact communities and infrastructure across Tennessee. They bring a positive attitude, adapt well to change, and build strong working relationships across diverse teams. With a thoughtful and forward-looking mindset, they are driven to make meaningful contributions and support others in achieving shared goals.