

LIFE-SAVING RAIL CROSSING TRIALS BEGUN

A \$5.5 million three-year trial using La Trobe University technology which aims to save lives by cutting collisions at railway crossings began in May 2012 on Melbourne's Frankston train line.



It involves up to 100 cars, a specially equipped Metro train and two level crossings, all in direct 'communication' with each other via a dedicated mobile-phone-style wireless network and integrated Global Positioning System (GPS).

The project is led by Professor Jugdutt (Jack) Singh, Director of the University's Centre for Technology Infusion. He says it is the largest-known rail crossing safety study of its kind in the world.

The Melbourne trial, which ran till end of June, will assess the effectiveness of the technology and the reaction of drivers using it. The aim is to have the system in new cars as early as 2014. It can also be retrofitted to existing cars.

Already hailed in some quarters as possibly the next major road safety innovation after seat belts, airbags and ABS brakes, the system has the added potential of creating export markets for Australian technology.

There are about 9,500 level crossings on Australian public roads. About 2,000 are in Victoria. Only a third have flashing lights or boom barriers.

Professor Singh says with more than 600 rail and vehicle crashes at level crossings in Australia during the last decade, the technology could prevent and hopefully eliminate collisions and save many lives.

The system was developed by the La Trobe Centre for Technology Infusion, in partnership with the Australian Automotive Co-operative Research Centre, the Victorian Department of Transport and other partners.

Professor Singh says it will trial different messages for drivers: for example, 'A train is coming, slow down' and 'A collision is about to happen' - with 'all bells and whistles blaring, to see how drivers react'.

The trial will assess not only the technology, but also the reaction of drivers who have to make a 'staggering number of decisions, often in split seconds'.

MORE INFORMATION

Further information on research opportunities in the centre for Technology Infusion can be found at:
latrobe.edu.au/tech-infusion/activities/research