



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Rail coalition at work to keep Texas Hill Country safe** *New rail safety education campaign unveiled in the region*

**Austin, Texas, Nov. 5, 2012** – Several railroad organizations have joined forces to raise awareness of rail safety issues in the Texas Hill Country and in Austin alongside the Austin Western Railroad owned by Capital Metro.

A public service campaign sponsored by Capital Metro, Watco Transportation Services, Herzog Transit Services and Operation Lifesaver has begun and targets motorists. Messages like, “A train hitting your car is like stomping on a soda can,” and, “A moving train exerts 550,000 pounds of force,” have sprouted up on billboards in the Highland Lakes area, and on web and print ads, too. Television and radio public service announcements created by Operation Lifesaver and tailored by Capital Metro explore the dangers of texting while driving near railroad tracks.

“The basics of rail safety are common sense rules that drivers were taught when they were learning to drive: stop and look both ways before crossing the tracks, don’t try to beat an oncoming train, etc.,” said Capital Metro President and CEO Linda S. Watson. “It’s easy for drivers to become complacent around railroad tracks. But the fact is, there’s been an increase in rail traffic in our area and an uptick in distracted driving—a dangerous combination.”

According to Federal Railroad Administration statistics, 10 percent of all grade crossing collisions in the United States occurred in Texas in 2011—more than any other state. Along the Austin Western Railroad, since March 2011, there have been eight collisions at rail crossings, and another five near misses.

“Nearly every collision between an automobile and a train at a railroad crossing is preventable,” noted Watco Transportation Services Marketing Manager Ryan Williams. “Railroad operators like Watco follow strict safety protocols and federal regulations, but ultimately, we rely on automobile drivers to follow public safety and traffic laws when it comes to railroad tracks. We’re encouraging all motorists to look, listen, and live.”

The campaign follows Capital Metro's and Operation Lifesaver's comprehensive rail safety outreach over the last few years that has brought rail safety education to every school within two miles of the Capital MetroRail Red Line—a 32-mile segment of the Austin Western Railroad.

The partners behind the current campaign encourage everyone to familiarize themselves with the lifesaving tips for driving, walking or biking near railroad tracks found at [capmetro.org/railsafety](http://capmetro.org/railsafety) and [oli.org](http://oli.org).

## RAIL SAFETY BASICS

### When you're in a vehicle...

- **Never stop your vehicle on railroad tracks.** It is illegal to stop a vehicle on railroad tracks.
- **Always obey all traffic signs and signals** at grade crossings. The train has the right of way – look both ways before crossing.
- **Never drive around lowered gates.** It's illegal and deadly. If the gate is down, the road is closed.

### When you're walking...

- **Always stop, look, and listen** for trains before crossing the tracks and be sure to look both ways.
- **Never walk down a train track.** It's illegal and dangerous. It can take a mile or more to stop a freight train, so by the time an engineer can see a trespasser or a vehicle on the tracks, it is too late.
- **Cross tracks ONLY at designated pedestrian or roadway crossings** and obey all warning signs and signals. If you cross at any other place, you are trespassing and can be ticketed or fined.

### If you have children...

- **Talk to them about railroads** and teach the importance of crossing the tracks safely. "Stop, look and listen" is an important message for them to understand.
- **Know the facts.** Make sure that everyone in your family knows all these safety rules.

## MULTIMEDIA ELEMENTS

CAPMETRO.ORG/RAILSAFETY

**A TRAIN HITTING YOUR CAR IS LIKE STOMPING ON A SODA CAN.**

**Consider the impact.**



   