

# Quiet Zone Application Update

July, 2007



The concern over train horn noise has escalated since the Final Rule by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) was implemented last summer (2006). This Final Rule has resulted in increased train horn noise, not only in San Clemente, but throughout the State. The City Council has made the application for quiet zones one of our top five priorities for the current fiscal year. We are extremely concerned with the increased train noise and are thoroughly committed to following through on a solution.

The establishment of a quiet zone is a positive means of controlling excessive train noise. A quiet zone is a designated section of railroad including one or more consecutive public grade crossings in which trains are prohibited from sounding their horns. The intent of quiet zones is to decrease the levels of noise for nearby residential communities. Automatic gates and lights, as well as other safety measures, are a few of the devices used at quiet zone crossings to ensure safety.

In preparation to our application for a quiet zone, the City has completed an annual report to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) explaining the City's safety and public education program that is currently being implemented to improve public safety along the railroad corridor. It is imperative that the City demonstrate we are successfully implementing all the safety improvements associated with the beach trail if we hope to obtain approval of our quiet zone application. Staff is working directly with the CPUC and SCRRA to ensure the Beach Trail project is being installed in conformance with the Settlement Agreement between the City, OCTA, BNSF and the CPUC. One of the major components of this program is public education, community outreach and enforcement of no trespassing laws. Please see the train safety alert information

The City has hired a railroad consultant, RailPros, to assist us in preparing an application to establish a quiet zone. RailPros expertise is in railroad engineering and crossing design and they are designing the quiet zone in downtown San Diego. RailPros has completed an initial assessment of the Beach Trail and associated railroad safety improvements and found that our recent pedestrian crossings are consistent with the draft pedestrian at-grade crossing design standards developed by the CPUC. The good news is the Coastal Trail access improvements already include the railroad signalization improvements which are typically the most expensive of the safety improvements generally required to establish a quiet zone. Other safety improvements maybe required as a result of the diagnostic team review of each at-grade crossing.



The formal process will begin with the City submitting a notice of intent to establish a quiet zone. The City plans to submit this notice to the CPUC as soon as we hear from CPUC and OCTA staff that they are satisfied with the City efforts in implementing Phase I of the beach trail project (estimated submittal date is by the end of July).

In response to this growing concern of train horn noise county and state-wide, OCTA has established a quiet zone working group. The City of San Clemente is now working cooperatively with other Orange County cities along the railroad corridor to find solutions to the train horn noise problem. The mission of the group is to act as a forum for the Cities in Orange Council and OCTA to work together to develop consistent policies and procedures for the establishment of Railroad Corridor Quiet Zones in Orange County.

The primary steps in the Quiet Zone process are summarized below:

1. Continue to work with CPUC and SCRRA staff to insure the City has addressed all remaining issues with the Beach Trail construction. Staff has responded to letters by both the CPUC and SCRRA by addressing issues that they have identified. This will be an ongoing process through the completion of Phase II of the beach trail. Staff is verifying that they are satisfied with our responses to their concerns thus far.
2. Continue to meet with OCTA to determine what they are planning with respect to the Tier 1, 2, and 3 grade crossing improvements in San Clemente and throughout the county.

3. RailPros will meet with City and finalize strategy for moving forward based on their initial assessment of the existing conditions and legal interpretations of the Final Rule.
4. Finalize the Quiet Zone Notice of Intent (NOI) Document and distribute it to required parties.
5. Schedule diagnostic team meetings, develop and agree upon the proposed improvements to implement the quiet zone. The diagnostic team will identify supplemental and alternative safety measures and recommendations.
6. Execute contract for design and FRA/CPUC processing.
7. Advertise, award, bid and construct the improvements to the satisfaction of the diagnostic team members.
8. Send out Quiet Zone Notice of Establishment.