

Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC)
Downtown San Diego Quiet Zone Project
Frequently Asked Questions
July 17, 2006

Q: What is a Quiet Zone?

A: A Quiet Zone, approved and authorized by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), is a public grade crossing(s) where additional safety precautions have been constructed, thus reducing the federal requirement for trains to sound their horns when approaching the crossing(s). When the Quiet Zone is in effect, the train will not be legally required to blow the horn when approaching crossings, except in an emergency.

Establishing a Downtown San Diego Quiet Zone will improve the quality of life of residents and visitors by reducing train horn noise and at the same time improving safety conditions for vehicles and pedestrians.

Q: At what downtown intersections will the Quiet Zone be in effect?

A: CCDC's proposed project consists of improvements to 13 existing railroad crossings in downtown San Diego; all of the grade crossings north of the freight yard, from Laurel Street south to Park Boulevard (currently closed). The 13 crossings are at the following streets: Laurel, Hawthorn, Grape, Cedar, Beech, Ash, Broadway, Kettner/G, Market, Front, First, Fifth and the new Park Boulevard crossing.

Q: How will the Quiet Zone benefit downtown San Diego?

A: A major reduction in train horn noise would improve life for residents and visitors and the planned safety upgrades will add precautions for pedestrians and vehicles at the railroad crossings.

Q. What improvements must be made at the grade crossings to qualify downtown San Diego for a Quiet Zone?

A: Officials from the FRA, the railroads, trolleys, the City of San Diego, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), CCDC staff and CCDC's rail consultants (BDS and Korve Engineering) evaluated the physical factors at each of downtown's rail crossings in order to assess current conditions and to determine the necessary upgrades for achieving a Quiet Zone for downtown San Diego.

Railroad crossing improvements will vary by location. Included will be combinations of additional vehicle crossing gates, pedestrian gates, pre-signals on approaching crossings, median islands and extended medians, additional flashing lights, additional warning signage, restriping, and the possible installation of queue cutters and other improvements.

G Street will be converted from a two-way street to a one-way street (eastbound) from Pacific Highway to Front Street. G Street is already one-way eastbound from Front Street to 17th Street (Highway 94 entrance). As part of the conversion to one-way, parking along the affected portion of G Street will be converted from parallel to angled parking on the north side of G Street, resulting in an increase of about 18 parking spaces.

The conceptual design plans and specific improvements proposed at each crossing can be viewed in the Downtown Quiet Zone section of CCDC's website at www.ccdc.com.

Q: Will there be more speeding and traffic on the street due to the conversion of G Street from two-way to one-way from Pacific Highway to Front Street?

A: A traffic study reviewed by the City of San Diego Traffic Engineering Division concluded that there would be no significant impact to traffic patterns and vehicle speed in surrounding neighborhoods. The use of sidewalk "popouts" at the Kettner and G intersection, and diagonal parking replacing the westbound lane on the north side of G will both serve as traffic calming devices to lower vehicle speeds. Speed signs will also be employed.

Q: What is the time frame for this project?

A: The project is expected to be completed by late fall 2007.

Q: How much noise will really be reduced in the Quiet Zone?

A: Noise reduction will be significant. A designated Quiet Zone stops the routine sounding of the horn that is used to warn motorists and pedestrians that the train is approaching the crossing. Train horn blowing will continue as the trains enter and exit stations and in the case of emergencies. It is important to note that the locomotive engineer has full discretion to sound the horn in any emergency situation. It also does not stop the use of the horn when advising train crew members the train is about to move, to warn workers on or near the track or when the crossing warning devices are not operating.

Q: Will there be a lot of construction near my residence for this Quiet Zone project?

A: The construction necessary for the railway crossing improvements will be minimal and will not be disruptive. It will only take place for a brief period in each crossing area as the safety improvements are installed.

Q: Where can I get information on the Quiet Zone project?

A: Details and updates regarding the project are available at www.ccdc.com. Click on the Downtown Quiet Zone link on the homepage. Questions can be emailed to quietzone@ccdc.com. Additionally, a downtown resident has created their own personal website to track the Quiet Zone. This site can be found at www.quietzonesd.info.

Q: What are trains legally required to do when approaching crossings?

A: Currently, the Federal Rule 49 CFR 222 “Use of Locomotive Horns at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings” is now in effect. This rule provides for safety at public highway-rail grade crossings by requiring locomotive horn use at all crossings that are not within an established Quiet Zone.

The train horn must be sounded in a discernible pattern of two long blasts, one short blast and one long blast 15 to 20 seconds before the crossing and prolonged until the train occupies the crossing. If multiple crossings are close together, the engineer can vary this pattern. Train horn use is in effect 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If San Diego establishes a Quiet Zone downtown, this rule would not be in effect, unless the engineer identified a potential emergency or safety issue.

The Federal Rule 49 CFR 222 “Use of Locomotive Horns at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings” is now in effect.

The rule states:

Subpart B §222.23 ...a locomotive engineer may sound the locomotive horn to provide a warning to animals, vehicle operators, pedestrians, trespassers, and crews of other trains in an emergency situation, if, in the locomotive engineer’s sole judgment, such action is appropriate in order to prevent imminent injury, death, or property damage.

FILING A COMPLAINT- INFORMATION AND PROCESS

Q: What qualifies as a train horn complaint and who enforces this rule?

A: If the horn is sounded in excess of 15 to 20 seconds and/or there is no discernible pattern it **may** qualify as a complaint. Remember, if there are multiple crossings the engineer can vary the pattern and the length of time the horn is sounded.

All railroads are responsible for adhering to this and all federal regulations. Railroad operating managers audit employee horn use on a regular basis. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) also audits for compliance.

Q: When should I complain?

A: Only qualified railroad personnel or federal inspectors know when the horn is not being sounded correctly. However, if you feel you have a valid complaint, report it immediately. Complaints must be filed within 12 hours. It may be necessary for the railroad to retrieve on-board data from the locomotive “event recorder” and interview the train crew.

Q: How do I file a complaint?

A: All complaints should be submitted to the City Council District 2 office for review. They can be emailed to quietzone@ccdc.com which then forwards the complaint directly to the Council Office.

Complaints should include the following information needed by the railroad and the FRA to investigate appropriately:

Your Name
Address and Building Name
Contact information phone/email
Date and Time of complaint
Description of complaint
Identity of train: BNSF, Coaster, Amtrak

Q: What happens to my complaint?

A: Each complaint will be entered into a spreadsheet maintained by Council District 2 for tracking purposes. This spreadsheet will be forwarded to the railroad and FRA for review. Council District 2 will work with the railroads and the FRA to ensure a proper response. The spreadsheet will not list any personal information, however the nature of the complaint will be provided to the railroad and the FRA.

IMPORTANT TRAIN SAFETY NOTES:

Safety First

Do not enter the railroad right-of-way to obtain any information on trains. Trespassing is illegal and dangerous. Only use designated pedestrian or highway-rail crossings.

Locomotive engineers are highly trained professionals and are doing the job they are paid to do. Safety is one of the core values within the railroad industry. All railroad employees bear a great responsibility for safety of the public and their fellow employees. Do not attempt to contact the engineer. Do not throw objects at any part of the locomotive or train.

CALIFORNIA CODES

PENAL CODE

SECTION 219.2

§219.2. Every person who willfully throws, hurls, or projects a stone or other hard substance, or shoots a missile, at a train, locomotive, railway car, caboose, cable railway car, street railway car, or bus or at a steam vessel or watercraft used for carrying passengers or freight on any of the waters within or bordering on this state, is punishable by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding one year, or in a state prison, or by fine not exceeding two thousand dollars (\$2,000), or by both such fine and imprisonment.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS:

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