



## More RRQZ Q&A

**Q. What benefits would a train horn “quiet zone” provide in Eugene?**

**A.** When describing the benefits of a quiet zone, people often mention quality of life, particularly for those who live or work near train crossings and are subject to loud horns. Safety enhancements would benefit people who drive, walk or bike in the vicinity of rail crossings. A quiet zone may also spur economic development, particularly on the east end (Hilyard to Pearl), where train horns are a detriment to potential projects such as the EWEB master plan and other major projects.

**Q. Are there any down sides to establishing a quiet zone in Eugene?**

**A.** In addition to monetary costs, there likely will be shifts in traffic patterns and inconveniences for people who drive, bike or walk if streets are closed or reconfigured to increase safety.

**Q. How does the quiet zone fit into plans for developing the EWEB property?**

**A.** The property in the EWEB Master Plan includes a two access points with or near rail crossings – a new access on the east side of High Street and a relocated crossing at 8th and Hilyard. A quiet zone would help meet sound requirements for federally funding housing such as that envisioned in the EWEB Master Plan.

**Q. Is there a requirement that at least one existing crossing be closed to get a quiet zone?**

**A.** The Federal Rail Administration, the Oregon Department of Transportation and Union Pacific Railroad aggressively encourage a net reduction of at-grade crossings. Additionally, the City wants to acquire an easement on Union Pacific property to construct a new rail crossing on Eighth Avenue west of Hilyard. The requirement to close an additional crossing likely will be part of the easement sales agreement.

**Q. Do all 10 crossings (Hilyard to Van Buren) need to be improved to get a quiet zone in Eugene?**

**A.** Generally, all required safety measures have to be in place before a quiet zone is approved. However, because a quiet zone only needs to be ½ mile long, the 1.5-mile-long quiet zone project area in Eugene could be split into two segments: Hilyard to Pearl and Lincoln to Van Buren.

**Q. What process is the City using to implement a quiet zone?**

**A.** Staff has worked with the City Council for several years to look at options for funding and constructing the necessary safety improvements to qualify for a quiet zone. More recently, in November 2015, the Eugene Public Works Department formed an 11-member citizen advisory panel to provide input on the proposed creation of a railroad quiet zone (RRQZ) in the north downtown and Whiteaker areas of Eugene. The charge of the citizen panel is two-fold: provide a recommendation to Public Works staff for supplemental safety measures each crossing in the rail corridor between Hilyard Street and Van Buren Street; and provide a recommendation for funding the recommended safety measures. The panel's recommendations will be forwarded to the council for consideration and possible action.

**Q. If Eugene got a quiet zone, could it be taken away?**

**A.** Yes, but the City would have three years to solve issues. If issues arise, the Federal Rail Administration would contact the City and start discussions on how to correct the safety issue(s) associated with the quiet zone.

**Q. What is Eugene's safety record for rail-crossing crashes?**

**A.** There been no vehicle crashes on rail crossings in Eugene in the last five years. On Monroe Street, there was a pedestrian injury in 2011 and a pedestrian fatality in 2014. On High Street, there was a pedestrian fatality in 2012. At Eighth and Hilyard, there was a bicycle fatality in 2012. On Jefferson Street, there was a pedestrian injury in 2015.

**Q. What options are there for improving pedestrian safety if routine sounding of train horns is eliminated?**

**A.** Education, enforcement and engineering are tools that can make people aware of the risks of crossing or being on the tracks, penalize people who disregard trespass laws, place physical barriers such as fencing to discourage people from trespassing on railroad property, and install warning lights and gates at permitted pedestrian rail crossings.

**Q. Would Union Pacific Railroad fence its right-of-way along the rail corridor between Van Buren and Hilyard?**

**A.** Union Pacific has stated it is unable to do this given current financial constraints.

**Q. How will safety be maintained for sight-impaired people if the train horns are silenced?**

**A.** Railroad crossings in the quiet zone would sound warning bells and flash lights when trains approach the crossings. Truncated domes will provide tactile warning that a crossing is ahead.

**Q. Were wayside horns considered as a safety measure?**

**A.** Yes, but it was felt they still generate a significant amount of noise, particularly for those who live or work near a crossing with a wayside horn.

*Last updated March 23, 2016*