



City of Grand Island

Tuesday, January 20, 2004

Study Session

Item -2

Discussion Concerning Use of 1/2 Cent Sales Tax for Train Noise Reduction

The community has discussed noise from train engine horns for a number of years. Kearney has closed crossings, built over and underpasses, and installed wayside horns on the Central Avenue crossing with the Union Pacific Railroad mainline tracks. Grand Island has not proceeded with the wayside horns because the railroads electronic circuitry needs upgraded, a cost the railroad expects the city to bear. A new rule change was recently approved by the Federal Railroad Administration that formalizes the requirements regarding railroad crossings. They allow the use of wayside horns and also "Quiet Zones". Public Works Director, Steve Riehle will update the council on the rule change with a series of PowerPoint Slides.

Staff Contact: Steve Riehle, City Engineer/ Public Works Director

Railroad Horns

Can we quiet them?

January 20, 2004 City Council Study Session

We have Numerous Railroad Crossings

- 10 on the Union Pacific Railroad Mainline
- 5 on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe
- 6 on the Power Plant Spur
- 4 on the Central Nebraska Railroad

Railroad Engine Horns

- When should they Blow
 - For 15 to 20 Seconds Prior to Arrival at Crossing
 - Sometimes for ¼ mile Prior to Crossing
 - If a Vehicle is in the Crossing
 - If a pedestrian is on the Tracks
- What Pattern should they Blow?
 - Pattern is 2 long - 1 short - 1 long (and repeated)
 - Pattern Can Vary if Crossings are close together
- How Loud should the Horn be?
 - Minimum sound level of 96 decibels
 - New maximum sound level of 110 decibels

Timeline for Horn Rule Change

- Before 1991 – A few Communities issued Whistle Bans
- 1991 - Federal Department of Transportation issued an Emergency Order pre-empting “Whistle Bans”
- 2000 - Draft Environmental Impact Statement Released
- December 18, 2003 - Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued Interim Final Rule Making
- December 18, 2004 - Final Rule takes Effect
 - Pre-empts State & Local Laws
 - Allows **Automatic Wayside Railroad Horns**
 - Communities can create **Quiet Zones**

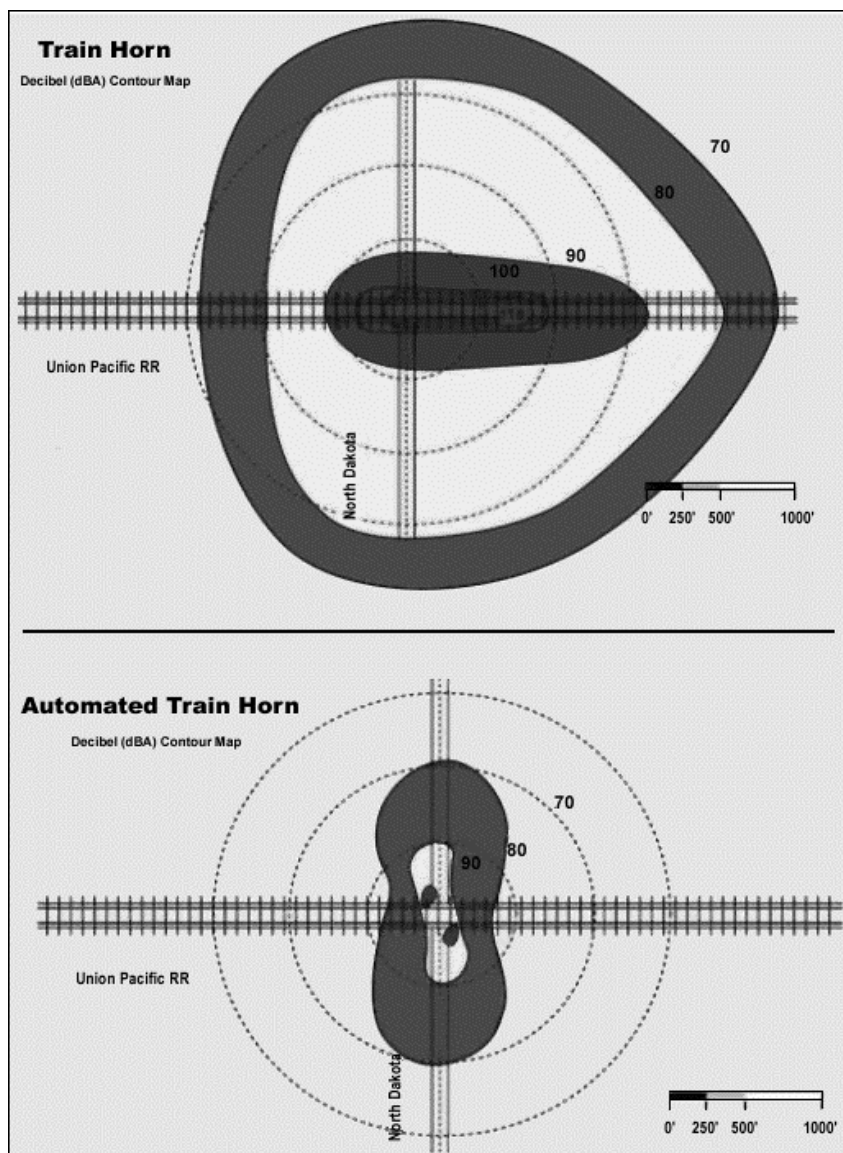
Wayside Horns

**(Directional or
Automated Horn
System AHS)
would Reduce
Noise Pollution**



Sound
Comparison:
Train Horn

VS.
AHS™



What is a “Quiet Zone”

- Horns are Prohibited (Whistle Ban)
- Horns will Sound
 - If a Vehicle is in the Crossing
 - If a pedestrian is on the Tracks

Quiet Zone May be Created if:

- Crossing has a Low Risk of Collision
 - All public Crossings have Lights & Gates
 - And Either
 - The Average Risk at Crossings is below the NSRT “National Significant Risk Threshold”
- Or
- Safety Improvements are made to Compensate for the Loss of the Train Horn as a Safety Device

Establishing Quiet Zones

- **Make Safety upgrades**
 - Four Quadrant Gates
 - Median Divider
 - Increased Enforcement
 - Temporary Closure
 - One Ways
 - Education and Enforcement

Next Steps

- **Put Together a Plan**
 - Categorize Crossings
 - Choose measures to Implement
- **Coordinate with**
 - Hall County
 - Nebraska Department of Roads
 - Federal Highway Administration
 - Railroads
- **Must Implement within 8 years if coordinated with State**