
M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: October 8, 2004
TO: City Council Members
FROM: Russell Weeks
RE: Ordinance to Create a Railroad Quiet Zone between 700 West Street and Redwood Road along 950 South.
CC: Cindy Gust-Jenson, Rocky Fluhart, DJ Baxter, Sam Guevara, Lee Martinez, Tim Harpst, Dave Oka, Gary Mumford

This memorandum is intended simply as a reminder outline to the City Council's options and key points pertaining to the proposed ordinance to establish a railroad quiet zone along 950 South between 700 West Street and Redwood Road (1700 West). The memorandum is the same one used for the City Council's briefing on the issue on October 7.

OPTIONS

- Adopt the proposed ordinance.
- Do not adopt the proposed ordinance.

POTENTIAL MOTIONS

- I move that the City Council adopt an ordinance prohibiting the sounding of train warning devices along the 900 South rail line between 700 West Street and Redwood Road.
- I move that the City Council consider the next item on the agenda.

KEY POINTS

- The proposed ordinance appears to be a temporary ordinance that would establish a "quiet zone" along the 900 South rail line until a Federal Railroad Administration rule regarding quiet zones goes into effect.
- According to the Administration, the physical facilities to implement the quiet zone have been built, and the Utah Department of Transportation has inspected and approved the facilities.
- In its transmittal, the Administration notes that although the proposed ordinance would prohibit the routine sounding of train horns, train engineers will retain the discretion to sound the horns "if in the engineer's sole judgment, such action is appropriate ... to prevent imminent injury, death or property damage."
- The Administration also notes that the proposed ordinance and the expected Federal Railroad Administration rule would not prohibit the sounding of "other, less obtrusive audible warning devices." The Administration indicates that Union Pacific Railroad

trains will “sound a bell” mounted on locomotives as they approach crossings. The Administration also indicates that the Railroad Administration has told the Administration that bells “are used in several existing quiet zones.”

DISCUSSION/BACKGROUND

The proposed ordinance appears to be the culmination of the Administration’s efforts to lessen the effect on residents of trains sounding horns along what is known as the 900 South rail line.

Union Pacific Railroad activated the line in late 2001. Since then the Administration has sought to lessen the effect of the sounding of locomotive horns as trains rolled through intersections on the 900 South line. The Administration reached an agreement with Union Pacific in March 2003 to address the operation of trains on that line. Part of the agreement included designing an implementing a quiet zone between 700 West Street and Redwood Road. It also should be noted that the Administration and Union Pacific reached an agreement in fall 2003 to work toward straightening the curve at Grant Tower – near South Temple Street – and ultimately abandoning train operations on the 900 South line.

Parts of the March 2003 agreement also included Union Pacific’s pledge to help the City develop a plan to install fencing along the 900 South line to discourage children from crossing the tracks except at signalized crossings. Union Pacific agreed to pay for the fencing, and the City agreed to maintain the fencing. Under the agreement, the City also pledged to pay for crossing guards where the tracks intersect Emery and Navajo streets starting in January 2003.

In September 2003 the City Council earmarked about \$700,000 to finance improvements along the 900 South line between 700 West Street and Redwood Road to create the physical barriers necessary to implement a quiet zone. Including 700 West Street and Redwood Road, there are seven locations where the rail line intersects City streets.

Physical improvements include:

- Raised median islands at 700 West, 800 West, 900 West, and 900 South streets and Redwood Road. (Median islands at 700 West, 800 West and 900 West streets are 160 feet long.)
- The installation of “quad gates” at 1100 West, Emery, and Navajo streets, and the installation of longer crossing arms at 700 West Street.
- Sidewalk, curb and gutter improvements at all seven intersections.
- Ramps to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act at all seven intersections.
- Road striping, painted medians and advanced warning signs installed at all approaches.

According to the Administration’s transmittal, the Utah Department of Transportation has inspected and approved all the physical improvements.

The proposed ordinance appears to be the second-to-last step toward federal implementation of the quiet zone. As indicated in the Administration’s transmittal the Federal Railroad Administration has yet to make final its rule on quiet zones. The proposed ordinance appears intended to bridge the time period between now and the Railroad Administration’s adoption of its rule.