

# **Village of Franklin Park Train Horn Quiet Zone Update**

**November 01, 2023**

## **TRAIN HORNS WILL BE FEWER AND FURTHER BETWEEN**

The Village is pleased to report that the Quiet Zone designation will continue to go into effect over the next several weeks. This designation will spare residents from the train horn blasts required ahead of each pedestrian crossing.

With this Quiet Zone designation, train engineers will no longer be legally required to sound their horns. However, if the train engineer perceives a threat on or near the tracks, such as seeing a car, pedestrian, or an animal on the tracks, they can still blow the horn. Also, an engineer can sound their horn when passing another train, if a train is stopped on the tracks, or if a passenger train is picking up passengers. In addition, an engineer may sound their horn in the railyard located west of Mannheim Road.

When our Quiet Zone designation was granted, the railroads were notified to remove the automatic triggering of the computerized mandatory sounding of the horn. Please note that this may take several months to have this system reprogrammed.

The Quiet Zone designation is the result of years of hard work and determination by the Village Board and staff. Our regional, state, and federal partners collaborated with us to obtain this benefit for our community. This effort demonstrates the achievements that result from working together for the common good.

I would like to offer special thanks to Mayor David Guerin of River Grove for being a steadfast partner and gracious neighbor.

**October 13, 2023**

The Village is pleased to report that the application review period has passed without objection, indicating that a Quiet Zone designation will go into effect over the next several weeks. This designation will spare residents from the train horn blasts required ahead of each pedestrian crossing.

The Village submitted the final paperwork in August for the joint application with the Village of River Grove to establish a Quiet Zone. Both towns and Metra completed extensive safety improvements at all the grade and pedestrian crossings.

With this Quiet Zone designation, train engineers will no longer be legally required to sound the horns. However, if the train engineer perceives a threat on or near the tracks, the horn will be sounded. If the engineer sees a car, pedestrian, or an animal on the tracks or feels that there is a danger to the train ahead, they can still blow the horn. Also, an engineer can sound their horn when passing another train, if a train is stopped on the tracks, or if a passenger train is stopped at the station picking up passengers. In addition, an engineer may sound their horn in the railyard located west of Mannheim Road.

According to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), approximately 95% of all railroad-related deaths in the U.S. are attributed to issues related to grade crossings and trespassing. Audible warnings of approaching trains are necessary to ensure the safety of motorists and pedestrians.

Trains also have an automatic horn system in place that is activated by a computer system. When a Quiet Zone designation is granted, railroads are notified to remove the automatic triggering of the mandatory sounding of the horn. We have been informed that it may take several months to have this system reprogrammed once the Quiet Zone designation is in place.

## **Quiet Zone Status – March 2023**

The final phase of the Quiet Zone process required each entity to make safety improvements. Despite

COVID-related setbacks, Metra has completed their required pedestrian safety improvements.

The Village has also completed \$1.2 million in safety improvements which included installing the delineators down the centerline of the roads at 25th and Ruby.

The Village of River Grove is nearing completion of their required safety improvements. The required delineators at the River Road and Thatcher Avenue Railroad Crossings have been installed. In mid to late April when the weather warms up, the Village of River Grove will complete their final street improvements.

When River Grove's work is complete, the Village of Franklin Park and the Village of River Grove will file jointly for a Quiet Zone designation.

The Village is in regular contact with River Grove regarding updates on their progress. Please watch our Village newsletter for updates

## **Quiet Zone Status – December 2022**

The final phase of the Quiet Zone process required each entity to make safety improvements. Despite COVID-related setbacks, Metra has completed their required pedestrian safety improvements.

The Village has also completed \$1.2 million in safety improvements which included installing the delineators down the centerline of the roads at 25th and Ruby.

The Village of River Grove is in the process of completing their required safety improvements. This includes installing lane delineators on River Road and Thatcher Road.

When River Grove's work is complete, the Village of Franklin Park and the Village of River Grove will file jointly for a Quiet Zone designation.

The Village is in regular contact with River Grove regarding updates on their progress. Please watch our Village newsletter for updates.

### **2021**

The Village is in the final stages of applying to secure a Train Horn Quiet Zone with the Village of River Grove. Completion of the pedestrian safety improvements will allow the two Villages to qualify for the Quiet Zone. Since fall of 2020, METRA has been working to construct the required safety improvements which include upgrading crossing equipment technology at Scott Street, a new pedestrian crossing at the Rose Street grade crossing, installing new gates at the Calwagner pedestrian grade crossing and

shifting the pedestrian grade crossing at the Metra depot.

Unfortunately, METRA has informed the Village that due to COVID-related setbacks, they will not be able to complete their work this summer as expected and have extended their estimated completion date to late October. The Village is proceeding with making street improvements including installing plastic delineators down the centerline of the roads at 25th and Ruby. Please watch our Village newsletter for updates on this important project.

### **Freight Train Horn Activation System**

Freight train horns are automatically activated by a Federally mandated Positive Train Control system. Federal law dictates the decibel level of the horn and the length the horn is sounded. The engineer has no discretion under this system. The train horns are automatically activated by a computer system inside each locomotive. However, when a community qualifies for a Quiet Zone, the Positive Train Control System in every locomotive is programmed to remove the automatic triggering of the mandatory sounding of the horn.

The Village has been aggressively pursuing a Train Horn Quiet Zone with the Village of River Grove for several years. Metra is implementing pedestrian safety improvements that have a total cost of \$1,573,715.00. The Village was successful in obtaining grants from several Federal and State sources in the amount of \$1,416,343.50. Construction work on the project began in 2020. Completion of the Pedestrian Safety Improvements will allow the two Villages to qualify for the Quiet Zone.

However, the Quiet Zone does not prohibit the engineers from blowing their horns, but it does relieve

them of the obligation of sounding them. If the engineer observes a vehicle or pedestrian on the tracks, the engineer will sound the horn. The Village is continuing to work with Canadian Pacific Railroad to ensure that once the Quiet Zone is implemented, the Village will experience significantly less train horn noise.

## **2020**

Metra expects to receive the last of the materials needed to complete the safety improvements by the end of 2020. Metra expects to complete construction on the safety improvements in the Spring of 2021.

The Village will make street improvements including installing a median barrier at 25th and Ruby.

## **2019**

The Village has received a \$1,416,343 Pedestrian Rail Safety Grant to fund a significant portion of the safety improvements needed at the pedestrian crossing at the Calwagner and 25th Street grade crossings and the Metra Station. We are working with Metra to design and construct the safety improvements. The Village will make street improvements including installing a median barrier at 25th and Ruby. Watch our Village newsletter for updates as we move closer to obtaining a Quiet Zone Designation in Franklin Park.

### **February, 2017**

The Village submitted an application for a Quiet Zone on the Canadian Pacific line in 2016 and was notified that our application was approved. We have been completing the necessary steps to qualify for a Quiet Zone and have hired Hancock Engineering to design the required safety measures at Rose and Ruby Streets and at the pedestrian crossings at the Metra Station and Calwagner Street. Upon completion, the operating railroads will be notified that a Quiet Zone is in place.

### **April 29, 2016**

The Village of Franklin Park, jointly with the Village of River Grove, has successfully completed an application for review to the agencies charged with the authority to approve a quiet zone designation from the Scott Street grade crossing to Thatcher Avenue. A quiet zone is a designated section of railroad where train horns are not used. Metra passenger trains will continue to sound their horn when approaching the station. This designation requires specific steps be met, including completion of safety measures mandated by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to stop the requirement for trains to use their horns as they approach the grade crossings. It is estimated that it will entail approximately one million dollars in repairs and changes be made to satisfy the federal requirements, most of which would be needed at the Metra Station pedestrian crossing and pedestrian crossing gates at Calwagner Street. The Village is looking at ways to complete these improvements in order to meet the requirements and obtain approval.

### **Train Horn Quiet Zone Update -- February 1, 2015**

The Village of Franklin Park, in partnership with the Village of River Grove, is moving forward with establishing a quiet zone from the Scott Street grade crossing to Thatcher Avenue. A quiet zone is a designated section of railroad where train horns are not used. This designation requires specific steps to attain a quiet zone, including completion of safety measures mandated by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to stop the requirement for trains to use their horns as they approach the grade crossings.

## **Franklin Park and River Grove Partner to Move the Process Forward**

In 2013, the Village met with the Regional Director of the FRA, to discuss the possibility of both villages attaining a quiet zone designation. Signal improvements have begun at the Ruby Street crossing to reduce the potential for entrapment on the railroad tracks and should be completed later this year. Last October, a Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) was established to assist in developing safety measures that would best work for the Village. Additionally, the Village hired Hancock Engineering to develop the quiet zone program.

In December, the CAB met to discuss safety improvements necessary to obtain quiet zone designation from Scott Street to Thatcher Avenue. Engineers provided data on the current risk index of all the crossings and which improvements would bring the risk down to an approvable level. The CAB agreed that placing the most effort on the three highest risk crossings (Thatcher, Des Plaines River Road, and 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue) would make the most sense. The CAB also recommended that the Village initiate the lowest cost option of channelization to present to the approving agencies.

The CAB also recommended that the option of installing additional signal gates, or quad gates at Thatcher and 25<sup>th</sup> be presented to the approving agencies should they not approve the channelization devices. The cost difference between the installation of channelization devices and quad gates is significant. The input from the CAB has been invaluable and will be used in meetings with the approving agencies.

## **Village Meets with Agencies to Seek Approval**

On January 22nd, the Village met with the approving agencies, or Diagnostic Team, comprised of representatives from the FRA, Illinois Commerce Commission, Illinois Department of Transportation, METRA and Canadian Pacific, Canadian National and Indiana Harbor Belt Railroads. The Diagnostic Team reviewed proposed improvements and will determine if they are appropriate and if any additional safety measures may be required. They also provided several additional safety measures (ASM) that would be required to attain Quiet Zone status. The Village's Engineer and consultant are evaluating this new information and will present options to the CAB at their February meeting. Because additional safety measures are required to comply with current rules, the length of time necessary to attain approval will be extended into the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2016.

Once a quiet zone plan is approved by the Village, a Notice of Intent (NOI) will be filed with the Diagnostic Team and it will evaluate the proposed ASM and determine if they meet current Federal Guidelines and this review will take 8 months or more. Once any issues with the NOI are resolved the Village will design and construct the approved safety measures. Upon completion of the improvements the crossing data will be updated and the quiet zone will go into effect. The target date of implementation of the quiet zone is now late 2016. Watch the Village website and this newsletter for more updates.