

Whistle Cessation and Railway Crossing Projects

ISSUE

This report summarizes the current status of the rail whistle cessation process at four grade railway crossings where train whistling has been identified as an ongoing concern by residents.

BACKGROUND

Transport Canada's Canadian Rail Operating Rules require all trains to whistle whenever they approach a public grade crossing. If a municipality wishes to make a request to stop train whistling, the first step in the process is to assess the crossing to determine if it meets whistling cessation requirements specified in the Grade Crossings Regulations and Standards published by Transport Canada. If the assessment determines the crossing meets the criteria and the railway company agrees, the municipality must issue a public notice, pass a resolution saying it agrees train whistling shall not be used at the crossing, and send a copy of the resolution to the railway company and all relevant stakeholders (including Transport Canada).

CURRENT STATUS

The status of whistle cessation for individual crossings in the City is at different stages of the process.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

There are four grade crossings where the City is either actively pursuing whistle cessation or will be initiating the process.

Marquis Drive Crossing, CN Warman Subdivision, Mile 8.50

Train whistling is primarily affecting the Silverwood Heights and Lawson Heights residents. The application for whistle cessation at this crossing began in 2015 with Canadian National Railway (CN) followed by completion of a grade crossing safety assessment, implementation of improvements by the City identified through the assessment, and finally a recent completion of required upgrades by CN.

The final safety concern that was to be addressed before CN will agree to implement whistle cessation is the requirement that the City install concrete barriers around the gates and warning flashers for protection from vehicles and road maintenance equipment. The installation of low-profile concrete barriers was completed in mid-October 2019.

Following the final approval by CN, the Administration will present an approval report to City Council requesting a resolution for whistle cessation, and subsequently send copies of the resolution to relevant stakeholders. Upon receiving the resolution, CN is required to issue special instructions to stop train whistling. It is anticipated that whistle cessation would come into effect in early 2020.

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Range Road 3051 in the RM of Corman Park, immediately south of Stonebridge

Even though the crossing is outside the city limits, Stonebridge residents have petitioned the City to take action to stop train whistling. In January 2019, City Council resolved that the City of Saskatoon and the RM of Corman Park (RM) cost share the completion of the safety assessment.

In June 2019, the RM hired an engineering consultant to complete the study. The Administration is awaiting the final report to review the assessment findings and discuss with the RM the available options and next steps. Any recommendations that have cost implications will require City Council approval.

Highway 7 Crossing, CP Wilkie Subdivision, Mile 4.44

This crossing was upgraded in 2018 to improve public safety by adding gates, constant warning system and a new Canadian Pacific Railway (CP) bungalow. The next step in the whistle cessation process is to hire an engineering consultant to complete a grade crossing assessment to verify that the crossing fully meets the criteria for whistle cessation, or identify if additional improvements are required.

The assessment will be commissioned and completed by March 2020, at which time it will be shared with CN for their review and input.

Fairlight Drive Crossing, CP Wilkie Subdivision, Mile 3.37

This crossing was upgraded in 2018 to improve public safety by adding gates for improved protection, a constant warning system and a new CP bungalow. A safety assessment is required to determine compliance with the standards. The crossing has an element of added complexity and compliance uncertainty due to existence of two sets of tracks with different operating speeds (CP mainline and Viterra spur line operated by CN) that are both protected by the same protection devices.

The safety assessment will be completed in conjunction with the Highway 7 crossing study by March 2020 and the report recommendations discussed with all stakeholders (CP, CN and Viterra).

IMPLICATIONS

Capital Project #2288 - TU - Transportation Safety - Railway Crossing Safety Improvements has proposed funding of \$100,000 in each year of the 2020/2021 Capital Budget and will fund the whistle cessation assessment studies and required infrastructure.

If additional funding is required to meet the infrastructure standards for whistle cessation, the Administration will provide City Council a report with funding options at the appropriate time.

There are no legal, social, or environmental implications.

NEXT STEPS

The Administration will provide an update to the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation upon completion and review of the grade crossing assessments at Range Road 3051, Highway 7, and Fairlight Drive. The report is anticipated for summer of 2020.

Report Approval

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