

July 05, 2012

News Release

For Immediate Release

Rountree Railway Quiet Zone Discussion Continues

The City of Springfield will host a public meeting at 7 p.m., July 17 at Rountree Elementary School Library, 1333 S. Grand, to discuss the potential creation of a railway quiet zone. City staff will present suggested improvements required and the potential impact of these improvements in the neighborhood. This follows a discussion with Rountree Neighborhood Association board members. The City also sent letters to 456 citizens living within 500 feet of the railway track, asking for input.

The City has received numerous and continuing complaints with regard to the sounding of train whistles at all hours of the day and night, at the rail crossing intersections of Walnut, Elm, Cherry, Weller, Delaware, and Madison Streets.

The sounding of the train horns is a requirement of the Federal Rail Administration, and the railroads are required to sound the horns by federal regulations unless certain supplementary safety measures are installed.

Several options that do not appear to be feasible include the following:

Closing the line

The rail line is predicted to remain active, necessary, and functional for the foreseeable future, so closing the line is not an option.

Relocating the line

It is also cost prohibitive to consider relocating the line and all the customers that are served on that section of track.

Supplemental safety measures allowing for silencing of horns

A third option that appears to be economically feasible involves improving public crossings by adding supplemental safety measures that would allow for the silencing of the train horns. These measures would include improvements to public crossings including installation of gates and raised medians, and some permanent street closures.

Recently, the City of Springfield, Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway, and the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) have jointly researched the matter and concluded that by partnering and pooling resources, supplemental safety measures can be added where trains will no longer have to sound their whistles, thus creating a quiet zone. In order to facilitate the creation of the quiet zone, the following improvements would have to be made to the existing public crossings at six locations as follows:

Walnut Street Crossing

Adding supplemental safety measures to include gates and a raised median.

Elm Street Crossing

Adding a supplemental safety measures to include gates and a raised median.

Cherry Street Crossing

Adding supplemental safety measures to include gates and a raised median.

Weller Street Crossing

Permanent street closure.

Delaware Street Crossing

Permanent street closure.

Madison Street Crossing

Permanent street closure.

The improvements would be jointly funded by the City of Springfield, BNSF Railway, and MoDOT. The total cost is estimated at approximately \$950,000.

The City Fire and Police Departments have reviewed the quiet zone proposal, and have indicated that the improvements and closures would not impact their emergency response times.

Springfield City Council representatives as well as City staff from Public Works, Planning, and representatives of MoDOT and BNSF Railway will attend the meeting to hear concerns and answer questions.

For more information, contact Michael K. MacPherson, MBA, Principal Planner, City of Springfield, at 417-864-1198.