



Request for City Council Committee Action From the Department of Public Works

Date: July 15, 2008
To: Honorable Sandra Colvin Roy, Chair Transportation & Public Works Committee
Subject: **Railroad Quiet Zone status and Railroad Safety Project**

Recommendation:

- a. Receive and File Railroad Quiet Zone Update
- b. Authorize the proper City Officials to execute an Agreement with the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Commercial Railroad (MNNR)

Previous Directives:

1. 9/24/04 Receive and File Interim Report on FRA Quiet Zone Requirements
2. 12/23/04 Submit report to FRA for Quiet Zone Requirements
3. 6/7/05 Receive and File Railroad Quiet Zone Update

Prepared by: Steve Mosing, Traffic Operations Engineer 673-5746

Approved by:

Steven A. Kotke, P.E., City Engineer, Director of Public Works

Presenters: Steve Mosing, Traffic Operations Engineer, Department of Public Works, Traffic and Parking Services

Reviews

Permanent Review Committee (PRC)	NA
Civil Rights Affirmative Action Plan	NA
Policy Review Group (PRG)	NA

Financial Impact (Check those that apply)

- No financial impact - or - Action is within current department budget (If checked, go directly to Background/Supporting Information)
- Action requires an appropriation increase to the Capital Budget
- Action requires an appropriation increase to the Operating Budget
- Action provides increased revenue for appropriation increase
- Action requires use of contingency or reserves
- Business Plan: Action is within the plan. Action requires a change to plan.
- Other financial impact (Explain):
- Request provided to department's Finance Dept. contact when provided to the Committee Coordinator

Community Impact

Neighborhood Notification: Not Applicable

City Goals: A SAFE PLACE TO CALL HOME: the city's infrastructure will be well-maintained, people will feel safe in the city.

Comprehensive Plan: Not Applicable

Zoning Code: Not Applicable

Background/Supporting Information

Railroad Quiet Zone

The City of Minneapolis has 13 railroad corridors that consist of 89 public rail grade crossings and 27 private rail grade crossings. These corridors, until 2005, were established Quiet Zone (Whistle Ban) corridors that did not require the use of train horns while approaching a rail grade crossing. As a result of a 2005 addition to the Federal Rail Administration's (FRA) rules governing rail corridors established in Quiet Zones, the City has gone through a number of measures to continue to operate these corridors as Quiet Zones. These measures included:

1. June 3, 2005 - Submit Notification to continue Quiet Zone Status (Done)
2. December 24, 2005 – Submit notification of Quiet Zone Establishment (Done)
3. February 24, 2008 – Submit Notice of Intent to submit a detailed plan. (Done)
4. June 24, 2008 - Install "No Train Horn" Warning Signs at crossing locations. (Done)
5. June 24, 2008 – Submit Detailed Plan for Quiet Zone Improvements. (Done)

The basis for the City in complying with the measures set forth by the FRA is to not unnecessarily introduce train horns that have no bearing on the safety of the public and negatively impact livability. Federal law allows train locomotive horns be used at grade crossings starting June 24, 2008 unless the roadway authority complies with the above stated measures.

The FRA annually sets the National Safety Risk Threshold (NSRT) rating for the purpose of determining the rail corridors that will require the implementation of Supplemental Safety Measures (SSMs) in order to maintain quiet zone status. These SSMs can include the installation of center medians, roadway operational changes and new gate systems. Public Works has recently evaluated all crossing in Minneapolis to determine the corridors that have Quiet Zone Safety Index's (QZSI) above the NSRT thus requiring the installation of SSMs. Based on this evaluation, the City of Minneapolis has two crossings that exceed the maximum allowed rating. The City is required to upgrade these crossings to allow trains to proceed through the intersections without sounding their horns. The crossings presently above the NSRT are the Talmadge crossing (USDOT 082978K) located on Talmadge Ave SE between 20th and 21st Avenue SE, and the Broadway St. NE crossing (USDOT 463567H) located on Broadway St. NE, just west of Industrial Blvd. A detailed plan outlining the necessary SSMs required to bring these crossings under the NSRT has been submitted as part of 5. Submit Detailed Plan for Quiet Zone Improvements stated above and are summarized below:

Line	USDOT # Minneapolis Minnesota	Street	Proposed Crossing Improvement	Scheduled Completion Date
BNSF, Talmadge	082978K	Talmadge	Installation of insurmountable median	October 1, 2009
MNNR, Broadway	463567H	Broadway	Pre existing median with installation of gates	October 1, 2009 Gate installation

These crossings are currently the only crossings that require upgrades to maintain quiet zone status. However, with the FRA annual calculation of the NSRT, there may be crossings that require attention in the future. Upgrades do not impact transportation operations or limit access.

Railroad Safety Program

MnDOT's Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations annually conducts safety reviews of grade crossing locations for potential projects to include in the RR Grade Crossing Safety Program.

Talmadge Ave SE -- Talmadge is a grade crossing that operates with a rail signal system that includes gates and bells. The Talmadge crossing has the highest frequency of trains (52/day) in the City. The proposed project would install a median to reduce the QZRI below the NSRT. The cost for the installation of a median is part of the 2009 Public Works Capital Budget Requests as Net Debt Bonds submitted to CLIC for construction in 2009. The approximate cost for this project is \$100,000.

Broadway St NE -- The Broadway project was submitted and approved for SAFETEA-LU funds as part of the State's 2009 and 2010 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

This project includes safety enhancements such as the replacement of the existing crossing warning devices with warning devices that are more reliable, the addition of crossing gates and replacing existing track circuitry for improved train arrival prediction.

The estimated total cost for the crossing signal installation is \$288,750. Of this cost, 90% (\$259,875) will be reimbursed by the Federal Highway Administration in cooperation with the State of Minnesota. The City is responsible for funding the remaining costs (\$28,875) which is part of the 2009 Public Works Capital Budget Requests as Net Debt Bonds submitted to CLIC.

Public Works is requesting that the proper City Officials be directed to execute an Agreement with the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Commercial Railroad (MNNR) for installation of a complete railroad crossing signal system on Broadway St. NE. (USDOT 463567H) just east of Industrial Boulevard. This project will be completed in 2009 by MNNR Forces.

cc: Council Member Ostrow, Ward 2
Council Member Gordon, Ward 1
Jon Wertjes, Public Works
Don Elwood, Public Works
Jack Yuzna, Public Works

T&PW

Your Committee recommends that the proper City Officials be directed to execute an Agreement with the Commissioner of Transportation, State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Commercial Railroad (MNNR) for installation of a complete railroad crossing signal system on Broadway St. NE (USDOT 463567H MUN 445) east of Industrial Boulevard.