



Fremont City Council

3300 Capitol Avenue
Fremont, CA 94538

SCHEDULED

Meeting: 12/14/21 07:00 PM

Div/Dept: Public Works

Category: Public Projects

STAFF REPORT (ID # 4497)

Sponsors:
DOC ID: 4497

CENTERVILLE RAILROAD CORRIDOR SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT - Approve of the Intent to Construct Railroad Crossing Safety Improvements with the Goal of Creating Train Horn Quiet Zones in the Centerville Area at Six Locations, as Required in the Code of Federal Regulations “Use of Locomotive Horns at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings Final Rule”; Make Findings of CEQA Exemptions.

Contact Persons:

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Executive Summary: The purpose of this report is to initiate the establishment of railroad crossing quiet zones at six locations in the Centerville area at Blacow Road, Dusterberry Way, Maple Avenue, Fremont Boulevard, Shinn Street, and Clarke Drive (Niles Canyon area) consistent with the Code of Federal Regulations, 49 CFR Section 222 et seq. This project is being proposed at this time to take advantage of opportunities to the fund the project from regional sources and to partner with Altamont Commuter Express (ACE).

BACKGROUND: Federal transportation safety policy requires the sounding of train horns in advance of public grade crossings. Horn blasts have a volume of level in the range of 96 to 110 decibels. In 2006, the Federal Highway Administration established the *Use of Locomotive Horns at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings Final Rule* (Quiet Zone). Local communities can enact a quiet zone if certain safety measures are provided, such as median islands at railroad crossings or 4-quadrant gates. When a traffic signal is located near a railroad crossing, special communication systems are required to coordinate the train detection system, the crossing gates, and the traffic signal to ensure that traffic is not backed up at the signal and across the tracks when the train is approaching.

In 2007, Fremont commissioned a feasibility study on establishing quiet zones at all railroad crossings in Fremont. The Stevenson Boulevard and Nursery Avenue locations were identified as the highest priorities for installing quiet zones. A quiet zone was implemented at Stevenson Boulevard in 2010 and Nursery Avenue was completed in October 2021.

In 2017, the Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC) completed a Regional Rail Safety Enhancement Program (Rail SEP) study for the county which prioritized at-grade crossings in Alameda County based on safety, vehicular delay, emissions, noise impacts and land use considerations. Railroad crossings in the Centerville corridor were identified as a high priority for improvement and they were designated a “Tier 1 priority” for regional funding in the County Transportation Plan.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS: The locations which require Council approval to proceed with the procedure for establishing quiet zones as part of the Centerville Railroad Safety

Improvement Project consist of the following six crossings: Blacow Road, Dusterberry Way, Maple Avenue, Fremont Boulevard, Shinn Street, and Clarke Drive.

Staff recommends moving forward with issuing a "Notice of Intent to Create New Quiet Zones" for the six crossings as the first step in the quiet zone establishment process, in order to start discussions with the key stakeholders which include the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) and Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA).

The six crossings in the proposed quiet zone represent all of the at-grade railroad crossings travelled by ACE Trains in Fremont. ACE is planning to increase their commuter rail services in Fremont in the near-term. The City and ACE staff have discussed jointly supporting the railroad safety improvements in the Centerville corridor as it helps to mitigate community impacts associated with increased train travel. Mayor Mei is a member of the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (manager of ACE) and has been advocating for the quiet zone project as priority for ACE.

The Centerville community and the main street business district along Fremont Boulevard is significantly impacted by the frequent train horn blasts that occur over 20 times a day and at all hours. Implementing the railroad corridor quiet zone helps support the City Council's priority goal to support the City's historic town center business districts.

In June 2021, the City Council approved new funding in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) in the amount of \$150,000 to support project development work for the Centerville Railroad Corridor Safety Improvement Project.

FISCAL IMPACT: There are sufficient funds in the adopted CIP available to start the quiet zone process for this project. Staff will seek funding from regional sources for project construction, since the project has been identified as a priority in the County Transportation Plan for Alameda County.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW: This project is exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to, without limitation, CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 as the repair, maintenance or minor alteration of existing facilities involving no or negligible expansion of use beyond that presently exists; Section 15302, as replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities located on the same site and with substantially the same purpose and involving negligible or no expansion of capacity; Section 15303, as new construction or conversion of small structures, including street improvements; Section 15304, as minor alterations to land; and/or Section 15311, as construction or replacement of minor structures accessory to existing facilities including but not limited to on-premise signs. Each of the foregoing provides a separate and independent basis for CEQA compliance.

ATTACHMENTS: None.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval of the following actions related to the Centerville Railroad Corridor Safety Improvement Project (PWC9071):

1. Authorize staff to begin the process to establish quiet zones at the Fremont Boulevard, Maple Avenue, Dusterberry Way, Blacow Road, Shinn Street and Clarke Drive crossings, in accordance with the requirements of 49 CFR Parts 222 and 229 - Use of Locomotive Horns at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings.
2. Authorize the City Manager or her designee to issue the Notice of Intent and Notice of Quiet Zone Establishment as required in the quiet zone establishment process.
3. Find that this project is exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review pursuant to, without limitation CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 as the repair, maintenance or minor alteration of existing facilities involving no or negligible expansion of use beyond that presently existing; Section 15302, as replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities located on the same site and with substantially the same purpose and involving negligible or no expansion of capacity; Section 15303, as new construction or conversion of small structures, including street improvements; Section 15304, as minor alterations to land; and/or Section 15311, as construction or replacement of minor structures accessory to existing facilities including but not limited to on-premise signs. Each of the foregoing provides a separate and independent basis for CEQA compliance.