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Village of River Grove

Quiet Zone Designation Becomes a Reality

On October 4, 2023 the Village of River Grove finally received approval to establish a Quiet Zone. Mayor Guerin and the Village Engineers have been meeting and working with federal, state and local agencies for several years to accomplish this. The Village submitted the final paperwork to the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) in August as part of a joint application with the Village of Franklin Park to establish a Quiet Zone in both towns. The Villages of Franklin Park and River Grove started the process in 2015 with initial talks with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the four railroads using the tracks that would be affected. The Villages worked jointly, as the minimum length of the new Quiet Zone would span over both Villages and each Village was reliant on the others' improvements to be able to petition for the creation of the Quiet Zone.

In November of 2016 River Grove and Franklin Park received approval of their jointly filed Notice of Intent from the FRA, at which time the proposed improvements over the nine roadway crossings of the tracks were identified. These improvements included installation of new pedestrian gates, the installation of delineators on four busier roadways, closures of some entrances that were to near the tracks, restricting others to right turns in/out, and new signage and pavement markings. At the completion of this work the Villages were required to resubmit new railroad crossing inventory forms, cataloging the improvements were made and in place. Once these inventory forms were entered into the national system,, with assistance from the ICC, the Villages were able to send out their Notice of Establishment to the FRA and affected railroads letting them know that the roadway crossings had been upgraded per the Notice of Intent. The FRA inspectors were on site October 2nd and 3rd confirming the improvements had been made in accordance with the approved plan and issued their approval of the Quiet Zone.

While the railroads have been notified of the new 24-Hour Quiet Zone across the Villages of Franklin Park and River Grove, and it has been noticeably quieter in town, it should be known that the train engineer is still in control of the horns and will utilize the horn in certain safety related and emergency situations. Mayor David B. Guerin stated, "I am thrilled to report that the application review period has passed without objection, and a Quiet Zone designation will go into effect over the next several weeks. This designation will significantly decrease train horns that are required ahead of each pedestrian crossing."

With this Quiet Zone designation train engineers will no longer be legally required to sound the train horns. However, if the train engineer perceives a threat on or near the tracks, the train 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.

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.

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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.

Mayor Guerin added, "I appreciate the community's patience during this long process, and I want to thank the Village of Franklin Park and Mayor Pedersen for partnering with us on this effort."