



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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With Railroad Quiet Zones Coming Online, Riverside Urges Safety at Crossings

New safety measures mean fewer train horns, but lights and warning bells will remain at intersections

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – With one railroad quiet zone already reducing the noise from train whistles through much of Riverside and another quiet zone on the way in the coming weeks, city officials are reminding motorists and pedestrians to stay off the tracks when crossing arms are down.

“A quiet zone offers real relief for residents and business owners who live and work near the train tracks,” Mayor Rusty Bailey said. “But it’s important to continue to stay safe by observing all safety precautions, especially when trains are passing.”

Quiet zones, which require Federal Railroad Administration approval, reduce the amount of noise generated by train whistles by increasing safety measures at railroad crossings. These safety measures, including raised medians and additional crossing gates, make sounding train whistles less necessary.

The city’s first quiet zone encompasses 12 railroad crossings along seven miles of railroad track between Buchanan and Mary streets. The \$13 million project, which took five years to complete, affects railroad tracks that largely parallel Highway 91 and regularly carry more than 130 trains per day. That quiet zone went into effect on Nov. 17.

A second quiet zone is expected to launch by the end of 2016 between Mt. Vernon and Marlborough avenues in northeast Riverside on railroad tracks now travelled primarily by Metrolink’s Perris Valley Line.

In areas where there is no quiet zone, engineers are required to sound the train horns prior to entering a crossing in a pattern of blasts that each exceeds 100 decibels: two long, one short and one long. The blasts must occur 15 seconds before the train enters a crossing or a quarter-mile before the crossing if the train is travelling 60 mph or faster.

This is especially significant in a city like Riverside, where railroad tracks can be found through much of the city and where trains pass through hundreds of times a day. In areas of Riverside where a lot of

crossings can be found in a relatively short distance, the horns sometimes sound like one long blast to neighbors living nearby.

Train conductors still must sound the horns if they see something or someone on the tracks and/or if there are workers on or near the tracks. The lights and bells that activate at the crossings are still in effect for the safety of people and motorists.

The quiet zone along Highway 91 is a collaborative effort between the City of Riverside, the Riverside County Transportation Commission, the BNSF Railway and Metrolink, the commuter railroad. That stretch is the longest quiet zone on BNSF tracks.

“The quiet zone, which so many people worked so hard to bring to fruition, is a godsend to the folks who live and work near the railroad tracks,” said City Councilman Chris MacArthur, whose ward includes much of the first quiet zone. “From people trying to sleep to employees trying to concentrate on work, the lack of train horns is going to change lives.”

Anyone who believes that the quiet zone regulations have been violated can call 311 from anywhere in Riverside to report the violation so that the City can monitor and analyze such incidents. Violations also can be reported by (951) 826-5311 or online at www.riversideca.gov/quietzone.