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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Reply Attention: **W.H. Jackson, P.Eng.**
Director of Public Works
(905) 727-1375, Extension 4371

August 24, 2004

Mr. Kees Schipper, P. Eng.
Commissioner of Transportation and Works
Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street, Box 147
Newmarket, Ontario
L3Y 6Z1

Aug 27 2004
TO: T & W COMMITTEE

Dear Mr. Schipper

Re: Elimination of Whistling at Railway Crossing – Newmarket Subdivision in the Town of Aurora

I refer to the attached copy of Report No. PW04-039 dealing with the above noted matter.

Town Council at its meeting of August 17, 2004 adopted the report without amendment and accordingly, I am requesting that you initiate the procedures necessary to eliminate whistling along the Newmarket Subdivision at the Wellington Street East and St. John's Sideroad crossings. I have also requested Canadian National Railway to initiate the procedures for the crossings on Town roads.

My contact at Canadian National Railway is:

Mr. Peter Gorski
Public Works Offices
Canadian National Railway
1 Administration Road
Concord, Ontario
L4K 1B9

Please call if there are any questions.

Yours truly,

W. H. Jackson, P. Eng.
Director of Public Works

Attachment

File: T00: Transportation/Railway Crossing



**TOWN OF AURORA
COUNCIL REPORT**

No. PW04-039

SUBJECT: *Elimination of Whistling at Railway Crossings*

FROM: W. H. Jackson, Director of Public Works

DATE: August 17, 2004

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT staff be requested to formally initiate the procedures to request Canadian National Railway to eliminate whistling along the Newmarket Subdivision at the Englehard Drive and Centre Street crossings;

THAT the Region of York be requested to initiate the process to request Canadian National Railway to eliminate whistling along the Newmarket Subdivision at the Wellington Street East and St. John's Sideroad crossings;

THAT funds to an upset limit of \$15,000 be allocated for the required safety audits at the subject crossings as described in Report No. PW04-039; and

THAT staff be requested to report further on this matter when the results of the safety audits are available and detailed costing for the required safety infrastructure is available.

BACKGROUND

Council and staff have received a number of complaints recently regarding the blowing of train whistles particularly at night.

The purpose of this report is to explore the matter of train whistling and determine the options available to the Town in this matter.

COMMENTS

1. General

Train whistles are a safety device used to alert motorists and pedestrians to the presence of an approaching train. They also warn trespassers away from the rail right-of-way. Locomotive engineers follow a detailed set of instructions (as approved by Transport Canada) as to when a whistle must be sounded and the whistling sequence to be used when safety is at risk.

The instructions (Canadian Rail Operating Rules) specify that all trains must sound their whistle one quarter of a mile before all public crossings, regardless of the type of crossing warning system in place. The whistle must be sounded while approaching the crossing and until the train has fully occupied the crossing.

There are four at-grade railway crossings of the "Newmarket Subdivision" rail line in the Town (Englehard Drive, Wellington Street East, Centre Street and St. John's Sideroad).

2. Process to Eliminate Train Whistles

A process has been established whereby municipalities can seek relief from whistling at railway crossings. Typically, the process involves the following steps all of which are done at the cost of the municipality:

- The municipality formally requests the elimination of whistling at specified locations;
- A safety audit is undertaken by the railway authority;
- Any required safety infrastructure is installed by the municipality;
- The safety infrastructure is inspected and approved by the railway authority;
- A municipal by-law is passed to eliminate whistling;
- The municipality advises all operators of the railway (as identified by the railway authority) regarding its intent to eliminate whistling;
- The railway authority requests elimination of whistling from Transport Canada;
- Transport Canada approves the request from the railway authority.

In Aurora, the railway operating authority is Canadian National Railway although GO Transit also operates on this line. Accordingly, both of these agencies will be involved in this project.

In addition, Wellington Street East and St. John's Sideroad are both Regional roads and therefore, the Region of York will need to initiate the above noted process for their crossings and request Canadian National Railway to eliminate whistling at the crossing of the Newmarket Subdivision at these streets.

3. Expected Safety Infrastructure for Crossings

Minimum safety infrastructure must be in place before the rail authority will consider elimination of mandatory whistling requirements for at-grade crossings. The minimum

safety infrastructure is dependent on the number of tracks to be crossed, the type of crossing (vehicular or pedestrian/bikeway) and the maximum train speed at the crossing. The infrastructure requirements range from simple flagging to flashing lights and bells with gates. Depending on the specifics of the crossing, additional safety measures may be needed to deal with matters such as a high level of trespassing or vegetation that reduces line of sight.

As noted above, the safety audit is undertaken by the railway authority (typically a consultant working on behalf of the railway) with all audit costs the responsibility of the municipality.

As Council is aware, crossing gates already exist at the Wellington Street East crossing and crossing gates are scheduled to be installed at the St. John's Sideroad crossing as part of that road's reconstruction. We are also aware of a GO Transit plan to eventually equip all of their crossings with gates. Staff is not aware of the final timing for crossing gates at Englehard Drive and Centre Street, however, we understand that one crossing will receive gates within a year or two. Based on this information, it would appear that what is typically the main cost component of the safety infrastructure costs required to eliminate whistling at crossings may already be accounted for in Aurora.

OPTIONS

Council may not wish to proceed with efforts to eliminate whistling at at-grade railway crossings in Aurora.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on preliminary information, the estimated cost to have the safety audit undertaken is \$2,500 per intersection for a total of \$10,000 in the Town. To ensure enough money is available to continue the safety audits if additional work is required, it would be prudent to allow an upset limit of \$15,000 for this work. Funds in this amount are available in the Public Works Engineering Fees account.

At this time, further detailed costs to install the required safety infrastructure are not known.

CONCLUSIONS

A process is available for a municipality to request the elimination of train whistling at level crossings within the boundaries of the municipality. In consideration of the complaints that have been received, a reasonable response would be to initiate the process by requesting the required safety audits be undertaken. This would involve certain funds but on completion of the audits, staff would be in a position to inform Council of the estimated cost to proceed with the installation of infrastructure so that the Town would be in a position to request the operating railway and hence Transport Canada to approve implementation of an anti-whistling by-law.

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal "A" speaks to maintaining a well-managed and fiscally responsible municipality.

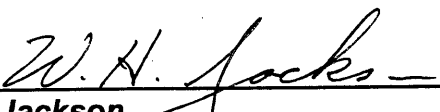
ATTACHMENTS

None

PRE-SUBMISSION REVIEW

Management Team Meeting – August 11, 2004

Prepared by: W. H. Jackson, Director of Public Works, Ext.# 4371



W. H. Jackson
Director of Public Works