



February 23, 2007

Mr. Scott O. Smith  
City Engineer  
City of Oceanside  
300 N. Coast Highway  
Oceanside, CA 92054

Subject: **Oceanside Quiet Zone Conceptual Design and Cost Estimates**

Dear Mr. Smith,

We are transmitting to you the following items:

1. Conceptual Design Exhibits
2. Conceptual Design Cost Estimate

### **Background**

In response to a legislative mandate, The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued its Final Rule (final rule) on the Use of Locomotive Horns at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings in mid 2005. The final rule provides an opportunity, not available until now, for localities nationwide to mitigate the effects of train horn noise by establishing new "quiet zones".

In general, the final rule requires the implementation of safety improvements (i.e. "Supplemental Safety Measures" or "SSM's") at each crossing to compensate for the horns no longer being sounded at the crossing. The most common SSM's are raised median extensions and/or exit gates to address vehicle safety. Improvements may also be implemented to address pedestrian safety if pedestrian safety is identified as a concern by the roadway owner, railroads, and/or regulatory agencies. However, the final rule is not as prescriptive with pedestrian safety improvements as with vehicle safety improvements. Instead, the final rule requires these local entities to come to agreement on the implementation of appropriate pedestrian safety improvements.

In 2006, the North County Transit District (NCTD) Board adopted a policy for working with Cities to establish quiet zones in accordance with the final rule. The rule outlines, among other things, process, capital cost responsibilities and maintenance cost responsibilities.

The City of Oceanside, CA is pursuing the implementation of a quiet zone along the North County Transit District (NCTD) main line; silencing the sounding of train horns at the following at-grade crossings:

- Surfrider Way
- Mission Avenue
- Wisconsin Avenue
- Oceanside Boulevard
- Cassidy Street

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The following railroad entities operate at some or all of these crossings:

- NCTD Coaster Commuter Service
- Amtrak Pacific Surfliner Intercity Passenger Service
- Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) Metrolink Commuter Service
- BNSF Railway freight service

In addition, NCTD is currently constructing the Sprinter light rail project, which will operate on new track at the Wisconsin Avenue and Oceanside Boulevard crossings.

## **Recent Developments**

RailPros is under contract with the City to provide assistance in implementing the quiet zone in accordance with the final rule, the NCTD policy and applicable California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) regulations.

In November 2006, the RailPros and the City participated in a diagnostic meeting with the CPUC and the operating railroads in order to discuss the SSM's and other improvements that would be required at each crossing in order to implement a quiet zone. In general, these improvements consist of the following improvements to address vehicular safety:

- Exit Gates,
- Raised Median Extensions, and/or
- Driveway relocations/closures

To address pedestrian safety, the following improvements are being implemented:

- Reconfiguration of Sidewalks,
- Pedestrian Channelization
- Installation of Detectable Warning Strips at Sidewalk Approaches to Tracks, and/or
- Pedestrian Gates

Earlier this month, RailPros prepared a notice of intent to establish a new quiet zone document for the City. The City sent out this notice on February 8th to the FRA, CPUC, operating railroads and other parties as required under the final rule. This document is the first official notice required under the final rule in order to establish a new quiet zone. It provides the various involved parties a 60-day comment period.

RailPros has prepared conceptual design exhibits that illustrate the improvements proposed at each crossing. Upon City approval, these exhibits will be transmitted to the involved parties for their review and comment. The capital cost estimate transmitted herewith is based upon the improvements identified on these exhibits. The estimated cost for the railroad signal improvements were provided by NCTD, who had them developed by their railroad signal design consultant Pacific Railway Enterprises (PRE). All other costs were developed by RailPros based on cost information provided by the Cities of Oceanside and San Diego as well as NCTD.

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In addition to the capital costs, NCTD will require the City to reimburse NCTD for the maintenance of the additional signal facilities implemented as part of the quiet zone. The annual maintenance costs have not yet been developed by NCTD. However, RailPros estimates the annual maintenance cost will be \$25,000 to \$50,000 per year based upon maintenance cost information from other railroads. NCTD will also require the City to pay for the capital replacement of any equipment added as a part of the quiet zone. For example, if a truck knocks out an exit gate mechanism, the City will need to reimburse NCTD for the cost of replacing the exit gate mechanism.

NCTD will require insurance coverage for the quiet zone. At this time, these costs have not been determined. At the June 2006, NCTD Board meeting, NCTD's legal counsel indicated that they had tentative agreement with their insurance carrier to provide "additional insured" coverage for Cities at approximately \$500 to \$700 per crossing per year. However, NCTD has recently indicated this now may not be the case. News articles indicate that the City of Placentia is paying as much as much as \$350,000 per year for insurance on the eight crossings within the City's quiet zone.

### **Next Steps**

Once funding of the project has been secured, the City would need to take the following steps to advance the quiet zone:

1. Enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NCTD on the development of the quiet zone. The MOU will require the City to deposit funds to NCTD to cover costs including railroad signal design costs, program management, and staff time.
2. Proceed with any environmental process that may be required. At-grade crossing improvements are statutorily exempt from CEQA. However, the City needs to make the final decision on the appropriate environmental process.
3. Enter into a contract for the design of all other improvements and for processing all other required information as per the final rule and as per CPUC General Order 88B.

The City will also need to execute a construction and maintenance agreement with NCTD that would address the capital and maintenance responsibilities of each party as well as City insurance requirements.

Assuming steady progress on funding and agreements, the design, material procurement and construction should be achievable in approximately 18 to 24 months. This timeline takes into account the current industry lead time of 6 months for ordering railroad signal equipment. However, this lead time may increase as the demand for signal equipment increases due to the expanding implementation of quiet zones nationwide.

Once the City makes the decision to move forward, RailPros will prepare the proposal for Item 3 above.

# RAILPROS **INC.**

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If you have any questions about the conceptual design, cost estimate, or the next steps for moving forward, please do not hesitate to give me a call at (714) 809 – 0463.

Sincerely,

**RAILPROS, INC.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Hankinson", written in a cursive style.

Eric Hankinson, P.E.  
President