

June 28, 2016

Ms. Sarah Feinberg, Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Train Horn Rule (49 CFR Part 222)

Dear Administrator Feinberg:

The Colorado Municipal League appreciates your decision to re-open the train horn rule for comment and amendment. Since the adoption of the current train horn rule, many Colorado cities and towns have been dealing with complaints from residents and business owners regarding the length and decibel level of locomotive horns sounding at crossings. Train horn noise is a negative factor in community redevelopment efforts, as rail lines traverse the urban core of our municipalities. The quality of life in our neighborhoods has been impacted. We urge your favorable consideration of the many thoughtful, practical rule changes suggested in comments submitted by Colorado municipalities and that you give weight to the comments you hear directly from Colorado citizens. We urge changes to the rule that will provide additional flexibility to address individual local circumstances while maintaining public safety.

The Colorado Municipal League believes the most benefit can be gained by having the FRA take the following steps:

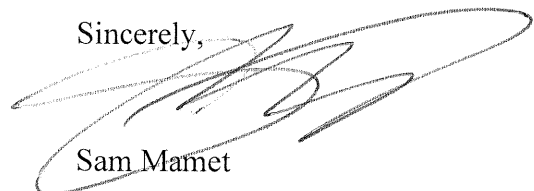
- Amend the train horn rule to reduce existing requirements for the sounding of train horns during the late night hours. This may be the simplest, yet most effective rule change that can be adopted. The sound level range for a locomotive horn is currently between 96 decibels and 110 decibels. When approaching a crossing the rule requires sounding the horn for 15 to 20 seconds and until the locomotive fully occupies the crossing. We recommend amending the rule to give locomotive engineers discretion in the length of time a horn must be sounded at urban grade crossings between 10:00 pm and 6:00 am. In consideration for the public, shorter soundings at night were common practice before the current rule mandated the length of time for sounding the horn.

- Amend the train horn rule to allow FRA staff the latitude to work with local traffic engineers in designing alternative grade crossing protections that both ensure public safety and mitigate noise impacts. The current one-size-fits all rule fails to address many urban situations such as tracks that travel the center line of a city street. Many factors should be considered in determining adequate crossing protection including train speed, sightlines, and vehicular and pedestrian traffic volumes. Safe, workable solutions can be developed to address train horn noise issues in these unusual situations if flexibility is written into the rule.
- Provide funding assistance for the installation of required quiet zone equipment, allowing more municipalities to implement quiet zones. The significant expense of meeting the current requirements is beyond the resources available to many cities and towns. A commitment of federal funds in a matching grant program would provide a shared method for improving both increased crossing safety and a more livable community. We pledge to work with Colorado's congressional delegation to partner with any FRA efforts to create such a funding source.
- Look to the future for new technologies that can improve grade crossing safety while minimizing or eliminating the use of train horns. We urge FRA to invest in research aimed at developing better methods of protecting grade crossings. Instead of continuing to rely on 19th century train horns to provide today's level of crossing safety, directed research may yield more effective, community friendly solutions if we make a concentrated effort.

We appreciate your personal interest in this issue underlined by your June Colorado visit to view crossings first-hand and engage in face to face dialogue with our municipal leaders.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sam Mamet
Executive Director
Colorado Municipal League

*We appreciated
you coming out to
CO for a visit
Thank you!*