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MAYOR AND COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Susie Byrd, City Representative, District #2

DATE: October 23, 2008

RE: Agenda Backup, City Council Meeting of October 28, 2008

On May 5, 2006, the Transportation Legislative Review Committee directed staff to develop a comprehensive citywide plan addressing Rail Crossing Quiet Zones and to develop a pilot Quiet Zone project in the Five Points Area in Central El Paso that could be replicated throughout the city.

The purpose of this item is report back to the Council on progress and issues to date and to ask for additional direction regarding the Quiet Zone project. The Quiet Zone project in the Five Points area was a request by residents living in the area. We have heard complaints from the neighborhood and from the nearby school that the train horn in the Five Points area is disruptive. We have been working with the Five Points Neighborhood Association and with representatives from Union Pacific to identify ways that we can minimize the train noise in the neighborhood. A Quiet Zone was identified as an ideal way to accomplish this goal.

Under Federal law, cities can establish Quiet Zones at railroad crossings. A Quiet Zone is a zone where the railroad company is not required to sound the horn because safety measures have been implemented that substantially decrease the likelihood that a car or pedestrian would cross the railroad.

The railroad crossings that were reviewed for this project were: Piedras Street, Elm Street, Cedar Street, Birch Street, Maple Street and Rosewood Street. If we are to make certain changes to these crossings, including closing three streets and putting additional barriers on other streets, we could implement a Quiet Zone in this area. This would mean that trains would not have to sound their horn through the neighborhood unless a danger presented itself.

In order to create a Quiet Zone, there would have to be trade offs made in the neighborhood including the possible closure of some of the streets that cross the railroad. A street closure would mean that a street would dead end at the railroad crossing and cars would not be able to pass over the railroad at that intersection.

We held several meetings with area residents and with UP officials to discuss the project. We also sent out a neighborhood survey to residents in the immediate area asking if they supported the Quiet Zone project and if so, what streets they were willing to close in order to fully implement the project.

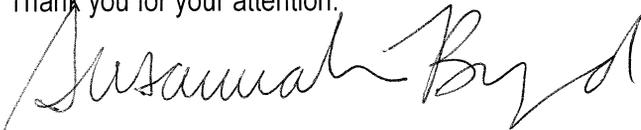
We received 172 responses to the survey. Of those 172, 124 residents, 72%, were in favor of the Quiet Zone project. A large number of residents indicated that they were willing to have Elm, Cedar and Birch closed in order to implement the project.

Ted Marquez had worked with UP to come up with a conceptual project design that would allow us to fully implement a Quiet Zone project in this area. He estimates that the entire project costs would be \$920,000. Union Pacific had their in-house engineers evaluate these costs and they agree that the project costs would be \$920,000. Union Pacific has agreed to put \$15,000 towards each grade crossing closing for a total of \$45,000. We have worked with the grants writer and with our lobbyists to identify additional funding through the federal government. To date, no other funds have been secured.

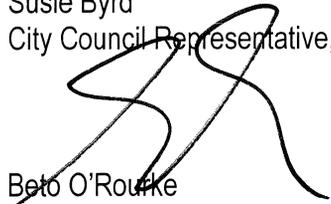
We would request the following action from council regarding this project:

1. Adopt as a city project.
2. Give staff authority to pursue any and all applicable grants.
3. Request that this project be considered for funding in the next General Obligation Election.

Thank you for your attention.



Susie Byrd
City Council Representative, District 2



Beto O'Rourke
City Council Representative, District 8