

INFORMATION SHEET

UNIONVILLE RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION

“STANDING UP FOR UNIONVILLE”

<http://www.unionvilleratepayers.com>

TOPIC: NO HORN ZONE

LAST UPDATE: Jan. 28, 2011

URA CONTACTS:

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BACKGROUND:

This issue stems from the announcement of a Provincial plan called “GO 2020”, established by Metrolinx (which includes GO Transit). For the Stouffville line, the plan is to provide train service up to Mount Joy every 15 minutes during peak periods, with counter-peak service every 30 minutes. The URA wanted the intensity levels of the train horns reduced. In June 2008, the Town started a process called the “Whistle Cessation Process” with Transport Canada, covering an area from Steeles Ave. up to north of Major Mackenzie. This involves establishing safety gates, flashing lights, and bells at a number of at-grade crossings, and some regrading, plus a safety audit, correcting sightline concerns, and getting insurance concerns taken care of. The Diesel trains in GO Transit’s system are being converted to “2-level horns”: “normal” and “emergency”. GO has stated that they will do their best to keep unconverted trains off the Stouffville line.

STATUS:

Meetings have been held with the key stakeholder group (Transport Canada, CN, GO Transit, and the Region). In November, the Town received Aecom’s Safety Crossing Report, which summarizes the condition of each of the crossing locations, including the detailed evaluation of each crossing and a list of the upgrades, and a cost estimate. Town staff is currently reviewing this report and plan on presenting the findings/recommendations of the report to the new Council in January/February of 2011 for approval. If the works are approved by Council, then the Town will undertake the following next steps towards implementation:

1. Finalize the system upgrade details with the key stakeholders;
2. Complete the insurance and indemnification agreements, if any, with CN and GO Transit for all of the Town and Region crossings;
3. Prepare and issue formal public notification to the residents;
4. Obtain approval/funding from Region of York for their crossings; and
5. Proceed with the detailed design, tender, and construction of the proposed works.

After being built, inspected and approved by all appropriate authorities, Transport Canada and GO will give the Town authorization to bring forward a no-horn bylaw that can be adopted by the Town and brought into effect. Following Council approval of the works, it will likely take 15-18 months to fully design and implement all of the upgrades, expected for mid 2012.

In November, 2009, a Metrolinx manager stated at a Town meeting that all-day GO service will not be running north of Unionville GO Station, in deference to residents' concerns and problems with twinning the tracks. However, the long term strategy apparently remains to provide all-day service by 2020, but GO Transit agrees that there are a large number of details to be worked out. Given the planned increased frequency, there may also be problems of vibration and probably air pollution from the heavy Diesels. Overall, most residents are reporting an improvement in noise levels (with occasional surprises!), due to the implementation of 2-level horns. Still, Diesel trains seem rather antiquated by today's standards, and the long-term strategy should be towards electrification.

HOW TO LEARN MORE:

Contact committee CHAIR.

See also the web page: http://www.jpaulmorrison.com/misc/Train_Horn_Status.shtml

URA OFFICIAL POSITION:

URA supports all the various efforts going forward at this time, and is working with the various stakeholders. In the medium term, we need GO Transit to properly evaluate the impact of their Diesel train expansion plans on the community. In the long term we support electrification, and will be liaising with various groups in Ontario that support this, including the Clean Train Coalition.