Quiet Zones
Before FasTracks can begin connecting communities across the Denver metro area, RTD must address how the commuter rail corridors might impact surrounding communities and make recommendations for minimizing impacts. In response to community concerns about train horn noise, RTD has created a plan to help local cities establish Quiet Zones along the Gold Line, Northwest Rail, East and North Metro Corridors.

Last year, the RTD Board adopted the “Responsible Rail Amendment,” which calls for active involvement from RTD in helping communities apply for Quiet Zones along FasTracks commuter rail corridors. RTD is committed to paying for grade crossing improvements to address any safety and noise impacts that are required by federal guidelines. Local communities may need to pay for additional improvements necessary for Quiet Zone designation when upgrades are not required for safety or noise mitigation.

RTD’s Quiet Zone Program

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What is a Quiet Zone?
The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) currently requires trains that travel along freight tracks to sound their horns anytime the train approaches a railroad crossing—an intersection where the railroad tracks cross a roadway. Quiet Zones are railroad line segments at least a half-mile long where railroad engineers don’t have to sound their train horns at railroad crossings. While RTD does not have the authority to create or apply for Quiet Zones, the agency will help local communities apply by providing technical resources and project-specific funding for required railroad crossing improvements.

Because train horns are sounded for safety reasons, the FRA requires that a railroad crossing be as safe with a Quiet Zone as it would be without one. Each Quiet Zone crossing must have:

- Active railroad crossing warning devices
- Flashing lights and gates at public crossings
- Advance warning signs
- Bells at gate location
- If feasible: Constant warning time devices (electronic gate triggers that ensure the gates close at the same time before the train arrives, regardless of the train’s speed)

What is RTD’s role?
Federal regulations require cities and counties to file the application requesting a Quiet Zone. However, RTD will help communities work through the Quiet Zone application process. RTD will pay for railroad crossing improvements for safety and noise mitigation measures when required for the FasTracks commuter rail lines. Local communities may need to pay for additional improvements necessary for Quiet Zone designation when upgrades are not required for safety or noise mitigation.
Safety Measures

In addition to the required crossing improvements for a Quiet Zone, cities can also implement the following safety measures:

**Supplemental Safety Measures (SSM)** – physical barriers intended to improve railroad crossing safety when train horns are not sounded. These can include:
- Road closures (permanent and temporary)
- One-way street with gates across width
- Four gates
- Two gates with medians between car lanes

**Alternative Safety Measures (ASM)** – Non-physical measures intended to improve railroad crossing safety. These can include:
- Public education and awareness
- Photo enforcement

Responsible Rail Amendment

In 2007, the RTD Board adopted the Responsible Rail Amendment, which calls for active involvement from RTD in helping communities establish Quiet Zones along FasTracks commuter rail corridors. RTD has worked with the railroads and local communities to develop a Quiet Zone work plan. (Go to www.RTD-FasTracks.com to view the plan.) As part of the plan, RTD will provide cost estimates for each crossing, identify available financial resources and keep the public informed of the application process.

“A railroad crossing must be as safe with a Quiet Zone as it would be without one.”

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**NUMBER OF CURRENT GRADE CROSSINGS IN QUIET ZONES IN COLORADO**

**QUIET ZONES PROPOSED IN SOME AREAS OF THE FOUR FASTRACKS COMMUTER RAIL CORRIDORS**

Number of grade crossings to be included in Quiet Zones to be determined.
**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q:** **IF MY CITY IS APPROVED FOR A QUIET ZONE, DOES THAT MEAN I WILL NEVER HEAR THE TRAIN HORN AGAIN?**  
**A:** No. It’s important to remember that train horns are blown for safety reasons and, while your town may have a Quiet Zone, there may be times when the railroad engineer feels it is necessary to blow the train horn as a safety precaution. These instances could include a stalled car or person on the railroad tracks, people walking alongside the tracks or crossing too closely in front of the train, etc. Train horns are used for the safety of communities and will continue to serve as a safety precaution, even in a Quiet Zone.

**Q:** **HOW CAN MY COMMUNITY QUALIFY FOR A QUIET ZONE?**  
**A:** Communities can qualify for Quiet Zone status if the railroad crossing meets minimum safety requirements. These requirements are outlined in the Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration Final Rule 49. For more information, go to www.fra.dot.gov/us/content/1318.

**Q:** **HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO CREATE A QUIET ZONE?**  
**A:** The cost to create a Quiet Zone depends on the existing safety barriers at each crossing and how much additional improvement is needed at each one to meet the minimum safety requirements.

**Q:** **HOW WILL RTD HELP COMMUNITIES ESTABLISH A QUIET ZONE?**  
**A:** RTD will help communities establish a Quiet Zone in several ways:  
- RTD will develop railroad crossing inventories, site requirement reviews, and cost estimates for all crossings.
- RTD will work with communities to determine a Quiet Zone implementation approach for each individual railroad crossing.
- RTD will coordinate the Quiet Zone application process with communities.

The federal process requires cities and counties to file the Quiet Zone application. By federal regulation, RTD cannot apply for one.

**Q:** **WHAT WILL RTD FUND?**  
**A:** RTD will pay for the following elements that are associated specifically with running commuter rail service:  
- For grade crossings that require noise mitigation, based on FTA’s noise and vibration manual, RTD will pay for 100 percent of the upgrades necessary to qualify a crossing for Quiet Zone status.
- For grade crossings that do not meet the federal criteria for noise mitigation, RTD will still fund the required safety upgrades; however, local jurisdictions would need to fund any additional crossing infrastructure upgrades that would be required to meet Quiet Zone status.

**Q:** **WHEN WOULD QUIET ZONES BEGIN?**  
**A:** If a Quiet Zone is determined to be necessary and local governments are committed to any necessary funding, the required infrastructure would be built in time for opening day service.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
Web site: RTD-FasTracks.com  
FasTracks Information Line: 303-299-2000  
For a presentation, call 303-299-6990.