



RAILROAD TRANSPORTATION SAFETY DISTRICT

Board Meeting
February 20, 2007

Meeting Began At: 8:00 A.M.

Meeting Ended At: 9:30 A.M.

Members Present: Deb Schorr, Ken Svoboda, Bob Workman, Ray Stevens, Dan Marvin, Robin Eschliman

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Roger Figard, Rick Haden, Murthy Koti, Bill Kuester, Alicea McCluskey, Bruce Sweney, Tina Queen, Harlan Layton, Gary Irvin, Larry Yoble, Mike Rogge, Jerry Joyce, Mark Hunzeker, Roger Yant, John Krejci, Bob Hoffman.

Order No. 07-01 **Quiet Zone Study & North 44th Street Traffic Study.**

Rick Haden with Kirkham Michael presented the studies via power point. See power point attachment.

Quiet Zone Study - additional comments included:

- Public demonstration of wayside horn in January at 44th & Cornhusker
- Demonstrated wayside horn at 3rd & D to get public reaction
- Website was set up for public comment - 18 comments received
- Seven people were at home - out of those seven, four thought the wayside horn was quieter, two thought it was significantly quieter and one was not able to hear the wayside horn
- **70th Street** - recommendation is to replace a portion of the median and the curb to provide a minimum 6" height, wayside horn is not required - \$18,000
- **44th Street** - three options were considered
 - A. Total closure - \$355,000, includes building connecting road to the east, doesn't include right-of-way costs
 - B. Recommended option - \$70,000, raised medians with 60' minimum, widening north of the railroad tracks to provide for trucks turning off of Cornhusker Highway, wayside horn is not required
 - C. Wayside horns - \$120,000, would not silence horns, allow for construction both east and west of 44th Street, additional horns would be required
- **Adams Street** - because of proximity of 36th Street, not able to provide the required distance for a median, only feasible alternative is to install wayside horns - \$125,000, longer range improvements could include reconfiguring the medians on the north side of the crossing - \$50,000, would not be required as part of the wayside horn
- **33rd Street** - recommending raised medians, requires closure of one access point - a driveway into a business on the northwest corner of the crossing - \$46,000

North 44th Street Traffic Study - additional comments included:

- license plate survey done - tracked vehicles by recording the last three digits
- traffic would increase on 48th and Adams, 48th Street is included in the Long Range plan to be widened to four lanes

Workman thanked Kirkham Michael for a complete engineering report and Harlan Layton for the information he provided on 44th Street.

Svoboda asked about how the wayside horns will sound.

Haden replied that it will sound similar to a railroad horn as it approaches the crossing. Once the train is in the crossing, the horn ceases.

Marvin asked about the realignment of the median on Adams Street.

Haden replied that there is a potential for someone to go on the wrong side of the median after making a left turn from Cornhusker. There is an opening in the median used as an escape route for people who come to the crossing and want to get out if the gate arms come down.

Stevens asked about what happens to Adams Street during the next phase of Antelope Valley.

Figard replied that Adams Street is part of Phase II. The 35th and Adams crossing would close. The Adams traffic would be brought down into the 33rd Street area or under 29th Street and connect into Antelope Valley near 27th. The RTSD 6 year program does show some planning money to consider the underpass at 33rd without the rest of Antelope Valley.

Stevens asked if a road goes northeast and hooks into Huntington because of 44th Street, would there be a stop light installed.

Haden replied that there is not enough traffic volumes to warrant a signal. Hartley would be the street that trucks should use.

Figard added that 48th Street is on the Long Range Transportation Plan to be improved from Adams to Superior. From the perspective of the RTSD Board, he wouldn't recommend that the Board spend money to buy the right-of-way or to build the road to the east unless 44th Street is closed.

Schorr asked about Roger's opinion regarding the \$50,000 to realign the median.

Figard replied that his recommendation would be to not spend the \$50,000. There are other studies possibly coming forward and that money may be needed.

Harlan Layton - *"Each of you have my comments on 44th and Cornhusker and quiet zone. What you have now is gates and horns do not stop an accident from happening and the only way that this can be stopped, is either you go under the tracks, over or you close the crossing period. If there is a route that you can divert the traffic from that crossing....44th can go over to Adams or to 48th Street and eventually down to 33rd. Any way you go east to 48th, make the connection to 48th at a stop light."*

Bob Hoffman - *"I reside at 4315 Colfax which is approximately two blocks north of 44th. About a*

year ago, I purchased some property in that area that I was in the process of subdividing. I was going to build a couple homes and I kinda put that on hold until this train issue was solved. I just wanted to very quickly say I'm in favor of the recommendation they did with the study. Thank you."

John Krejci - "I live at 4402 St. Paul which is about six blocks south of the 44th crossing. I would just like to thank the people that don't want to close 44th Street. We have to drive a mile either way. The train are far enough away from the noise, the whistles. It's a nice beautiful sound in the distance but for the people next to it, I think that it needs to be quieter. I was at the Upco University Place Community Organization meeting last week and there was a strong feeling to not close the 44th Street crossing. It would make it very inconvenient for the neighborhood."

Mark Hunzeker - "I'm appearing on behalf of Jerry Joyce. Just to say thanks for getting this done and to say that we definitely support the recommendation on 44th Street. We think it's going to be a great improvement and we really appreciate it and hope it gets done very quickly."

Workman thanked Roger for pushing this forward on the fast track. He also mentioned Jerry Joyce and Bob Hoffman who brought this to the RTSD Board's attention.

Figard talked about the upcoming process. In order to publish a notice of intent, there has to be authority and a willingness to move ahead with the improvements and to pay for those improvements. The City of Lincoln and the Director of Public Works and Utilities would be the authority over the crossings and could possibly be moved ahead without Council approval but needs to be discussed further.

Stevens asked who the controlling body is for this quiet zone.

Figard replied that the City of Lincoln through the Director of Public Works would be the controlling body because he has the authority over the street rights-of-way.

Schorr asked if there is a mechanism on the train that triggers the wayside horn.

Figard replied yes and that there has to be constant warning circuitry already in the tracks and right-of-way for this to be more economical.

Stevens isn't sure that the RTSD should do this on its own and would feel more comfortable if the City Council endorsed this process. One way to do that is to ask them to pay 5% of the cost.

Workman understands that argument but these funds did come from the citizens of Lincoln and Lancaster County. It is appropriate that the RTSD pay for them and shouldn't be delayed.

Marvin thanked Workman for his leadership on the Board and for moving this along.

Eschliman thanked everyone for working on this and that Roger has done a great job with the RTSD over the years. Kirkham Michael found a cost effective solution, but still not comfortable doing this. The purpose of this committee is to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries caused by collisions between automobiles and trains. This is more about reducing noise. The objective of the committee is to eliminate to the extent possible conflicts between highway traffic and railroads in Lancaster County. The taxing authority is supposed to be strictly limited. This transportation district is

supposed to contain a sunset provision when it will go out of existence. The district is established for the purpose of moving, relocating or removing railroad tracks and right-of-way. If the RTSD goes down the road of sound reduction, the next thing is going to be beautification. This is not the right use of taxpayer money.

Workman motioned to move ahead with the recommendations by Kirkham Michael for the improvements on the four intersections along Cornhusker Highway - North 70th, North 44th, Adams, and North 33rd and that these improvements be paid for by the RTSD in the amount of \$259,000, but would not include the \$50,000 improvement at 35th and Adams. Marvin seconded the motion. Motion approved 5-1.

Order No. 07-02 Additional Quiet Zone Studies; South Salt Creek & 14th/Yankee Hill Area.

Figard stated that the south study was split from south of Yankee Hill to just north of Pioneer. The Old Cheney Road connection is one that will get additional study as the West Beltway moves forward.

If the diagnostic team recommends a closure, public meetings would need to be discussed. The cost to do that study is \$27,200 and has three crossings in it.

Figard added that the 3rd Street corridor has seven potential crossings that need to be discussed at Park, South, D, three along the J Street corridor (1st, 2nd, 4th) and N. The proposed cost on the north study is \$37,400 and does include a public meeting. The railroad is interested in further discussions about what might happen at 1st and J and would like to see it closed. At some point, the Amtrak line will go away so there was not anything proposed. The recommendation to the Board is to not spend any time or money on that at this point in time.

Haden added that the south study is more straight forward and simpler and could be done in three months. The 3rd Street corridor would take about five months because of the need for public input and potential closures.

Marvin asked if it would be more cost effective to do the studies at the same time.

Haden replied that it would be if everyone could get together at the same time. 1st and J could cost anywhere from \$500,000 - \$1,000,000 for wayside horns because of the number of tracks in the area. Raised medians would be much more feasible and quicker to implement.

Workman moved to proceed ahead with the two studies by Kirkham Michael for the total amount of \$64,600. Marvin seconded the motion. Motion approved 5-1.

Schorr stated that the next RTSD Board Meeting will be on Tuesday, March 13th at 8:30 a.m.

Gary Irvin - *"I live at 645 D. I live four blocks from the trains. I'm not as close as what everybody else is and I'm glad you're going to do this study but I would really recommend that you advertise this a little better than you have when you did 3rd Street. I didn't hear anything about it until it was over. I would really appreciate it. The second track was forced down our throats. That's the way I feel about it. At that time, we were told that all the rest of the other crossings, the horns would silence and everything else but they haven't. Last night I went to bed at midnight and I could hear the horns from three different directions. It would be greatly appreciated and like I said, I only live four blocks*

away from it. The people that set right on those tracks and they didn't have a choice of whether that was a two track or one track. They have to listen to it. It would be greatly appreciated to get those silenced whatever it takes but I don't want you to close any of these crossings. You have a lot of different areas in there that if you start closing tracks and crossings, you're going to have a lot of people that are going to be isolated more than these people at 44th Street. There is no way getting in or out of these places and it becomes an emergency issue."

Figard stated that the 3rd and D horn test was an afterthought and didn't get publicized as well. Harlan has given some alternative transportation routes that might help on the south area. Harlan has some alternative layouts that would help close some crossings and provide for some future improvements. Rick and his staff did a lot of extra work including the additional wayside horn. At this point there is a \$3,000 addendum to that study that will be processed. Every invoice was checked and the level of effort and the hours that went into that are justified.

Roger Yant - *"I'm here representing my neighborhood. I live on 6th and Old Cheney Road. I live a baseball's throw from the railroad tracks. We moved there 11 years ago realizing there was railroad tracks so it isn't like it was a surprise we had them. We also have heard in the past that there possibly would be a quiet zone. We've talked to the railroad. You want to do a study. I can give you just an example. You may not have to do a study. This is this morning at 8:15. This is the train on Pioneer Boulevard right now which is a mile from where I live. They are supposed to have a certain amount of beeps. I'm telling you one thing, they don't stick to the certain amount of beeps most of the time. It gets so loud that it shakes the house. Sometimes if they're mad, we figure they are mad at their wife or mad at their spouse or something, that they'll honk the horn almost continually from Pioneers Boulevard all the way thru the intersection and partially down. If you want to do a study and spend a lot of money, just come and sit on my front porch or we'll have ya over for steaks and you can sit on my deck and hear the noise that comes from these trains. I think the quiet zone is something that you should think about for all this area and I know that I have done a survey of everyone up and down our street and of course everybody I took a survey on and everybody would like to have a quiet zone. In the 11 years we've been there, nobody has ever been hit by a train, nobody has ever gone thru the tracks. There are ways to make sure that people don't go around. They have extensions they can put on the arms so it goes completely across the tracks to keep people from going around them. If we're going to legislate stupidity of people going around train tracks it's something that I think you ought to think about and not have to do a real expensive study to realize that it is very noisy and they do not stick to the regulations like they say they are going to. Thank you."*

Marvin expressed his disappointment because people think this is a study to determine whether trains are noisy. This is about a method of how to deal with it in the most cost effective way.

Figard added that the law and the intent of the horn rule needs to be met as well. It's an engineering analysis and putting together recommendations and costs to create the quiet zone.

Stevens stated the reason the horns are loud is for safety reasons and asked if the next phase of this study is the Highway 2 corridor.

Figard replied that the other studies would be worked on first but yes, it may be the next corridor looked at.

Eschliman asked what happens to railroad engineers when they violate the procedures.

Figard replied that those violations are reported to the superintendent and the local authority at the railroad. They try very hard to police on their end and hold their engineers accountable. The Vice President of Government Affairs, Lynn Hartley, has corrected earlier statements that the railroad doesn't necessarily support quiet zones. The railroad does support the legislation that is in the final horn rule which is why it is important that the engineering analysis is done and the supplemental safety measures are done accurately. They are concerned about the liability of possibly killing someone on one of those crossings.

Haden added that a railroad engineer came out to the 44th Street public information meeting. He emphasized that they are being held personally accountable by their supervisors if they don't follow the rules.

Stevens motioned to adjourn the meeting. Workman seconded the motion. Motion approved 6-0. Meeting adjourned.

Prepared by: _____
Tina Queen, Engineering Services