NEW WESTMINSTER
Engineering Services

Memorandum

To:	Mayor Johnstone & Members of Council	Date:	October 16, 2024
From:	Lisa Leblanc Director of Engineering Services	File No:	1860.40.05
Subject:	**Train Whistle Cessation Update – 2024 – Q3 Update**		

PURPOSE

To provide an update on the progress of train whistle cessation in the City of New Westminster.

SUMMARY

This is the 2024 third quarter update on the progress of Citywide train whistle cessation.

BACKGROUND

Quarterly reports are provided to the public in response to direction received from a Motion of Council on December 12, 2022. The last report was the 2024 – Q2 update, which was provided on July 26, 2024. Staff have continued to advance projects and strengthen relationships with the railways and regulators through meaningful conversation, shared goals and participation in the Railway Technical Committee (RTC).

DISCUSSION

The City-led RTC held its seventh meeting on August 27th, 2024. The meeting was chaired by city staff and attended by representatives from the Engineering Department, one railway company and Transport Canada (federal regulator). The topics discussed included rail-related Council updates, safety concerns, fencing, trespassing and current and future rail-related projects.

Staff have received 54 rail-related communications from the public since January 2023. These communications have come via public delegations to Council, website contact forms, email, Be Heard, SeeClickFix, Engineering counter walk-ups and phone calls. They are categorized as follows:

2023 (Q1 to Q4): 40 communications:
- 35 – whistle related
- 4 – operational concerns
- 1 – exhaust related

2024 – Q1: 5 communications:
- 4 – whistle related
- 1 – wait times

2024 – Q2: 9 communications:
- 8 – whistle related
- 1 – vibrations

2024 – Q3: 13 communications:
- 8 – whistle related
- 5 – train noise

The updated At-Grade Public Crossing Whistle Cessation Summary is included in Attachment 1.

Short and Medium-Term Opportunities

The estimated date of whistle cessation (EWC) and updates to the Short and Medium Term opportunities are as follows:

Queensborough Neighbourhood

1. Furness Street @ Duncan Street EWC: 2024 – Q4
    a. We are waiting for confirmation from the rail company that an anti-whistling directive has been issued to the operators. They have not responded to our May 31, 2024 whistle cessation letter. Staff remain in contact with the rail company and constantly request this response.

West End Neighbourhood

1. Twentieth (20th) Street crossing EWC: 2027 – Q2
    a. The City of New Westminster's external legal counsel has prepared a position paper recommending the crossing remain public and that we follow the Transport Canada whistle cessation process.

2. Fourth (4th) Avenue crossing EWC: 2026 – Q2
    a. The City of New Westminster's external legal counsel has prepared a position paper recommending the crossing remain public and that we follow the Transport Canada whistle cessation process.

Sapperton Neighbourhood

1. Spruce Street crossing EWC: 2027 – Q2
    a. A decision on the necessary upgrades was requested from Transport Canada on September 20, 2024. A response is expected to take 3 to 6 months. Following receipt of the decision, we will review and consider the appropriate next steps.

2. Cumberland Street crossing EWC: 2025 – Q3
    a. The detailed design process started with the intention of having tender drawings ready by December 2024. We plan to secure a contractor early in 2025 and begin construction in Spring.

Long Term Projects

The following crossings will likely require extensive structural modifications or road/rail re-alignments, and significant capital investment to achieve whistle cessation:

Sapperton Neighbourhood

1. Braid Street crossing (@ Brunette Ave) EWC: TBD
    a. The final Signalization Review report has been received, which contains recommended upgrades to the corridor to eliminate the concerns of motor vehicles queuing on the rail tracks. We are considering the next steps.

2. Braid Street (@ Vulcan St) EWC: TBD
    a. The final Signalization Review report has been received, which contains recommended upgrades to the corridor to eliminate the concerns of motor vehicles queuing on the rail tracks. We are considering the next steps.

Queensborough Neighbourhood

We have issued a Request for Proposals from consultants to undertake a "Train Whistle Cessation Options Assessment Study" for the Ewen Avenue rail corridor. The objective of this study is to review all constraints of the corridor (transportation, utility, etc.) and provide various options to achieve whistle cessation.

1. Furness Street (@ Ewen Ave) EWC: TBD
2. Mercer Street (@ Ewen Ave) EWC: TBD
3. Ewen Avenue (@ Stanley St) EWC: TBD
4. Ewen Avenue MUP (@ Stanley St) EWC: TBD
5. Salter Street (@ Derwent Way) EWC: TBD

Additional information will be shared with Council, as it becomes available, and direction will be sought at that time.

NEXT STEPS

Staff resources continue to focus on advancing rail crossing improvements on the mainland of New Westminster. Advancing safety upgrades and whistle cessation initiatives on the Queensborough crossings will require additional time and resources, including consultants, to study and manage this work.

Staff will continue working directly with stakeholders and through the RTC to better understand the costs and timelines for upgrading all public crossings in the City and implementing whistle cessation. This information will be used to update the At-Grade Public Crossing Whistle Cessation Summary, which will continue to be part of the quarterly update process.

Staff will continue to update the City's website quarterly with information on the progress of whistle cessation at individual crossings.

The City of New Westminster continues to work with the external legal counsel to advance contracts and legal agreements with the railways.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2024-2028 Five Year Financial Plan includes $3.6M to support rail crossing upgrades and whistle cessation projects, including an additional $0.5M to assess the Queensborough crossings. The 2024 Capital Budget allocates $1.5M of funding towards safety upgrades and whistle cessation initiatives, which aim to advance stakeholder engagement, conceptual and detailed design works, installations, and advance service and equipment procurement where appropriate. This work will inform and identify the scope, risk, and constraints to advance the safety works and provide information on total funding requirements.

Third-party grant funding opportunities for safety upgrades through Transport Canada's Railway Safety Improvement Program (RSIP) are not currently available as the call is closed. City staff are committed to staying informed about the specific timeframes for grant application openings within the closed call system to ensure we can maximize grant funding. Through RSIP, municipalities have been eligible to receive up to an 80% financial contribution per eligible project.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

Engineering Services will continue working with the City's Finance and Legal Departments to minimize the financial impacts and risk exposure to the City. Additionally, the Communications Department will be updated with advancements in major milestone progress or impactful phases of the work.

CONCLUSION

Whistle cessation is a complex, expensive and lengthy process. Implementing Citywide train whistle cessation in a timely manner will require dedicated staff resources, external consultant support, the continuation of collaborative stakeholder relationships and adequate capital funding from the City.

Future train whistle cessation quarterly updates will be posted to the City's website in lieu of reports to Council.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – At-Grade Public Crossing Summary

AT - GRADE PUBLIC CROSSING WHISTLE CESSATION SUMMARY

No.	Area	Crossing	Owner	Users	Required Work	Estimated City Cost	Status	EWC
1	QB	Salter Street @ Derwent Way	SRY	SRY	Further analysis required. Road or rail re-alignment may be required	TBD	Reviewing Information	TBD
2	QB	Stanley St / 400 Ewen Ave Access (MUP)	SRY	SRY	Conduct a Train Whistle Cessation Options Assessment Study of the Ewen corridor.	TBD	Waiting for proposals	TBD
3	QB	Ewen Avenue @ Stanley Street	SRY	SRY	Conduct a Train Whistle Cessation Options Assessment Study of the Ewen corridor.	TBD	Waiting for proposals	TBD
4	QB	Mercer Street @ Ewen Avenue	SRY	SRY	Conduct a Train Whistle Cessation Options Assessment Study of the Ewen corridor.	TBD	Waiting for proposals	TBD
5	QB	Furness Street @ Ewen Avenue	SRY	SRY	Conduct a Train Whistle Cessation Options Assessment Study of the Ewen corridor.	TBD	Waiting for proposals	TBD
6	QB	Boundary Road @ Boyd Street	SRY	SRY	Further analysis required.	TBD	Reviewing Information	TBD
7	QB	Gifford Street @ Boyd Street	SRY	SRY	Further analysis required.	TBD	Reviewing Information	TBD
8	QB	Queensborough Landing Pedestrian Crossing	SRY	SRY	Further analysis required.	TBD	Reviewing Information	TBD
9	QB	Wood Street @ Boyd Street	SRY	SRY	Further analysis required.	TBD	Reviewing Information	TBD
10	QB	Boyne Street @ Boyd Street	SRY	SRY	Further analysis required.	TBD	Reviewing Information	TBD
11	QB	Stanley Street @ Duncan Street	SRY	SRY	Further analysis required.	TBD	Reviewing Information	TBD
12	QB	Furness Street @ Duncan Street	SRY	SRY	Waiting for Southern Railway to confirm whistles have been ceased.	TBD	Application Complete	2024 – Q4
13	QB	Pedestrian Crossing @ Brookes Street	SRY	SRY	None – whistle cessation has been implemented	N/A	Complete	Complete
14	ML	Twentieth Street @ River Drive	SRY, CP, CN	SRY, CP, CN	Maintain the crossing as public and complete upgrades to comply with whistle cessation.	TBD	Reviewing Next Steps	2027 – Q2

QB = Queensborough / ML = Mainland
TBD = To Be Determined
EWC = Estimated Date of Whistle Cessation

Updated to end of: 2024 – Q3
Costs do not consider grant funding
Yellow highlight – revised information

No.	Area	Crossing	Owner	Users	Required Work	Estimated City Cost	Status	EWC
15	ML	Fourth Avenue @ Fourteenth Street	SRY, CP, CN	SRY, CP, CN	Maintain the crossing as public and complete upgrades to comply with whistle cessation.	TBD	Reviewing Next Steps	2026 – Q2
16	ML	Quayside Drive @ Laguna Court	SRY	SRY	None – whistle cessation has been implemented	N/A	Complete	Complete
17	ML	Begbie Street @ Front Street	CN	SRY, CN, CP, BNSF	None – whistle cessation has been implemented	N/A	Complete	Complete
18	ML	Front Street @ Fourth Street	CN	SRY, CN, CP, BNSF	None – whistle cessation has been implemented	N/A	Complete	Complete
19	ML	Cumberland Street @ Columbia Street	CP, BNSF	CN, CP, BNSF	A consultant is working on the detailed design. Construction planned to start in Spring 2025.	$1.4 M	Detailed Design	2025 – Q3
20	ML	Spruce Street @ Brunette Avenue	CP, BNSF	CN, CP, BNSF	Flashing Lights, Bells and Gates plus pedestrian facility upgrades.	TBD	Waiting for decision from Transport Canada	2027 – Q2
21	ML	Capilano Way @ Edworthy Way	BNSF	BNSF	Due to low rail activity, whistle cessation is not being pursued at this crossing.	TBD	Reviewing Information	TBD
22	ML	Braid Street @ Brunette Avenue	CN	CN, BNSF	Signalization Review report finalized. Issue RFP for design consultant for upgrades.	TBD	Signalization Review complete	TBD
23	ML	Braid Street @ Vulcan Street	CP	CP	Signalization Review report finalized. Issue RFP for design consultant for upgrades.	TBD	Signalization Review complete	TBD
24	ML	Braid Skytrain Station access road	CN	CN, BNSF	Due to low rail activity, whistle cessation is not being pursued at this crossing.	TBD	TBD	TBD

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