

# Railroad Safety in Norman



**Community Planning & Transportation  
Committee**

**November 30, 2022**




# Agenda

- Responsibilities for Railroad Safety
- Establishment of Railroad Quiet Zone in Norman
- Collision History Prior to Establishment of Quiet Zone
- Collision History Following Establishment of Quiet Zone





# Responsibilities for Railroad Safety

- **Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)**
    - Promotes and regulates safety throughout the Nation's railroad industry
    - Application for Quiet Zone initiated through FRA
    - Inspections of Railroad Quiet Zone through FRA
  - **Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT)**
    - ODOT oversees the Heartland Flyer passenger service, highway construction projects affecting railroad property, railroad crossing safety improvements, and maintenance of the state-owned rail lines
  - **Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC)**
    - Monitors the operations of Oklahoma railroads for compliance with state railroad crossing safety regulations for at-grade crossings in the state
    - Conducts routine reviews of public at-grade crossings for safety compliance and investigates public complaints
  - **City of Norman**
    - Signing and markings on each public road approach to an at-grade railroad crossing
    - Upkeep of Quiet Zone appurtenances installed prior to Quiet Zone approval
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# What are Railroad Quiet Zones?

Railroad Crossings at which trains are prohibited from sounding their horns in order to decrease noise levels for nearby residential communities. Train horns can be silenced only when other safety measures are used to compensate for the absence of horns.




# Why did Norman Pursue a Railroad Quiet Zone?

- Quality of life issues
- Economic impact on area
- Train Horns every 45 minutes, 24/7 year around
- Increasing train traffic






# FRA Prediction Formulas

- The Nationwide Significant Risk Threshold is the average of the risk indexes for all of the gated public locations nationwide
  - Risk Index with Horns
    - The calculated risk of the crossings in the designated “zone” of crossings in conjunction with the use of train horns
  - Quiet Zone Risk Index
    - The anticipated risk associated with a designated “zone” of crossings (i.e., public crossings in the City Limits of Norman) after the improvements have been completed
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# Quiet Zone Safety Record

- Yes, there have been more collisions in the five years following implementation of the Quiet Zone than in the five years prior to its implementation (9 post and 5 pre)
  - Suicides continue to make up the largest percentage (78% post and 100% pre) of the collisions and the train will sound its horn when the operator sees someone on the tracks
  - Even the non-suicidal collisions in the five years during Quiet Zone implementation would have resulted in the train blowing its horn as the operator sensed danger
  - So, there is no evidence that the existence of the Quiet Zone has negatively impacted safety—In fact, the presence or lack of a Quiet Zone has no impact on railroad safety
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# Looking Forward

- Continue to respond to and cooperate with Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) officials regarding requests to evaluate or inspect conditions within the Quiet Zone—expecting next inspection following conversion of Gray Street to two-way
  - Continue to provide information to the FRA related to future collisions
  - Look for opportunities to replace Kwik-curb medians with something more permanent and more substantial
  - Address any potential changes with conversion of Gray Street from one-way to two-way in 2023
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# QUESTIONS?

