



Memorandum

Memorandum No: 15-036

Date: February 25, 2015

To: Honorable Mayor and Commissioners

From: Lee R. Feldman, ICMA-CM, City Manager

Re: Volume of Train Horns along the Florida East Coast Railway

Recently, city neighbors have noticed increased noise from the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway, impacting neighbors in the following areas: Middle River, South Middle River, Poinsettia Heights, Lake Ridge, Progresso Village, Flagler Village, City View, Downtown, Sailboat Bend, Tarpon River, Croissant Park, Poinciana Park, and Edgewood. Staff contacted the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to investigate the volume of train horns on the FEC line. The FRA reported receiving over 20 complaints from Fort Lauderdale residents.

The Florida East Coast Railway began operating 24 new locomotives in January of 2015. The new locomotives are used for heavy haul service between Jacksonville and Miami. The locomotives were purchased to meet U.S. EPA emissions requirements. The new locomotives reduce the emission of particulate matter by approximately 70% and lower fuel consumption by approximately 17%.

Before a locomotive can operate, the FRA requires an inspection of the train horn to ensure the horn is between 96-110 decibels. According to the FRA, as a locomotive horn ages, the pitch changes and the volume decreases over time; thus, it is possible the older locomotives were operating closer to 96 decibels. Additionally, the new locomotive horns produce a different pitch from horns on older locomotives. Therefore, the combination of a new pitch and a potentially higher decibel level may be producing the noticeable difference for our neighbors.

Based on these preliminary discussions, the FRA decided to conduct a more thorough investigation based upon the number of complaints received from our neighbors and a request by the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization and the City of Fort Lauderdale. The Federal Railroad Administration will travel from the regional office in Atlanta to Jacksonville to inspect the volume of train horns and review pre-operation inspection reports to ensure the new locomotives are compliant with federal train horn regulations. The inspection should take place within 3-4 weeks and the City will be notified of the results.

Neighbors with noise concerns may reference the following resources:

- 1) The Train Horn Rule (49 CFR Part 222).
- 2) Sound Level Requirements for Train Horns (49 CFR Part 229.129)

Neighbors can contact the Federal Railroad Administration Region 3 in Atlanta, Georgia at 404-562-3800.

C: Stanley D. Hawthorne, Assistant City Manager
Susanne M. Torriente, Assistant City Manager
Cynthia A. Everett, City Attorney
Jonda K. Joseph, City Clerk
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Department Directors
CMO Managers