

# Edmonton will study eliminating 'sleep-shattering' northwest train whistle

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BY GORDON KENT, EDMONTON JOURNAL FEBRUARY 4, 2015

The city will conduct a rail crossing safety study that could end frequent northwest train whistles that one man compared Wednesday to being yelled at with a bull horn.

Trains on the CN tracks near 142nd Street must blow horns as they pass 162nd Avenue and 167th Avenue, but Carlton resident Jason Ushkowski said the nightly noise shatters his sleep.

“Some of these horns can exceed 120 decibels,” Ushkowski, who lives 300 metres from the rail line, told council’s transportation committee.

“That’s the same as a jet plane flying by at 100 feet. It gets pretty loud.”

He didn’t notice the tracks and wasn’t warned they were there when he bought his home eight years ago.

Some of the blasts last for almost a minute, jarring him awake, especially when windows are open in summer, he said.

“Having an open window, at least where I live, is like having someone come into your room and yell at you with a bull horn.”

Sympathetic councillors agreed to do the \$50,000 study, the first step in receiving a whistle exemption for the crossing from Transport Canada.

But this would require lights and other crossing controls. Staff estimated that would cost about \$250,000, which the city would likely have to pay by itself.

It would probably be a couple of years before any equipment was installed.

There’s already an exemption at the 153rd Avenue crossing. Controls exist at the other local crossing, on provincial land at 167th Avenue, but a whistle exemption hasn’t been requested.

"I absolutely understand your concerns. I live a few kilometres from two crossings," said Coun. Amarjeet Sohi, who lives in Mill Woods.

"I hear the horns ... with my windows closed."

But other councillors worried about giving special treatment to people near 142nd Street, arguing residents across Edmonton have similar problems with train noise.

"I absolutely think we should do something," Coun. Andrew Knack said.

"I just want to make sure (we don't) pit one community against another."

The committee asked for information on the number of level rail crossings in Edmonton, which ones have whistle exemptions and options for working with the federal government and railways.

They also want to talk to the province about stopping whistles at 167th Avenue.

A report is due in June.