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## County evaluates train whistles

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Strathcona County is reviewing the possibility of minimizing train whistles, but first wants to get more information on the issue.

On July 12, Strathcona County council unanimously voted to postpone a motion calling for further research into minimizing train whistles. The topic is planned to be discussed at council's Aug. 16 meeting.

"I feel we need to deal with the residents' issues once and for all," Coun. Jacquie Fenske said.

"Let's get some statistics, let's go out and ask the residents, let's find some reasons for and against, based on what the residents are saying."

Fenske added every time she asked the community, she got a 50/50 response. She said those who weren't against the idea didn't live anywhere near the tracks, asking that administration talk to those who only live close to the railroad.

"We need to have a policy, because people need to know that we are dealing with their issues," she said, adding a policy will make people aware that council needs has a time line for issues like train-whistle reduction.

There are certain points of information council wants to see coming back from administration before making a decision on the motion.

First is the issue of liability. Who is responsible if a collision occurs within county jurisdiction.

Secondly, council wants to see an improved scale of prioritization for which crossings the minimization in noise should occur at.

Thirdly, council is looking for a report from other communities, such as Wetaskiwin, Leduc and Spruce Grove, on how they dealt with the issue and if it worked.

"If I lived in Ardrossan, frankly, I would be ticked at the number of trains that are going through and blowing the whistles," Fenske said.

"People say the train is part of the community, and that is correct, but the number has increased substantially over the last few years."

According to engineering and environmental planning services, out of the several railroad crossings throughout the county, the busiest crossing is Range Road 215 near Green Haven Estates, which has an average 4,342 vehicles a day.

Range Road 222, which intersects the tracks through the middle of Ardrossan, sees an average of 3,600 vehicles a day. The next busiest is the track intersection of Range Road 231 (Cloverbar Road) just north of Highway 16, with 2,324 vehicles a day.

Council agreed the busier areas need to be prioritized.

"Ardrossan, in my mind, might merit some serious consideration because of the density of the population and the growth," Coun. Peter Wlodarczak said in the meeting.

"I think it's premature to bring it to a bylaw right now. I'd like a legal opinion regarding the liability issue."

If a minimization bylaw is put in place, the requirements will mean upgraded crossings. This includes a six-foot-high chain-link fence on both sides and railway advance-warning signs to go with advanced crossing guards.

Currently, according to the Canadian Rail Operating Rules, a train exceeding 70 km/h must sound the whistle and repeat 400 metres before a crossing, until it has entered the intersection.

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