

# City of Boulder - Railroad Quiet Zones Update

In response to community concerns regarding the impacts of train horn noise, the City of Boulder is pursuing “quiet zones” for railroad crossings that affect the city. A quiet zone is a street-level railroad crossing that includes additional safety measures in compliance with federal requirements that allow a train engineer to forgo sounding a horn at the crossing. This fall, the city is beginning a community engagement process to seek input on potential railroad quiet zones.

The city has worked with agency partners, including the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC), and Boulder County, as well as the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF) to explore potential quiet zone solutions that improve both safety at crossings and the quality of life for people who live near them.

In 2014, the city completed a quiet zone study of the nine BNSF railroad crossings located within and adjacent to the city (see list of crossings and map on page 2). The report, which included cost estimates, evaluated potential infrastructure improvements and non-infrastructure programs that could reduce or eliminate train horn noise. Based on the study results, the total cost to create quiet zones at these locations was estimated to be approximately \$5 million (in 2013 dollars).

Recently, the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) awarded the city of Boulder \$1,056,000 in funding to advance work on Boulder-area quiet zones. The city’s matching this DRCOG funding with \$264,000 in local funding for a total program budget of \$1,320,00. Although less than the total amount needed to complete all proposed city quiet zones, the award allows the city to get started. This next phase of work includes updating the technical requirements and cost estimates, and begins the community engagement process.

The community will be asked to consider how best to prioritize quiet zone crossing improvements based on factors like the number of people living and working within half a mile of the railroad crossings, type and proximity of adjacent land uses (existing and/or planned), as well as street characteristics, costs for installation, potential on-going maintenance responsibilities, opportunities for multi-agency and public/private partnerships, and above all, safety.

## Timeline

**Fall/Winter 2016-17:** Update technical study and cost estimates, begin community engagement process to identify and prioritize potential quiet zone crossing improvements, develop phasing plan recommendations for implementation, and continue to pursue additional funding strategies.

**2017-18:** Selection of crossing location(s), crossing improvements, final design, engineering, and permitting process with BNSF, PUC, FRA and other agencies.

**2018-19:** Construction of selected quiet zone crossing improvements

## More information

Learn more about railroad quiet zones and review the quiet zone study reports at <https://bouldercolorado.gov/Transportation>. Or contact Kathleen Bracke, GO Boulder Manager with the City of Boulder’s Transportation Division. E-mail: [brackek@bouldercolorado.gov](mailto:brackek@bouldercolorado.gov) and phone: (303) 441-4155. City staff is available to meet with neighborhood groups and individuals to discuss railroad quiet zones in more detail.



# City of Boulder - Railroad Quiet Zone Locations

