

Aurora aims at train whistle cessation ? at St. John's crossing

It might not be a slam dunk for advocates for a complete ban on train whistles in Aurora, but they may have moved the needle forward.

Council last week approved the addition of a capital project in the Town's 2023 Capital Budget to improve pedestrian safety at the St. John's Sideroad railway crossing.

Local lawmakers voted in favour of a ?detailed design and peer review of a level crossing at St. John's along with a request to York Region to implement a 24-hour train whistle cessation? for that specific crossing.

?Council also approved a recommendation to request York Region allocate \$1,000,000 in their 2023 budget to implement the necessary crossing upgrades for anti-whistling,? said the Town in a statement.

But, as much as that was a win for advocates, Council subsequently voted against the implementation of Train Whistle Cessation programs on roads under the Town's jurisdiction, specifically Engelhard Drive.

Residents this past winter revived efforts to improve pedestrian safety at the Town's level rail crossings which would subsequently pave the way for a full train whistle cessation program.

Helping to fuel their concerns is the Province's plan to implement two-way all-day 15 minute train service along the Barrie corridor in the coming years. This, they argued, and many Council members agreed, would significantly increase the frequency of train whistles heard throughout the community.

Currently, the Town has four level railway crossings ? at Engelhard Drive, Wellington Street East, Centre Street and St. John's Sideroad.

As the plan of the Province and Metrolinx, the arm's length Provincial body which operates GO Transit, includes a traffic underpass at the Wellington Street crossing, this eliminated the Wellington and Centre Street crossings from the equation, along with the costs associated with the pedestrian safety improvements.

With Council pressing the Region for action on the St. John's crossing, Council's decision last week will leave the Engelhard crossing without any improvements necessary to dampen the horn as trains pass through this location, a stone's throw from the Wellington GO Station.

The detailed design and peer review for the safety measures needed for the St. John's crossing will cost an estimated \$95,000, according to Town Staff.

The matter passed Council with very little discussion last week, but Councillor John Gallo signalled his support for pursuing similar measures for the Engelhard crossing. Asking to vote separately on the fifth clause before Council, ?that the Train Whistle Cessation Program not be implemented on roads under the Town's jurisdiction,? he said further consideration was warranted.

?I just wanted to defeat it and take some time to really analyse and figure out whether to go in that direction, but I didn't want it to impact the rest of the resolution because I believe in the rest of it,? said Councillor Gallo.

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