

Council greenlights new Train Whistle Cessation study

Municipal staff are set to begin work on a new study that could lead to train whistle cessation.

Council formally approved a motion from Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese last week tasking staff to report back on the processes needed to create a bylaw that will result in the cessation of train whistles/horns at all level crossings in Aurora.

Councillor Weese first gave notice for his motion at the end of August, noting that Metrolinx's long-standing plan to bring all-day, two-way 15-minute GO Train service to the Barrie Line, which bisects Aurora, will be a game-changer. He also said it was important for Aurora to consider what other municipalities had to do to implement a successful whistle-cessation program.

Stopping train horns requires a by-law and the assumption of risk that occurs if that by-law is passed, said Weese in communications to Ward 1 residents following the September 23. Council of the day chose not to accept that risk with the existing train traffic. Other municipalities have implemented a similar by-law. This Motion is for staff to re-visit the issue and update us on train safety at level crossings with a comprehensive Report. I have spoken to Council members, and our engineering and legal departments and all agree that safety regulations at level crossings must be known and considered.

Make no mistake that this Report is focused on making vehicular, pedestrian and cycling safety a priority so that our community is safe at all level crossings, regardless of the mode of travel. Aurora deserves this.

This report that I ask for will include all requirements for safety at each crossing, the upgrade costs projected, and the responsibility for those costs and opportunities for cost-sharing, if any. Then a decision by the Council (and others) to remediate the crossings will be made before considering a by-law to ask that train horns be eliminated. Important to this train horn cessation by-law decision is the risk that the Town will have to assume or share, should an accident at a crossing occur. In discussions with our legal department, the evaluation of risk and liability can be assessed and will be presented at the Council so a responsible decision can be made.

By Brock Weir