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City of North Vancouver silences train whistles at Forbes

Jeremy Shepherd / North Shore News
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Photo Mike Wakefield, North Shore News

You can't even whistle in the City of North Vancouver anymore - at least, not if you're a train.

City council unanimously banned train whistling at the Forbes Avenue crossing below Esplanade Avenue Monday.

The prospect of silence at the station was sweet music to the ears of Waterfront Liaison Committee representative Doug Ausman. "Council's greatest Christmas gift to its citizens in the lower part of the city would be your unanimous approval of tonight's whistling prohibition," he said prior to the vote.

Residents throughout Lower Lonsdale have been hit with the train whistle blues, according to Ausman. "The committee found that loud, jarring train whistling at uncontrolled level crossings - causing health problems when sleep is disturbed - was residents' greatest complaint," he said. The short-short-long-short whistles at the Forbes crossing carried a great distance and were sometimes wrongly attributed to the train at the Chesterfield crossing, according to city staff.

Train whistling is largely unnecessary, given the elimination of three at-grade crossings as a result of the Low Level Road project. The whistling will be replaced by the installation of flashing lights, bells and crossing arms. Train operators can still blow the whistle if there's an imminent safety risk. However, extra fencing has been erected to deter trespassers.

The ban on whistling is "a milestone," according to Coun. Rod Clark, who recalled discussing the issue - along with former councillor John Braithwaite - during his days with the Waterfront Industrial Noise Control Committee. Following the passage of the bylaw, Clark asked Mayor Darrell Mussatto to call Braithwaite and let him know what they'd done. Mussatto assured Clark he would.

A city staff report found unanimous support for the ban among the 12 residents who responded to the request for public input, with a general community sentiment that the prohibition was long overdue.

Speaking about the issue in 2013, [Lower Lonsdale resident Per Christensen discussed the annoyance of late-night whistles \(http://www.nsnews.com/news/train-whistles-anger-north-vancouver-residents-1.620091\)](http://www.nsnews.com/news/train-whistles-anger-north-vancouver-residents-1.620091). "It's been going on for a lot of years and the complaints have been ongoing. ... nothing has changed there," he said. City staff is designing similar improvements for the crossing at Bewicke Avenue. Work is tentatively slated to begin next summer. The prohibition at Forbes was made possible by co-operation between the city, Squamish Nation, CN Rail and Port Metro Vancouver.

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