

The Washington Quiet Zone and West End

West End Civic Club Meeting
Thursday, May 14, 2009

What is a Quiet Zone?

- Quiet Zones are segments of railroad lines where train crews are exempt from sounding the horn at grade crossings. A quiet zone is defined as $\frac{1}{4}$ mile on either side of the intersection crossing being identified in a particular zone. A zone can consist of one or more crossings.
- For more information, refer to the Federal Railroad Administration's Quiet Zone website at www.fra.dot.gov/us/content/1318

Why do we need a Quiet Zone?

- Freight traffic has increased significantly on the tracks through our neighborhood, and is projected to increase even more over the coming years
- We need to enhance safety at our railroad crossings to avoid accidents
- Many residents desire to increase the quality of life in our neighborhood by silencing the train horns

What is a Quiet Zone?

- Safety is the number one priority of any Quiet Zone.
- Cars must be unable to cross the tracks when a train is present or approaching.
- Certain crossings require more upgrades than others, leading to higher expenses.
- Some crossings must be closed in order to make the Quiet Zone possible financially.

How was our neighborhood selected for a Quiet Zone?

- Officials and residents from around the Washington corridor asked the City to investigate the possibility of creating a Quiet Zone in our area, from Oliver Street to the East, to Sherwin on the West.
- We are one of 13 Quiet Zones under consideration for implementation
- Neighborhood residents have rallied and asked Mayor Bill White and the Department of Public Works and Engineering to fast track the Washington Quiet Zone.
- The Quiet Zone is supported by many neighborhood associations and governmental entities, including Super Neighborhood 22.

How was our neighborhood selected for a Quiet Zone?

- The City ranked the potential Quiet Zones using objective criteria including:
 - Traffic volume
 - Number of trains per day
 - Number of tracks
 - Number of observed accidents
 - Expected number of accidents per year
 - Affected population
 - Cost of improvement
 - Construction feasibility and available right of way
 - Added noise levels due to train horns
 - Average daily pedestrian volume

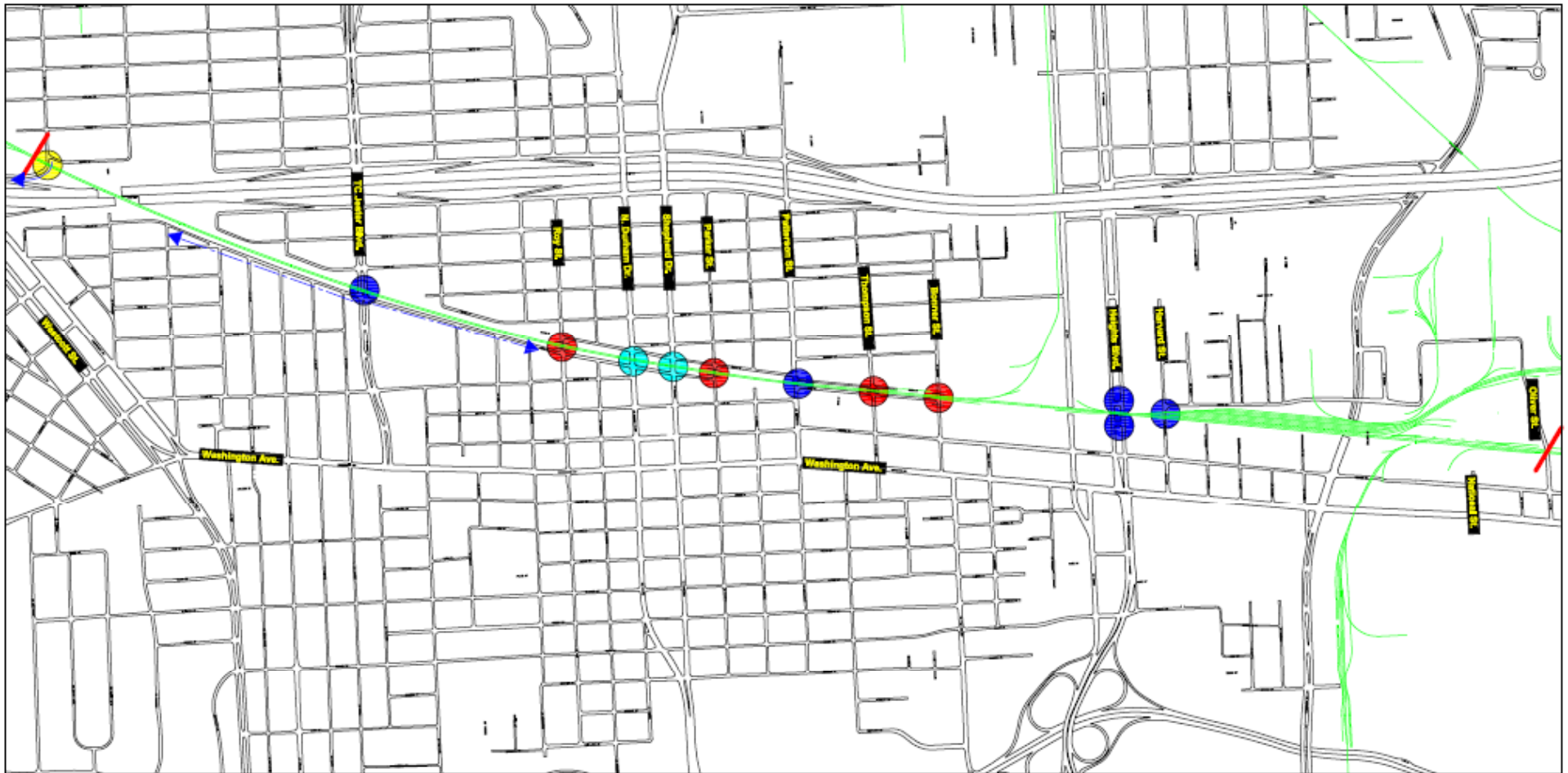
How does this effect the neighborhood?

- The City of Houston's Public Works and Engineering Department has outlined the potential configuration of the part of the Quiet Zone which will potentially run through West End

Washington Ave. RR Crossing Corridor

Legend:

- Median Work
- Closures
- One Way St. (w/gates)
- Convert to One-Way
- ↑ One-Way Traffic
- /// Quiet Zone Extents
- Railroads



Where are we in the Quiet Zone process?

- The City has issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for an engineering firm to design and construct our Quiet Zone
- The City has called a community meeting to share information regarding the proposal and to solicit input from the community.
 - Wednesday, May 27, 7:00 p.m. at the United Way building at 50 Waugh Drive (cross street is Feagan)

What can we expect next?

- All construction and improvements related to the proposed plans for the Washington Quiet Zone will take place on the City's right-of-way
- It may take between one and four years to implement a Quiet Zone
- However, in our situation, the City is tentatively scheduled to have the proposed Quiet Zone implemented by the end of the year.
- Please note that even though our area would be designated as a Quiet Zone, the train conductors would still be required to blow horns in cases of emergency or in case of obstructions on the tracks