

NOISE POLLUTION ABATEMENT FEASIBILITY STUDY

COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY (JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2023)

Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG)



The Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) is one of nine regional councils and planning regions in the State of Connecticut. The WestCOG region is the second most populous and fastest-growing region in Connecticut, with an estimated population of 600,000+ residents. With its location connecting New England to New York, Western Connecticut is an economically dynamic region, with strong cultural, educational, and natural amenities.

WestCOG works collaboratively with government and civic leaders to provide exceptional public services for Western Connecticut. In partnership with the municipalities of Stamford, New Canaan, and Darien, WestCOG is studying opportunities for safety improvements at railroad crossing locations along the Metro North Railroad's New Canaan Branch.

What is the Noise Pollution Abatement Feasibility Study?

Railroad noise, from numerous sources, is an issue that has always been present in communities near railroad facilities. While the advancement of rail technology has contributed to a reduction in noise of passenger train cars, mandated federal horn sounding safety rules have led to an actual increase in both average sound levels and peak sound intensities in Western Connecticut.

WestCOG's Noise Pollution Abatement Feasibility Study is looking to identify and determine a cost-effective approach to implementing noise reduction measures, quiet zone(s) or other methods, along the New Canaan Branch Line of the Metro-North Railroad.



The goal of the study is to reduce impacts for the residents and businesses around railroad crossings and improve the safety of all users at the railway-highway crossings along the New Canaan Branch Line of the Metro-North Railroad .

What we have learned and next steps:

The Noise Pollution Abatement Study began in early 2023 with data collection and documentation of existing conditions. Outreach to community partners and engagement with area residents is an important part of the study. In June through September of 2023, an online community survey was open and broadly promoted to all area residents. The survey received more than 750 responses, a summary of community responses and key themes are summarized below.

Comments or questions, please contact:



Todd Fontanella | tfontanella@westcog.org | 475-323-2076

NOISE POLLUTION ABATEMENT FEASIBILITY STUDY

COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY (JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2023)



WestCOG prepared a survey to get the public's sentiments on train horn noise that is attributable to the operation of the Metro-North Railroad's New Canaan Branch. The online survey was open for three months, translated in Spanish, French, and Polish and was broadly promoted through mailers, social media, and outreach to community partners.

760+
Responses

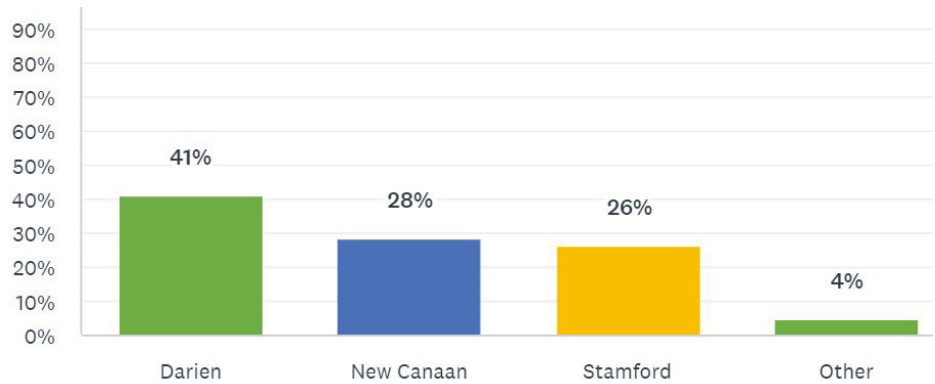
2,300+
open ended comments

The survey received robust participation and provided many helpful insights on understanding the impacts and affects of railroad noise on the daily lives of areas residents.

Proximity to Metro-North Railroad's New Canaan Branch

Where are you from?

- Darien
- New Canaan
- Stamford
- Other



How far do you live or work from the New Canaan Branch?

Word clouds show the most frequent answers.

Nearly all respondents live and/or work a short distance from the New Canaan Branch. Approximately 66% of respondents live/work less than one mile, and nearly all respondents live/work within a 5 mile proximity.



NOISE POLLUTION ABATEMENT FEASIBILITY STUDY

COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY (JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2023)

Impacts of Railroad Noise on Quality of Life

Please tell us how railroad-related noise affects the quality of life in your neighborhood or workplace?

- **Majority of responses (66%)** noted strong negative impacts in quality of life due to railroad noise.
- **Approximately 30%** noted little effect, or only occasional disturbance from railroad noise.
- **A few respondents (3%)** noted support or enjoyment of railroad noise.

"Just moved to the neighborhood, train horns are super loud and disruptive. My newborn cannot sleep at night and it's negatively impacting the quality of our life."

"Loud every hour (at minimum) throughout the day. Several times an HOUR during the morning and evening Peak times"

"I wear hearing aids and it really hurts my ears"

"I work from home. Horns blow all day and up until midnight. Affects both my professional and personal life."

"Train honking is disruptive, inconsistent and loud. Some operators barely honk, others push down the horn for several Seconds. It wakes and scares my pets and children at times."

"I am a representative in Darien's town government...the horn at night is extremely disruptive to children and families. It has to stop."

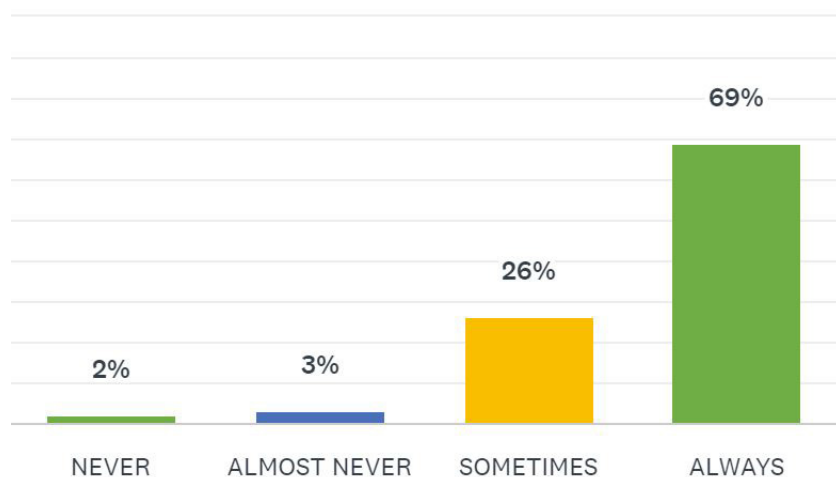
"Quiet zone! As soon as possible. Please!! I am listening the train honking in front of my apartment right now while I write it. It's 12:45am and I can't sleep!"

NOISE POLLUTION ABATEMENT FEASIBILITY STUDY

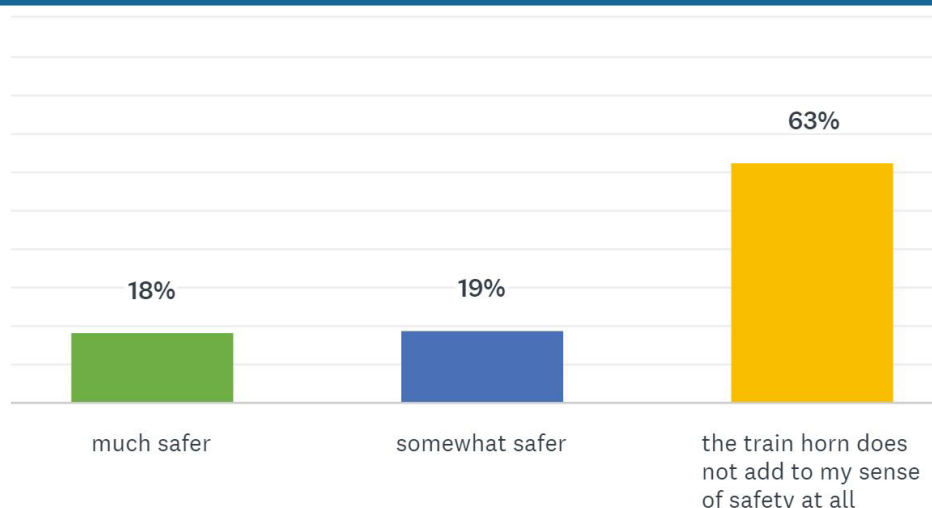
COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY (JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2023)

Impacts of Railroad Noise on Quality of Life

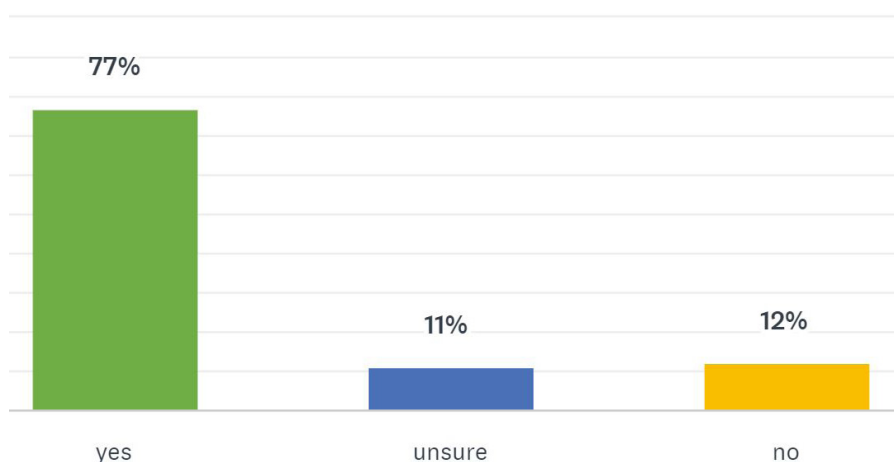
How often do you hear railroad trains sounding their horns in your neighborhood or workplace?



How much safer does a train horn make you feel when crossing a railroad (compared to no train horn)?



Would you support the cessation of routine horn soundings (with the addition of supplemental safety improvements) as part of a noise abatement plan/process?



PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY (JULY 14 - AUGUST 12, 2023)

Priorities for Potential Safety Improvements

Please rank your priorities for the following planning outcomes:

Maintenance – investment in crossing surfaces, equipment, signage and pavement markings

Quality of life – reduction of train horn noise throughout the community

Safety – reducing the potential for rail and grade crossing incidents/accidents

1

Quality of life - 50%

Safety - 34%

Maintenance - 16%

2

Maintenance - 46%

Safety - 35%

Quality of life - 18%

3

Maintenance - 38%

Quality of life - 32%

Safety - 31%

Please select the following engineering strategies you would prioritize:

- Crossing closure
- Upgrade warning devices
- Roadway geometric improvements
- Visibility improvements
- Raised medians
- Lighting improvements
- Traffic signal coordination
- Other

1

Upgrade warning devices - 59%

2

Traffic signal coordination - 58%

3

Crossing closures - 57%

4

Visibility improvements - 42%

5

Lighting improvements - 38%

6

Roadway geometric improvements - 26%

7

Raised medians - 16%

Would you support the use of local or other public funds to make rail crossing safety improvements?

82%

Yes, I support the use of public funds

18%

No, I do not support the use of public funds



Do you have any additional comments or questions you would like to share?

"As a realtor I can provide evidence to your commission on how it affects home values of immediately adjacent homes.."

"Please stop the noise! It's affecting our quality of life and it's to the point that it's affecting our children too."

"Any spending on improving safety of the crossings so you don't need to sound the horn would be money well spent."

*"I find these surveys insulting and a waste, but it is the only way to communicate with metro north. Our neighborhood has been complaining for over 5 years of the noise that came with the new engine cars. Much louder. Also, there are some respectful engineers and some real a***** on power trips that blow the horn all the way from springdale to Talmadge hill."*

"Adding 4 way street blockers at RR crossing is very important to improve the safety for all."

"Eliminating the train horn is long overdue and common sense. This needs to finally be done especially now that Richmond Hill will be getting sidewalks and proper sidewalk closure bars and warning devices can be installed at the same time. Please also consider trimming or taking down trees along the track that appear to be rotting or damaged."

"Train travel is very important. In the US don't appreciate it enough. One of the reasons I moved to New Canaan was because of walkability to the train station and then taking the train to NYC. In New Canaan many use trains to travel locally between towns, cities (New Canaan to Stamford) not just to NYC. If we could improve train travel we could maybe encourage more public transportation and less car travel."

"Everything is fine as is; only support gate-crossing maintenance . The train only runs twice an hour on the Springdale line. The train and it's sounds are part of the Springdale community and acknowledge life."

"I think it is VERY important to put a cross walk on Richmond Hill Road all the way up the hill. There are a large group of people who commute by walking and commute to the park from this road. It is very dangerous to cross the railroad without a cross walk. The visibility is VERY poor during sunset times as well."

" The train that sits on the crossing on grove street blocking the road to cars and pedestrians for very long periods of time is incredibly frustrating."

" Sidewalks are desperately needed for Talmadge Hill Railroad Stations up & down Hoyt street."