



# City of Cambridge

## Executive Department

**LOUIS A. DePASQUALE**  
City Manager

**LISA C. PETERSON**  
Deputy City Manager

July 24, 2018

Stephanie Pollack  
Secretary and Chief Executive Officer  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160  
Boston, MA 02116

Luis Manuel Ramirez, General Manager  
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4510  
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Secretary Pollack and General Manager Ramirez:

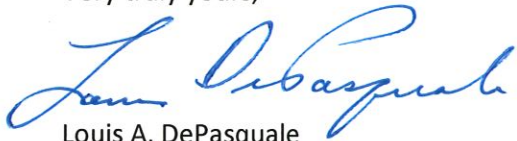
On Friday, June 29<sup>th</sup>, trains operating along the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's Fitchburg Main Line began sounding their horns at the Sherman Street highway-rail grade crossing (US DOT National Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Inventory Number 052313H) in North Cambridge. Since that time, trains operating across this grade crossing have been sounding their horns dozens of times per day, from approximately 6:15am to 12:30am. The City of Cambridge is working as quickly as possible to take the actions necessary to officially establish a quiet zone at this crossing, and we are working closely with the Federal Railroad Administration to file the necessary paperwork and install the required safety countermeasures. In the meantime, the train horns are still sounding, creating extreme levels of hardship and disturbance for residents located adjacent to the railroad tracks, for hundreds of feet in each direction on either side of the grade crossing. While we certainly appreciate and agree with the need to make this crossing as safe as possible, it is also critical to acknowledge the disruption this is causing in the local community, particularly given that train horns have not been used in this location within recent memory.

As a short term solution to this issue while we work to establish a quiet zone, we are officially requesting that MBTA (and Pan Am Railways, which has trackage rights on the Fitchburg Main Line) exercise the discretion allowed under 49 CFR 222.33, to cease sounding the train horns if trains are operated at or under 15 miles per hour and a flagger is deployed at the crossing. This solution was implemented when similar circumstances arose at the High Street and Canal Street grade crossings on the New Hampshire Main Line in West Medford, and we feel strongly that a similar approach should be used here until a quiet zone can be officially established. While this may cause some temporary delays for commuter rail passengers, it will eliminate a very significant impact on local residents who are having to live with this disruption on a daily basis for over 18 hours per day. As noted, we are working as quickly as possible to properly establish a quiet zone at this location, and hope that any delays for commuter rail trains would be short lived.



Thank you very much for your consideration of this request, which we believe is a reasonable accommodation given the sudden and unexpected impact of the recent change in practice (for which the City received less than three hours notice). Please reach out to Joseph Barr at 617-349-4743 / [jbarr@cambridgema.gov](mailto:jbarr@cambridgema.gov), so we can schedule a time to discuss this request as soon as possible.

Very truly yours,



Louis A. DePasquale  
City Manager



Joseph E. Barr  
Director of Traffic, Parking, and Transportation

cc: David Scorey, General Manager, Keolis Commuter Services  
Nancy Glowa, City Solicitor