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Staff Report

STUDY
SESSION
ITEM NO. 4

To: Lemoore City Council
From: Judy Holwell, Redevelopment Project Manager
Date: May 30, 2007
Subject: Presentation – San Joaquin Valley Railroad

Discussion

In March, staff presented Council with a brief update regarding concerns associated with the San Joaquin Valley Railroad (SJVRR). Complaints have been received for blocked street crossings from Fox Street through Lemoore Avenue, school age children crossing under stopped trains and unsafe train speeds through town. The Public Utilities Commission General Order 135 provides that railroads operating in the state of California shall observe the following regulations:

1. Train Movements - ... a public grade crossing which is blocked by a stopped train, other than a passenger train, must be opened within 10 minutes, unless no vehicle or pedestrian is waiting at the crossing...
2. Switching Movements – Switching over public grade crossings should be avoided whenever reasonably possible. If not reasonably possible, such crossings must be cleared frequently to allow a vehicle or pedestrian to pass and must not be occupied continuously for longer than 10 minutes unless no vehicle or pedestrian is waiting at the crossing.

Safety issues continue to be a concern. The train typically switches cars at Leprino East between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m. which is during the time children are released from school. On one occasion, the train was observed blocking Fox Street continuously for 34 minutes and during that time approximately 15 children were seen crossing under the train. This was the worst occurrence that was reported, however, other incidents of road blockages and children crossing have been witnessed as well. Emergency vehicle response time to the opposite side of town is also a concern when the main roadways are blocked. In addition, the train is now allowed to travel through town at 40 mph, however there are no gates (arms) at Fox or Follett streets and the view is typically impaired by buildings and other standing train cars. Previously the maximum speed was 25 mph, which was increase from 10 mph after the Cross Valley Rail Corridor Project was complete.

Attached again for your review is the Synopsis presented to us by Jack Gauthier, General Manager at SJVRR. Mr. Richard McGowan, Manager Marketing and Sales, Customer Service Representative of SJVRR, will be here during Tuesday evening's Study Session to discuss these and other issues. Complaints have decreased; however, staff feels that a Memorandum of Understanding between the City and the SJVRR would be beneficial to avoid future safety issues regarding these concerns.

Budget Impact

None.

Recommendation

Council discussion.