San Clemente Audible Warning System (AWS) Testing

Timing

Periodically over the next several weeks, OCTA will be temporarily placing three potential AWS options at various locations along the Coastal Trail to field test acoustical performance and potential placement of the AWS.

Project Background

The City of San Clemente's "Coastal Trail", constructed along the OCTA-owned railroad right-of-way within the City limits, includes seven formal pedestrian-bicycle at-grade railroad crossings where trains must sound their horns as they approach. The City of San Clemente has been pursuing a number of different paths in an effort to maintain safety while reducing or eliminating the sounding of train horns in order to improve the quality of life for its coastal residents. As a result of the safety enhancements completed as part of OCTA's Rail-Highway Grade Crossing Safety Enhancement Program (OCX), the City established a quiet zone (QZ) that includes the Senda De la Playa street and North Beach pedestrian crossings.

The City further desires to establish a less impactful alternative to the sounding of locomotive-mounted horns. One such alternative is an Audible Warning System (AWS); a variation of the "Wayside Horn" alternative allowed by the Federal Railroad Administration at railroad/highway crossings.

What is an audible warning system?

Basically, an Audible Warning System (AWS) is a system that warns pedestrians and bicyclist of trains approaching pedestrian-bicycle railroad crossings. The warning sound comes from a stationary horn installed at the crossing rather than from a horn on the train's locomotive and the horn is activated in conjunction with the railroad crossing warning system.

Project Description

The project includes the installation of an AWS and the construction of several pedestrian safety enhancements, including additional pedestrian channelization fencing, pedestrian escape exit swing gates and handrails. The project's ultimate goal is to enhance rail safety and reduce sound impact.

The City and OCTA collaboratively have developed a funding and project delivery plan for development and implementation of an AWS along the beach trail. The funding plan is consistent with the existing OCX funding plan, including a requirement for City participation of 12 percent and OCTA participation of 88 percent, and is anticipated to be funded with Measure M2 and Highway-Railroad Crossing Safety Account funding.

What is the purpose in developing audible warning system prototypes?

Prototypes of an audible warning system are being developed in order to compare, test and evaluate constructability, maintenance and audibility of various, AWS aesthetics. In addition, prototype testing will be used to develop performance specifications and ultimate approval by the California Public Utilities Commission.

Construction

Construction of the project is expected to begin Winter 2012/2013.