

As established by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), a Quiet Zone is a section of rail line at least one-half mile in length containing one or more consecutive at-grade road-rail crossings at which locomotive horns are not routinely sounded when trains are approaching the crossing.



Breaking Down Roles and Responsibilities



Public Authority

Federal regulations require that a public authority, such as a city, county, or state, be designated to act as the lead agency in establishing a Quiet Zone. The lead agency is responsible for securing the necessary funding, permitting and approvals. The lead agency may also be required to construct federally-mandated safety measures at rail crossings, and should do so by working closely with the North County Transit District (NCTD).

NCTD

NCTD is required to review each Quiet Zone application submitted. If approved, NCTD would then review and approve of the necessary Quiet Zone infrastructure that would need to be built within their right-of-way. Typical infrastructure required could include quad gates, pedestrian gates, wayside horns, medians, signal towers, and more.

SANDAG

If SANDAG is constructing a project within NCTD's right-of-way and the public authority is pursuing a Quiet Zone, SANDAG will coordinate with the public authority and NCTD to help facilitate some of the needed infrastructure improvements.

Public Authority's Steps to Establishing a Quiet Zone

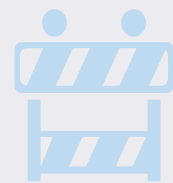
1 Determine Crossings:

Identify the road-rail grade crossings proposed for the Quiet Zone.



2 Evaluate the Existing Condition and Identify Safety Measures:

Conduct a safety review of all crossings within the proposed Quiet Zone. Complete U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) form to indicate current conditions and identify safety measures.



3 Provide Notice of Intent (NOI) to Establish a Quiet Zone:

List all of the crossings within the proposed Quiet Zone and send the NOI to all applicable railroad operators and agencies responsible for rail operations. Stakeholders have 60 days to comment on NOI.



4 Determine Quiet Zone Qualifications and Category and Submit FRA Application:

Safety is of paramount concern when establishing a Quiet Zone. Federal regulations require all crossings in a Quiet Zone to meet a nationally established safety threshold. If a crossing fails to meet that threshold when a Quiet Zone is established, the lead agency must construct Supplemental Safety Measures (e.g. four-quadrant gate, gates with medians, one way street crossings, etc.) to bring the crossing into compliance. A crossing can also be qualified using Alternative Safety Measures which are more passive in nature (e.g. photo enforcement, public education and awareness programs, etc.). If a lead agency uses Alternative Safety Measures, they will need to submit an application to FRA for review and approval. Stakeholders have 60 days to comment after FRA application submittal.



5 File Application for California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Authorization:

If an existing rail crossing is being modified to create a Quiet Zone, the public authority should file a formal application with the CPUC for authorization. This process can take four to 12 months for approval.



6 Construct Safety Measures:

Construct the proposed and approved improvements at the crossings and submit an updated inventory to the U.S. DOT.



7 Establish the Quiet Zone:

Provide proper notice to all parties established by federal regulation, which in this case includes: NCTD, Amtrak, BNSF Railway, Metrolink, the cities along the corridor, CPUC, and FRA. The Quiet Zone can become effective no earlier than 21 days after the date on which the notice is mailed.

