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Karyn E. Polito, Lieutenant Governor
Stephanie Pollack, MassDOT Secretary & CEO
Steve Poftak, General Manager

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TOWN OF NEEDHAM
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cc: SB, DPN
→ KP

massDOT
Massachusetts Department of Transportation

October 25, 2019

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Kate Fitzpatrick
Needham Town Hall
1471 Highland Ave.
Needham, MA 02492

Dear Town Manager Fitzpatrick,

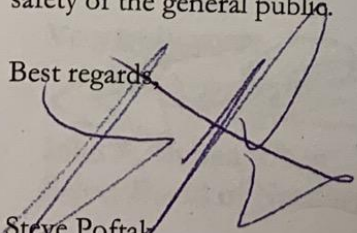
Thank you for reaching out regarding the train horn utilization along the Needham Line. The MBTA understands and recognizes the impact it may have on the quality of life of residents in proximity to the rail line. However, the MBTA's first priority has always been and will continue to be the safety of its riders, operators, and pedestrians. In 2018, there were 2,214 grade crossing incidents across the country, resulting in 819 injuries and 217 fatalities. As you may know, a study conducted by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) determined that bans/elimination of locomotive horns in other parts of the country resulted in accident rates doubling.

The position of the MBTA is that train horns save lives. We believe that quiet zones compromise the safety of our employees, our customers, and the general public. Our number one priority is to operate our system safely and in full compliance with federal regulations. While we will not prevent municipalities from installing the required supplemental safety measures and obtaining a quiet zone waiver, we cannot ignore the aforementioned priorities.

In order to proceed with the creation of a quiet zone for the public crossings, the Town of Needham must reach out to the FRA to receive quiet zone status. The town will be responsible for funding the installation of additional safety measures. For a rough pricing estimate, it costs approximately \$350,000 dollars to install a basic crossing warning system and up to \$500,000 dollars for a set of four-quadrant gates. Median barrier devices and lane channelization cost approximately \$80,000 to \$100,000 dollars. There is also an annual maintenance cost of approximately \$25,000, not including any repairs that may be necessary. Additionally, the community will be responsible for initial costs associated with obtaining a crossing diagnostic review from an experienced firm, which must include safety calculations that measure the amount of risk associated with crossing in a quiet zone (QZRI).

The MBTA will continue to advocate for the potential installation of an oversized culvert, which will create a path for pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Although we recognize that it may cause some issues for the Needham Country Club, this proposal will mitigate the risks associated with this grade crossing as it is currently designed and eliminate the need to use the horn. The MBTA believes this is the best solution for improving the quality of life of residents in this area. We look forward to continuing to work with you and the Town of Needham on solutions that meet both the needs of the community and the safety of the general public.

Best regards,


Steve Poftak
General Manager