

WHISTLE CESSATION IN CANADA

Regulatory Framework, Process & Lessons Learned

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Purpose of Presentation

- Evolution from early to modern days
- Overview of Whistle Cessation in Canada
- Regulatory framework and process
- Whistle cessation Trends
- Highlight safety-based approach - Case studies



Evolution from Early to Modern Railways



1800s- Early Railways

- Primary warning
 - Train whistle
- Supporting safety tools
 - Bells on locomotives
 - Flagman/manual signal
 - Lantern at night



Today- Modern Railway

- Warning system
 - Flashing Lights, Bells, Gates/barriers
 - Advance signaling system
- Additional Safety Measures
 - Sightline Requirements
 - Road design standards
 - Risk assessments

Whistle Cessation in Canada

Why Train Whistle:

Canadian Rail Operating Rules (CROR) Rule 14 mandates that trains sound their whistle as a safety warning, typically two long, one short, and one long blast, starting 400 meters (1/4 mile) before public crossings until occupied. The whistle is also used to warn people, animals, or in emergencies, and to signal movement

Key Principle:

- Whistling is the default requirement
- Can only be removed when equivalent or greater safety is achieved
- Strong regulatory oversight



What is Whistle Cessation?

- Removal of routine train whistle at specific public crossings
- Applies only to approved locations
- Whistle can still be used:
 - To warn people, animals, or in emergencies

Legislative Framework

Railway Safety Act (Section 23.1)

Grade Crossings Regulations (Section 103)

Grade Crossings Standards (Appendix D)

Canadian Rail Operating Rules (Rule 14)

The image shows the front cover of a legislative document. At the top center is the coat of arms of Canada with the word "CANADA" below it. Below the coat of arms are two columns of text. The left column is under the heading "CONSOLIDATION" and contains the title "Railway Safety Act" followed by "R.S.C. 1985, c. 32 (4th Suppl.)". Below this is a box containing the text "NOTE [1986, c. 40, assented to 28th July, 1986]". At the bottom of the left column, it says "Current to March 2, 2022" and "Last amended on September 2, 2022". The right column is under the heading "CODIFICATION" and contains the title "Loi sur la sécurité ferroviaire" followed by "S.R.C. 1985, ch. 32 (4^e suppl.)". Below this is a box containing the text "NOTE [1986, ch. 40, sanctionné le 28 juillet 1986]". At the bottom of the right column, it says "À jour au 2 mars 2022" and "Dernière modification le 2 septembre 2022". At the very bottom, there are two lines of small text: "Published by the Minister of Justice at the following address: <http://www.laws.justice.gc.ca>" and "Publié par le ministre de la Justice à l'adresse suivante: <http://lois-loves.justice.gc.ca>".

Legislative Framework

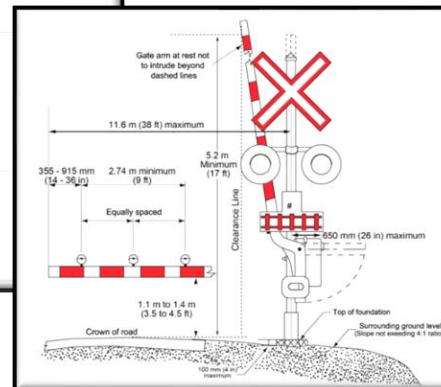
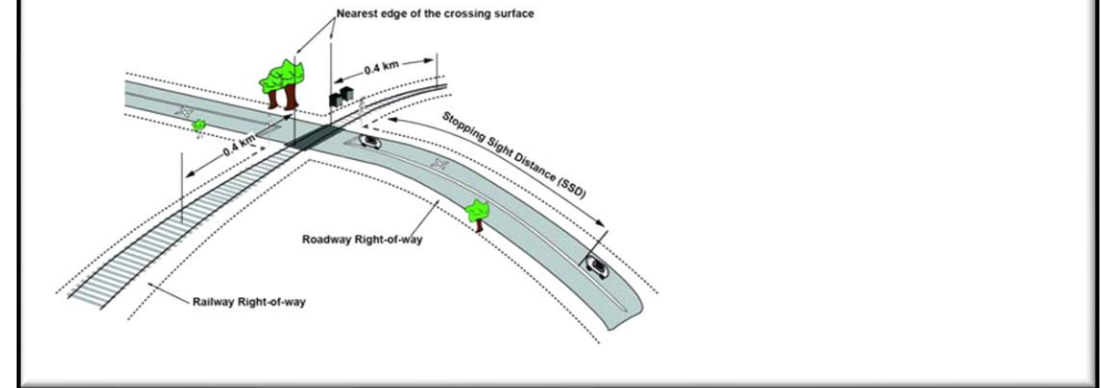
Grade Crossings Standards- Appendix D Table and Figure

Appendix D – Whistling Cessation

Table D-1 – Requirements for Warning Systems at Public Grade Crossings within an Area without Whistling

	Column A		Column B	
Railway Design Speed	Grade Crossings for Vehicle Use		Grade Crossings For Sidewalks, Paths, or Trails with the centreline no closer than 3.6 m (12 ft) to a warning signal for vehicles	
	No. of Tracks		No. of Tracks	
	1	2 or more	1	2 or more
Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
1 – 25 km/h (15 mph)	FLB	FLB	No warning system requirement	No warning system requirements
25 – 81 km/h (16 – 50 mph)	FLB	FLB & G	FLB	FLB & G
Over 81 km/h (50 mph)	FLB & G	FLB & G	FLB & G	FLB & G

Figure D-1 – prescribed area for whistling cessation as per article 23.1 of the RSA



Whistle Cessation Process

1. Resident or Community Group Expresses Interest to their Municipality

- Municipality receives a request for whistle cessation for one, or multiple crossings.

2. Municipality Consults with Railway

- Municipality must consult with the host railway company operating the railway line to determine the feasibility of the request.
- Initial consultation helps identify potential issues like trespassing.
- Railway companies are obligated to collaborate and inform the municipality of any safety concerns.

3. Municipality Notifies the Public

- Municipality must issue a public notice to all relevant stakeholders stating the intention to pass a resolution to stop train whistling at the crossing(s)

4. Municipality and Railway Assess the Crossing(s)

- Assessment to determine whether the area meets the whistle cessation requirements outlined in the GCR & GCS.
- Evidence / proof that there are no repeated incidences of trespassing.
- Recommended that a professional engineer assists with the assessment.

5. Municipality and railway company agree the crossing(s) meet requirements

- If they don't agree, they should try to resolve conflict,
- If disagreement continues, they can ask for ministerial decision on whether the crossing meet the legislative requirements.

6. Municipality passes a resolution

- If it's decided that the crossing(s) meet(s) requirements, the municipality: must pass a resolution saying it agrees train whistling should not be used at the crossing(s)
- sends a copy of the resolution to the railway company and all relevant associations or organizations, including Transport Canada's Rail Safety Directorate headquarters (railsafety@tc.gc.ca)

7. Railway company confirms whistling has stopped at the crossing(s) (within 30 days)

- issue special instructions to stop train whistling at the crossing(s)
- notify Transport Canada's Rail Safety Directorate (railsafety@tc.gc.ca) of the effective date of whistling cessation, with a copy of its special instructions
- notify the municipality and/or road authorities in writing of the whistling cessation, not later than 30 days after the day the whistling stops

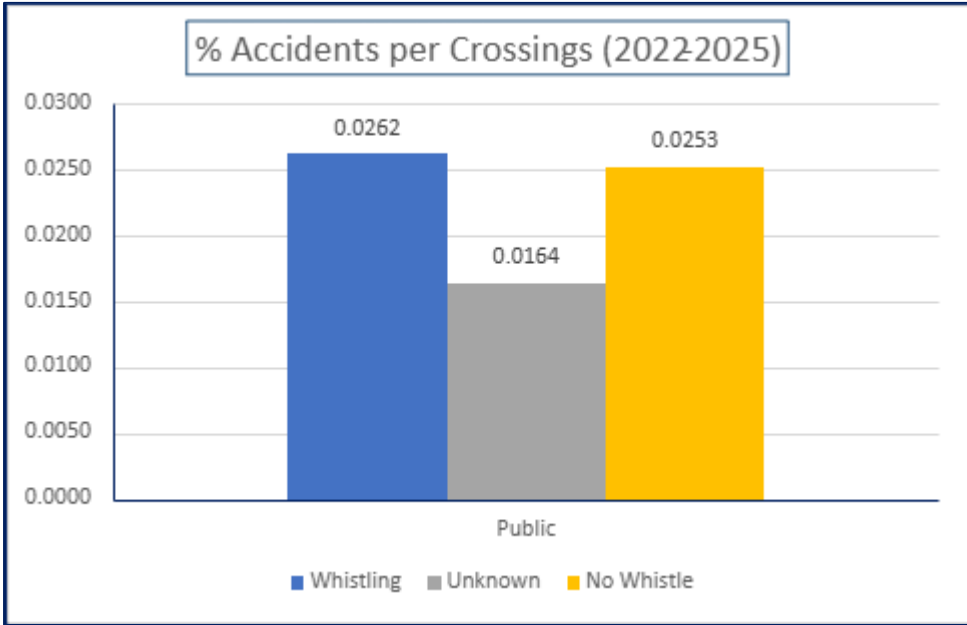
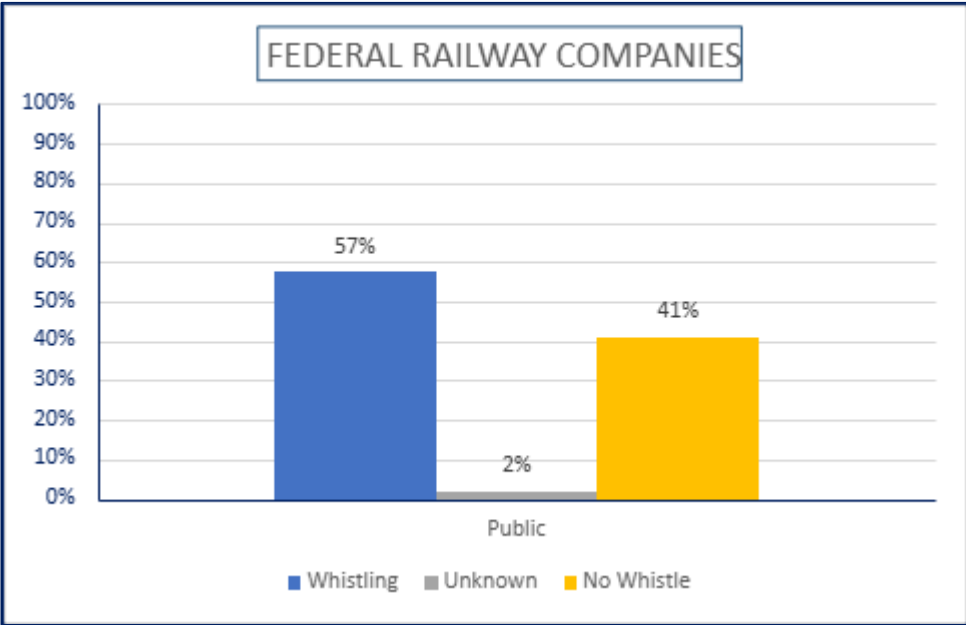
8. Municipality and railway company both ensure the right safety conditions are met

- If the municipality and company do not maintain the crossing(s) according to requirements in the *Railway Safety Act* and *Grade Crossings Regulations*, a Transport Canada Rail Safety Inspector may order that train whistling start again



Accident Trends

WHISTLE CESSATION CROSSINGS STATS AND TRENDS



Post-Cessation Responsibilities



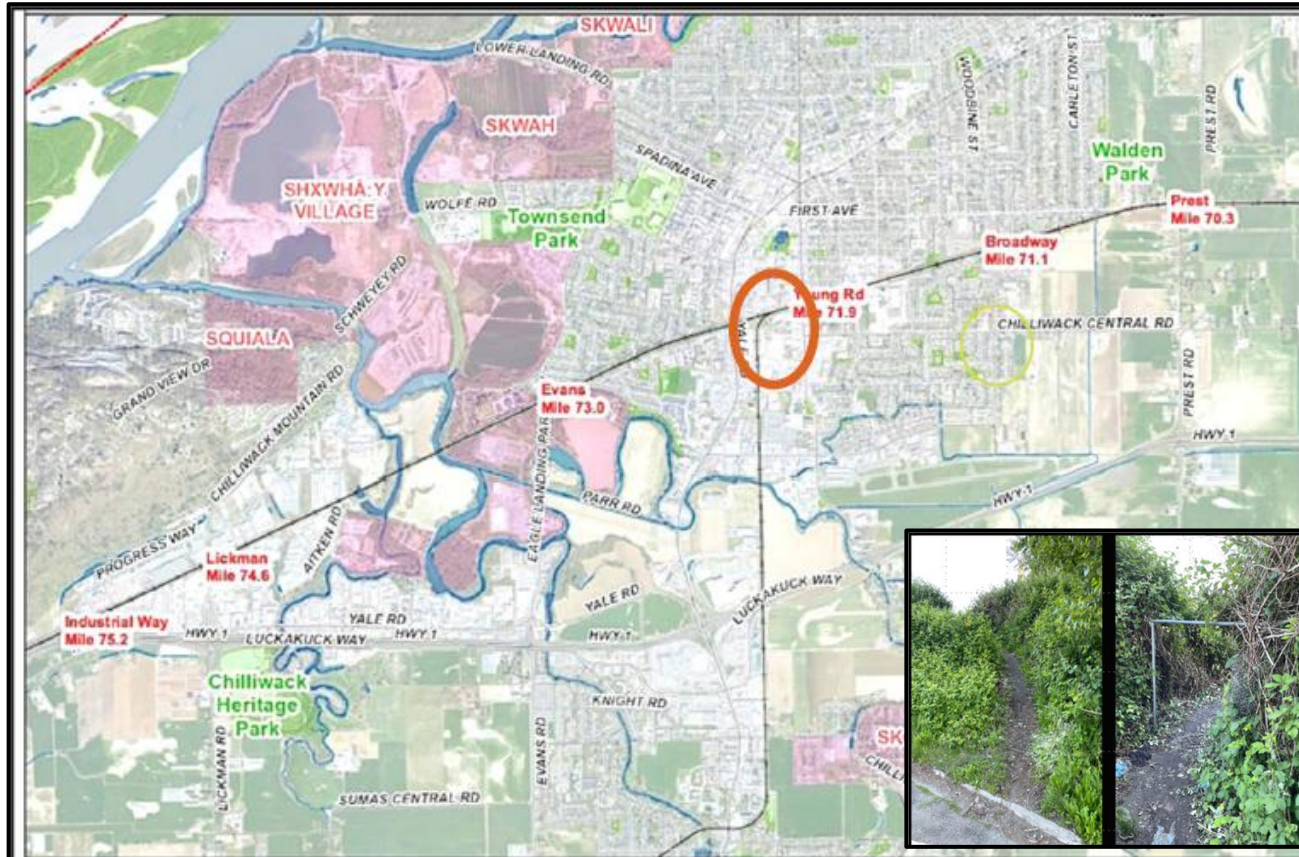
Case Study 1 : Quebec Region

NIGHTTIME WHISTLE CESSATION – PEDESTRIAN CROSSING



Case Study 2 : British Columbia

WHISTLE CESSATION
AT 6 CROSSINGS IN
CITY OF CHILLIWACK



Map of rail crossings affected by train whistling. (City of Chilliwack map)

Case Study 2 : British Columbia



Chilliwack residents vexed by train whistles

Global
NEWS

'Give us a break': Chilliwack residents sound off about incessant train horns - BC | [Globalnews.ca](https://www.globalnews.ca)

Case Study 2 : British Columbia

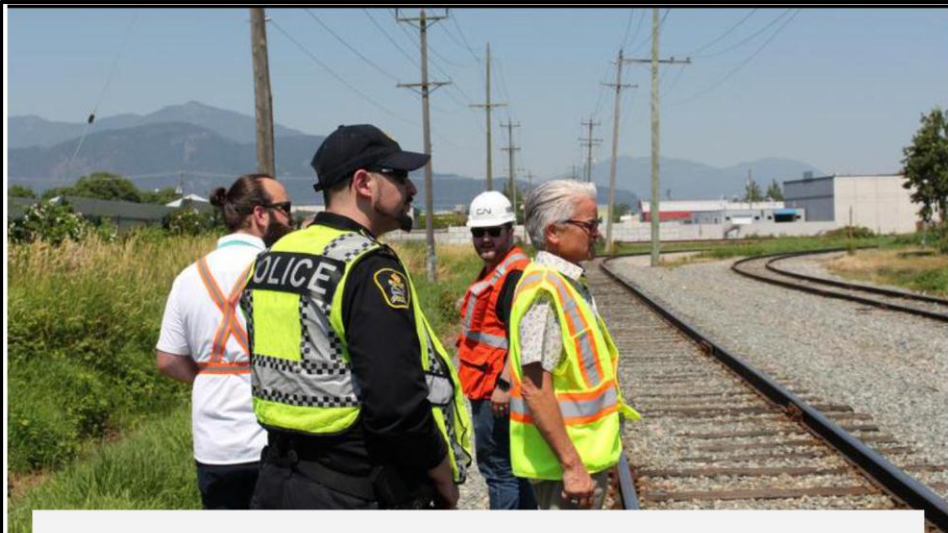


Image: City of Chilliwack / Chilliwack Mayor Ken Popove (centre) met with CN Rail Police and other CN representatives in July to discuss trespassing around CN property, in the aftermath of a pedestrian fatality in early June.

TRAIN WHISTLING IN CHILLIWACK

By Mike Vanden Bosch

Transport Canada lifts order mandating train whistling, reduced train speeds in Chilliwack

Source: [Transport Canada lifts order mandating train whistling, reduced train speeds in Chilliwack](#) | [Fraser Valley Today](#) | [Everything Fraser Valley](#)



Key Takeaways

- Whistle cessation in Canada is a formal, structured process governed by federal railway safety legislation.
- It requires close collaboration between the municipality and the railway company.
- Safety conditions must be met and continuously maintained to ensure long-term cessation.
- Transport Canada acts as the arbiter in cases of dispute.
- Online Guidance: **Apply to stop train whistling at a public grade crossing**

<https://tc.canada.ca/en/rail-transportation/grade-crossings/apply-stop-train-whistling-public-grade-crossing>

THANK YOU!

Questions?

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