

I live near a busy line between Chicago and the east coast. Traffic has become heavy in recent years. I recognize that there is a value to giving additional warning as a train approaches a crossing, but a warning does not have to consist of a symphonic movement at 104 dB. A few train drivers are courteous and sound their horns briefly for a few short blasts that is tolerable. Most, especially between 4am and 7am seem to suffer from boredom and amuse themselves by playing long melodies. This results in disturbed sleep for my entire small town. It is well established that poor sleep at night results in sleepy drivers and workers during the day and more accidents. Such costs should also be considered when increasing the noise level in communities.

We all recognize that people in cars sometimes go around lowered crossing guards. This unwillingness to take the barriers seriously is partly owing to the observation that barriers are often lowered when they should not be. Sometimes they are simply malfunctioning, but, in my community, they are usually lowered falsely because a stopped train is sitting near the crossing. Last week a CSX train sat during morning rush hour for about 1 hour and 45 minutes blocking the road in front of my house. If the rail operators were required to pay the costs of posting a policeman to direct traffic each time such false barriers were operated, we might have fewer false alarms and fewer motorists assuming that they can get through before the train does.

In short, the railroads do not pay the full costs of their operation and make exceedingly discourteous neighbors. I urge you to work toward improving this situation and not to making it worse by increasing the level of horn noise in residential neighborhoods.