



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:** 15-1798

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**Agenda Item Number:** 20.

**Agenda Date:** 5/21/2015

**In Control:** City Council A Session

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**DEPARTMENT:** Transportation & Capital Improvements

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Mike Frisbie, P.E.

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** Council District 2

### **SUBJECT:**

Permanent Closure of Railroad Crossing at Hoefgen Avenue

### **SUMMARY:**

This Ordinance will authorize the permanent closure of a railroad crossing at Hoefgen Avenue near Essex located in Council District 2, as approved by Union Pacific Railroad, which is necessary to provide safe roadways and railroad crossings at this location.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Over the last several years, the railroad crossing along Hoefgen near Essex has presented a challenge for vehicles trying to cross the railroad crossing. Due to the elevation of the tracks being higher than the roadway approaches, vehicles with low wheel clearances become lodged and cannot move off the tracks when a train is coming. In addition, the track is curved in this section and there is very little time to stop the train once it becomes visible that a vehicle is stranded on the tracks. The Transportation & Capital Improvements (TCI) Department has made several signage improvements to warn motorists. A "Low Clearance" sign has been in place for the last few years. It consists of the standard railroad crossing sign and a waiting sign to alert motorists of the low clearance. Earlier this year, there were two incidents including an accident where the train struck a limousine and an 18 wheeler of which both accidents were attributed to low wheel clearances. No injuries were reported but the incidents prompted a review to determine the recent history of issues at this railroad crossing.

On February 25 2015, TCI presented this issue to the Planning Commission in order to gain support of the

permanent closure of the railroad crossing at Hoefgen. The Planning Commission did not support the closure on the basis that the Commission believed there are alternatives to address the issue. TCI studied and reviewed other options of which two alternatives were identified. First, the road could be raised to address the elevation of the tracks in relation to the roadway approaches, which was determined to cost \$2.5 million. Second, the City could build a bridge to go over the tracks which would allow motorists to avoid becoming stranded on the tracks, which was determined to cost \$10 million. After review of both options, TCI believes it would serve in the community's best interest if the railroad closure was permanently closed rather than pursuing the mentioned alternatives.

TCI is requesting the permanent closure of railroad crossing (DOT# 764292J) at Hoefgen Avenue near Essex in order to provide safe roadways and railroad crossings at this location. This closure is essential to ensure the safety of the residents and to prevent any additional incidents in the future. The railroad crossing has been temporarily closed by TCI with two temporary metal guardrails in place to prevent crossing at Hoefgen near Essex. In addition, dead end signs have been placed at the intersection of Essex and Cherry Street as well as Carolina and Hoefgen to alert drivers of the current closure. A map with the detoured route is attached.

#### **ISSUE:**

This Ordinance will permanently close the railroad crossing at Hoefgen Avenue near Essex, located in Council District 2, as approved by Union Pacific Railroad, which is necessary to provide safe roadways and railroad crossings at this location. This closure is essential to ensure the safety of the residents and to prevent any additional incidents in the future. The railroad crossing has been temporarily closed by TCI with two temporary metal guardrails in place to prevent crossing at Hoefgen near Essex. In addition, dead end signs have been placed at the intersection of Essex and Cherry Street as well as Carolina and Hoefgen to alert drivers of the current closure. A map with the detoured route is attached.

Approval of this ordinance will enable consistent enforcement of safe roadways and railroad crossings regulations and is a continuation of City Council policy to maintain efficient and safe railroad crossings. As required by Chapter 37, Section 11 of the City Code, City Council must approve the closure, vacating, and abandoning of public right-of-way by ordinance.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

Not approving this Ordinance will result in the City of San Antonio's inability to enforce the temporary closure and protect drivers from the risks associated with the crossing at this railroad location.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the permanent railroad closure at Hoefgen Avenue near Essex, located in Council District 2.