

★ Roll Call Number

Agenda Item Number

81

Date June 14, 2010

RECEIVE AND FILE THE MAY 13, 2010 MEETING MINUTES BETWEEN THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD AND THE CITY OF DES MOINES REGARDING TRAIN BLOCKING AT-GRADE CROSSINGS

WHEREAS, the Union Pacific Railroad has trains blocking at-grade crossings within the City of Des Moines causing disruption to the traveling public, and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Des Moines authorized the Mayor to sign and send a letter to the Union Pacific Railroad asking the railroad to work with the City of Des Moines in finding ways to reduce the time that trains block streets within the City of Des Moines; and

WHEREAS, the Union Pacific Railroad met with the City on May 13, 2010 to discuss ways to reduce the time that trains block streets within the City of Des Moines.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA, that the attached minutes of the May 13, 2010 meeting between the Union Pacific Railroad and the City of Des Moines is hereby received and filed.

(Copy attached)

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_ to receive and file

SB

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
COLEMAN				
GRIESS				
HENSLEY				
MAHAFFEY				
MEYER				
MOORE				
TOTAL				

CERTIFICATE

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVED

Mayor

City Clerk

## Union Pacific Railroad and City of Des Moines Meeting May 13, 2010

For a number of years Union Pacific trains have blocked the east-west roads on the eastern part of Des Moines as the trains move into the yard causing disruption to traffic. Recently the train impacts and potential solutions to reduce these impacts has been a topic of discussion with the neighborhoods and City Council.

The Northeast Neighbors held a meeting on March 15, 2010 at the Eastside Library. David McGuffin with the City attended the meeting to discuss what options are available and to determine what solutions the Northeast Neighbors would want to forward to City Council concerning the Union Pacific Railroad blocking the streets.

At the April 12, 2010 City Council meeting, the City Council authorized the Mayor to sign and send a letter to the Union Pacific Railroad asking the railroad to work with the City of Des Moines in finding ways to reduce the time that trains block streets within the City of Des Moines.

The Union Pacific Railroad agreed to meet with the Mayor, two Council Members, City staff, and neighborhood groups on May 13, 2010 at 5:30 p.m. in City Hall.

City staff invited members of the Northeast Neighbors to attend the May 13, 2010 meeting with the Union Pacific Railroad to express the neighborhood's concern with blocked crossings. One representative was in attendance from the neighborhood group.

The Union Pacific Railroad gave a presentation of employment and operations in Iowa. The Union Pacific Railroad also discussed their train movements concerning most trains that come through Des Moines are going south and the restricted speed (10 mph) into the short line yard (south of Dean Avenue) due to the railroad curve. The following items that could reduce traffic impacts that came from the meeting are as follows:

- Future improvements on the Union Pacific switch yard in the short line yard. This will allow the trains to enter the short yard without stopping to set switches. This will help reduce the time the trains block the crossing, however the curve into the yard requires the trains travel no faster than 10 mph. The curve can not be rebuilt so the trains must still travel at 10 mph or less.
- Future growth and improvements on the Archer Daniels Midland yard. The ADM yard does create some traffic issues as the trains enter the ADM yards. Any improvement to the ADM yard may also help blockages.
- The Union Pacific Railroad and the City discussed working together on installing interconnects at crossings to inform Fire Department Dispatcher of when a train is blocking a crossing. This could decrease the Fire Department response time to an emergency call if the Dispatcher knows a clear route. The ultimate length of response route would not change.

- Construct an overpass over the Union Pacific Railroad. This option was very expensive and most of the cost would be the responsibility of the City. If one or more overpasses were to be built the issues to consider would be, costs, impacts to commuting traffic, impacts to emergency response traffic, impacts to property and adjoining businesses.

Other options were discussed that were not deemed feasible such as lower the rail lines, moving the rail yards out of the city and restricting train movements to certain times.

- Lower the rail lines below existing street grade would require a great length of rail to create a grade that the train could negotiate. There is not enough room between University Avenue and Dean Avenue to accomplish the proper grade. The Union Pacific Railroad has only one north/south line in Des Moines and to create a detour during construction may not be possible.
- Moving the rail yards out of the City would require acquisition of large tract/tracts of land adjacent to the rail line from cooperative land owners. Because the move would be solely due to the interest of the City, the City would be responsible for the cost. This option would likely be far more expensive than multiple grade separations. The railroad has the right of eminent domain, but the reasoning for moving the yard would need the proper justification. Originally the rail yards were outside the City, and over time the City grew around the rail yards. Given enough time a new rail yard location could be surrounded by the City or other communities.
- Restricting train movements to certain times is not possible due to interstate railroad operations and obligations to local customers. The railroad creates the schedule for pickup and delivery with local and non-local customers months in advance. Local customers require rail service during normal business hours and the requirements of interstate operations make it impossible to avoid service during heavy traffic periods in all 7,300 communities served by the Union Pacific Railroad.