



Legislation Text

File #: 18-0543, **Version:** 1

Resolution to Authorize a Professional Services Agreement with SRF Consultants, Inc., and to Appropriate Funds for Railroad “Quiet Zone” Conceptual-Engineering Services (\$35,000.00) **(8 Votes Required)**

Attached for your consideration is a resolution to authorize a professional services agreement with SRF Consultants, Inc. to complete professional design efforts responding to the issue of train horn noise for residents along the Ann Arbor Railroad corridor and to appropriate funds for that purpose.

As background, residents in two areas have raised concerns to the City about train-horn noise: (1) adjacent to the downtown and Old Fifth Ward area, and (2) in the Northside neighborhood, north of Argo Pond. Residences in both areas are close to the railroad and its at-grade street intersections.

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations require sounding a locomotive horn near such crossings unless they are in an FRA-designated “Quiet Zone.” The “Quiet Zone” rules require a safety evaluation and, potentially, public-safety improvements before any area may be designated a “Quiet Zone.” These improvements could include upgrading crossing gates to four-quadrant systems, which prevent vehicles from bypassing lowered gates, or curb channelization to restrict vehicles to the lane protected with the gate.

This resolution seeks authorization and funding to retain a qualified professional engineering firm to conduct the required safety review and to develop engineering concepts to support designation of an FRA “Quiet Zone” in these areas.

Staff requested and received three (3) quotes, which included descriptions of each firm’s proposed project team, each firm’s experience with “Quiet Zone” rules, and a proposed scope of work. Following review, staff selected SRF Consulting Group, Inc. (SRF). The rationale for selecting SRF included the firm’s experience and prior successful efforts in Michigan, as well as the comprehensive and detailed description of their proposed services. SRF’s work will include data collection based on field observation, coordination with appropriate agencies and stakeholders, expert analysis, a public education effort about “Quiet Zones” and a final report with recommended improvement scenarios for moving forward.

SRF’s will perform this work is \$24,455.00. Staff seeks an additional \$10,545.00 to cover staff costs and a contract contingency for additional items enabling this effort to move forward.

Staff will continue to seek and identify potential sources of funding to design and install the required improvements. To that point, the Michigan Department of Transportation’s (MDOT) and FRA’s longstanding position that train horns are a safety device means that their funds for this type of program are limited. Indeed, in 1995, MDOT expressed its “general position that train whistles (horns) are an important warning device and that a prohibition of their use could have a serious negative impact on crossing safety.” Staff does not expect either agency to spend much in safety-related funds just to minimize the nuisance of a safety device.

Budget/Fiscal Impact:

Funding for this effort is not currently included in the approved FY18 Budget. Therefore an appropriation from the General Fund balance is being requested.

Sustainability Framework

The work completed under this contract will relate to the Engaged Community and Safe Community goals of the City's Sustainability Framework.

Prepared by: Eli Cooper, Transportation Program Manager

Reviewed by: Craig Hupy, Public Services Area Administrator

Approved by: Howard S. Lazarus, City Administrator

Whereas, Residents have complained that train-horn noise impacts their ability to enjoy the serenity and tranquility typically associated with residential neighborhoods;

Whereas, The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulates public safety around railroads and requires sounding a train horn when trains are approaching public, at-grade crossings, except in areas that have been designated as "Quiet Zones;"

Whereas, For the Ann Arbor Railroad near these neighborhoods to be designated a "Quiet Zone," staff has solicited quotes and work plans from qualified consulting firms, and has selected SRF Consultants, Inc., to conduct a professional analysis consistent with the FRA "Quiet Zone" Program requirements;

Whereas, SRF Consultants, Inc., complies with the requirements of the City's Non-Discrimination and Living Wage ordinances;

RESOLVED, That City Council appropriates \$35,000.00 from the General Fund balance, increasing both the Engineering General Fund revenue and expenditure budgets for purposes of a "Quiet Zone" conceptual-engineering study;

RESOLVED, That the General Capital Project Fund expenditure and revenue budgets be increased by \$35,000.00, with the source of funding being a transfer from the Engineering General Fund;

RESOLVED, That City Council approves a contract with SRF Consultants, Inc. for a "Quiet Zone" conceptual-engineering study in the amount of \$24,455.00;

RESOLVED, That a contingency in the amount of \$3,668.00 (15%) be established within the project budget and that the City Administrator be authorized to approve change orders to the contract with SRF Consultants, Inc. in an amount not-to-exceed \$3,668.00;

RESOLVED, That the funding for the contract and the contingency amount, as well as staff effort be made available without regard to fiscal year;

RESOLVED, That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized and directed to execute the agreement for services after approval as to substance by the City Administrator and approval as to form by the City Attorney; and

RESOLVED, That the City Administrator be authorized to take the necessary administrative actions to implement this resolution.