



AGENCY:	City Council
MEETING DATE:	September 10, 2018
DEPARTMENT:	Public Works
PRESENTED BY:	T. Varga
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AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

TITLE:

Receive Report and Make Recommendations on Skunk Train Project to Rehabilitate Railroad Crossing at North Main Street (State Highway 1)

ISSUE:

The Skunk Train has been ordered by the Federal Railway Administration (FRA) to permanently repair its crossing at N. Main Street as quickly as possible. This work will require the full closure of N. Main Street during construction. Nighttime work is proposed from Sunday evening, September 16, 2018 through Thursday morning, September 20, 2018. Detours will occur on nearby City streets.

ANALYSIS:

In early 2018, The Skunk Train undertook interim repairs to stabilize its railroad crossing at Main Street (aka State Highway 1). Since that time the FRA has required the Sierra Northern Railway/ Mendocino Railway, the owner and operator of the Skunk Train, to make permanent repairs in as timely a manner as possible. The California Public Utilities Commission (who has State jurisdiction over highway/rail crossings) has concurred.





The Skunk Train plans to use pre-cast, concrete units, called “tubs,” for the crossing rehabilitation to ensure a fix that will last many years. Installation of these tubs, as well as proper rail repair, requires a full closure of the crossing to give crews the ability to perform their work. The railroad anticipates that the crossing work will take four or five days. The crossing itself is the State’s right of way and managed by Caltrans. Detour routes off of the highway would occur on City streets. Consequently, the Skunk Train, Caltrans, and the City have been working together to develop a plan minimizing public impacts during construction. Each agency will issue its own Encroachment Permit for construction related activities happening within its own jurisdiction.

After preliminary discussion with the Skunk Train in July, it was determined that any such closure would have to wait until after the busy summer season. A target date of September 16 was chosen at that time. On August 21, City staff was contacted with the current construction plan. Before a City Encroachment Permit will be issued, the matter is being brought to the City Council for input by the Council and the public. The Skunk Train has advised staff that it plans to notify people next to the work zone and the detour route of the proposed project.

The current plan is to perform construction overnight, closing N. Main Street at about 5:30 PM and opening it back up to traffic at 7:00 AM. The project is proposed to start Sunday evening (September 16). Work should be done by Friday morning (September 21). If work progresses smoothly, it may be possible to conclude Thursday morning. Permanent repair of the street paving next to the crossing is dependent on the availability of asphalt pavement and will occur at a different, later time. The question of how traffic control will be managed for final paving is still being evaluated. Under the circumstances, the proposed scope of work probably involves the least disruptive construction period. During the day, the work area would be at least partially covered by steel plates. The Skunk Train is proposing to opening one lane to traffic in the daytime. This option is still being reviewed and evaluated by Caltrans.

Overnight detour traffic would be moved to the adjacent, City side streets. On the east side, the block bounded by Pine Street/Franklin Street/Fir Street would carry this traffic. On the west side, the block bounded by Fir Street/Stewart Street/Pine Street would carry the other detour route traffic. Detour traffic could be either one-way or two-way at the City's discretion. One-way traffic has the advantage of simpler traffic movements and easier turns for larger trucks. The disadvantage is less convenient access to properties along the detour route. For two-way traffic, the pros and cons are reversed. With the possible exception of early evening traffic from 5:30 PM to 8 or 9 PM, traffic volumes will likely be light enough to make any of the disadvantages for either option minor at best. One other project-related issue to consider is noise during construction. The Skunk Train is trying to keep its activities as brief as possible to minimize this impact.

As soon as the final issues involving traffic control are settled, then the traffic detour plan can be completed and Encroachment Permits issued.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Much of the proposed project to rehabilitate the Skunk Train railroad crossing of N. Main Street is within Caltrans' jurisdiction and will be authorized by one of their Encroachment Permits. However, given the street closure necessary to accommodate work, a City Encroachment Permit will be issued for traffic to be detoured onto City streets around the project work site. The daytime and nighttime hours of this work look reasonable and staff recommends making them permit conditions. Traffic volumes should drop low enough during nighttime work that either one-way or two-way traffic along the detour route can be easily accommodated. For the convenience of adjacent residents, two-way detour traffic is suggested. Besides finishing this project as quickly as possible, noise mitigations are limited.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

The project itself needs to be completed to ensure the railway's continued operation. The FRA is requiring an expeditious project completion from the Skunk Train. Short, well justified delays may be possible.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There will be no fiscal impacts to the City. This is a private project undertaken by the Skunk Train.

IMPLEMENTATION/TIMEFRAMES:

If all relevant issues can be resolved during the Council meeting, then a City Encroachment Permit can be issued in time to meet the Skunk Train's proposed start date of Sunday, September 16, 2018.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed detour route.

NOTIFICATION:

Skunk Train, Mr. Robert Pinoli