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CPUC Rules on Gold Line Crossing Bells, Sound Walls

(Feb. 25, 2005) The California Public Utilities Commission approved the conditions of a three-party settlement agreement, Thursday, that allows for improvements to the South Pasadena section of the Metro Gold Line, City News Service reported.

The Metro Gold Line Construction Authority, the City of South Pasadena and the LA County Metropolitan Transportation Authority worked together to identify measures that would reduce community concerns regarding operations of the Gold Line.

Conditions of the agreement include modifications to the crossing bells by lowering the volume of the bells and installing a metal shroud on the back of the bell to direct the sound toward the crossing, and reduce the noise impact on any surrounding properties.

The settlement also provides for construction of at least 1,030 feet of additional sound walls, installation of two additional sets of rail lubricators. The settlement permits the Construction Authority and the city to agree to additional mitigation measures which are dependent upon the availability of surplus project funds.

Gates and crossings

Several projects that may be implemented include the reconfiguration of gates and pedestrian crossings at two intersections.

The settlement also includes a housing purchase and sales program, which will be mutually developed and implemented by the Construction Authority and the city of South Pasadena. Components of the agreement may be instituted as early as April 30.

A major issue in the controversy has been the noise level of the bells at Metro Gold Line rail crossings.

The PUC permits crossing bells to be set within a range of 75 to 105 decibels. The PUC's ruling directs that the crossing bells must be individually tested in accordance with PUC rules, metal shrouds must then be attached to the bells which will be tested again to ensure they ring no louder than 75 to 77 decibels.

"I think people will notice a significant difference," Deputy County Counsel Augustin Zuniga, who represents Metro, told the Pasadena Star-News. "Most of the manufacturers of these bells in America set (them) for the middle range, 85-90 (decibels)."

'A major reduction'

"When you come down to the level the judge ordered," he added, "that's a major reduction."

Bells in South Pasadena will be replaced first, according to the

Construction Authority.

The Construction Authority and Metro will adjust bells at Mission Street/Meridian Avenue and at Pasadena Avenue/Monterey Road in South Pasadena so that they will cease ringing after the crossing barriers have descended.

There will only be a single crossing in the city – El Centro/Glendon Way – where the bells will continue to ring after the gates are in the down position. The PUC determined that the unusual nature of the crossing design at the intersection required no change in the bell pattern until the crossing is redesigned with quad gates.

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