

Rep. Jared Polis – Train Horn Noise

The intolerable train horn noise that echoes throughout many of the communities in the 2nd Congressional District of Colorado is excessive and unacceptable. It detrimentally affects the quality of life for local residents, and negatively impacts economic development along the train corridors in our communities. Although federal rules allow communities to mitigate train horn noise through the establishment of quiet zones, the regulations and requirements to create such quiet zones are prohibitively expensive and often physically impossible for our localities. After hearing about the impacts of the train horn noise from frustrated constituents and municipalities, my staff and I have worked tirelessly to solve the above issues. We are seeking flexibility from the train horn rule and quiet zone regulations while maintaining stringent safety standards. The efforts of my office are outlined below:

- Personally met with the FRA administrator, Sarah Feinberg, to discuss train horn noise, and the impact it is having on our communities. I made the specific request to re-open the rule for comment in order to hear from communities how it has impacted, improved, or failed to affect rail safety.
- In April of 2016, I led a letter to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) thanking the agency for re-opening the train horn rule, allowing for the possibility to make substantial changes to the rule. The letter expressed hope that the Agency will give due consideration to each public comment submitted from our communities, and make the appropriate changes to improve the effectiveness of the rule.
- In March of 2015, I passed an amendment with Rep. Perlmutter that requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to submit to Congress a report evaluating the effectiveness of the FRA 2005 rule on the use of locomotive horns at rail crossings. We expect that report in the next few months.
- In November of 2015, I offered an amendment to the Long Term Transportation Reauthorization (H.R. 22) bill that would have reduced train horn noise in Fort Collins, Loveland, and other areas of along the Northern Front Range. My proposal called for giving train operators traveling at 25 MPH or less the discretion to only sound their horns when doing so is necessary to ensure safety.
- Supported a Great Western Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement (RRIF) Loan with the FRA, which would have gone toward easing an area of congestion where trains stopped for hours on end, in the middle of Fort Collins. That loan would have gone to finance infrastructure rehabilitation for an expanded switching yard outside of town.
- In December of 2015, I sent a letter, with several other Colorado delegation members, to the FRA expressing disappointment with the decision denying Fort Collins a quiet zone waiver, which would have allowed trains to not honk their horns in certain downtown areas of Ft. Collins. In that same letter, I called on the FRA to further examine and open up the train horn rule.
- In April of 2013, I sent a letter with then-Representative Gardner to the FRA requesting they re-open the train horn rule because of its inflexibility and the high cost of creating quiet zones.