



July 26, 2021

Dear Residents:

There has been a lot of discussion recently about what can be done when a train is blocking the road for an extended period of time. Below is an excerpt from the Texas Department of Transportation's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page regarding rail.

How long can a train block a railroad crossing?

States lack authority to enforce time limits on how long a railroad company can block a crossing. In 2001, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that federal laws preempt state anti-blocking statutes. Section 471.007 was removed from the Texas Transportation Code per the Texas attorney general's opinion in June 2005.

Who can impose a law regulating how long a train is allowed to block a railroad crossing?

The only legitimate authority to regulate blocked crossings is the federal government. Multiple times in the past the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has been requested to begin the rulemaking process to determine effective measures to regulate blocked crossings. Federal Railroad Safety Authorization Act of 1994 (FRSA), 49 U.S.C. § 20101 et seq. (2000), is the main source of the railroad industry's contention that state and local laws are not enforceable.

If a train is blocking a crossing, what should I do?

First, be patient. Railroads and railroaders do not intentionally block crossings; unavoidable circumstances and rules to protect public safety sometimes necessitate that trains block intersections.

Common reasons for a blocked crossing are waiting on the arrival of another train to pass or waiting to enter a rail yard. Occasionally, there are minor mechanical problems with locomotives or cars. By federal law, railroad employees cannot work more than 12 hours per day, so there are instances when a crew has met those limits and are waiting for another crew to relieve them.

What information should I collect if a train blocks a crossing for an extended period of time?

First, write down the time, date and how long the crossing was blocked. Note the county, city, street or route that you were traveling on. If possible, write down the numbers on the side of

some of the rail cars. Even better, record the number on the lead locomotive, which is usually in a format similar to “HLCX 1234”. Most helpful is the DOT Number posted at the railroad crossing that is blocked. For additional information regarding railroad issues go to www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/rail/faq.html.

In addition, a recent change in the maximum length of a train has caused more crossings to be blocked in town. The City is working with the two railroads to develop a workable solution.

Sincerely,

Don Denbow, Mayor
City of Corsicana