

# MEMORANDUM

**To:** Town Council

**From:** Theo Holtwijk, Director of Long-Range Planning

**Date:** November 21, 2011

**Re:** "Quiet Zone" along Pan American Railways Line

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On October 24, 3011 staff reviewed possible proposed Quiet Zone (QZ) designs at Falmouth's four crossings with the Council. It appears that a Quiet Zone can be obtained for an estimated construction cost of up to \$127,000 and that a formal approval process with Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is not required. The Council decided to hold a Public Hearing on this matter on November 28, 2011.

## CROSSING DESIGNS

1. Staff explored "channelization" safety improvements at all four crossings, consisting of a 2.5 feet wide traversable median with 45 degree granite curb. The delineator package would then be mounted on the median. This work mandates a slight road widening. Staff believes this is a design that will hold up better than other designs in adverse conditions and during winter maintenance (snowplowing) operations.
2. The FRA offered an informal opinion that such channelization improvements qualify this corridor for a Quiet Zone. An approval process will not be required, but a notification process will be required.
3. Improvements at the Field and Woodville road crossings would be mandatory for a Falmouth Quiet Zone involving all four (public) crossings. Improvements at the Blackstrap and Falmouth road crossings would provide additional safety and be at the discretion of the Town.
4. Staff prepared a sketch that shows the Falmouth Road crossing with possible car and truck movements that could potentially bypass a closed two-gate situation (see below).
5. Staff also explored with the FRA the alternative safety measure suggested by Councilor Chase involving extending a crossing gate over both lanes of traffic, not just one lane of traffic. This would form a vehicular traffic block across the entire two-lane road on both sides of the crossing. The November 8, 2011 response from Randall Dickinson of the FRA regarding this suggestion was as follows:

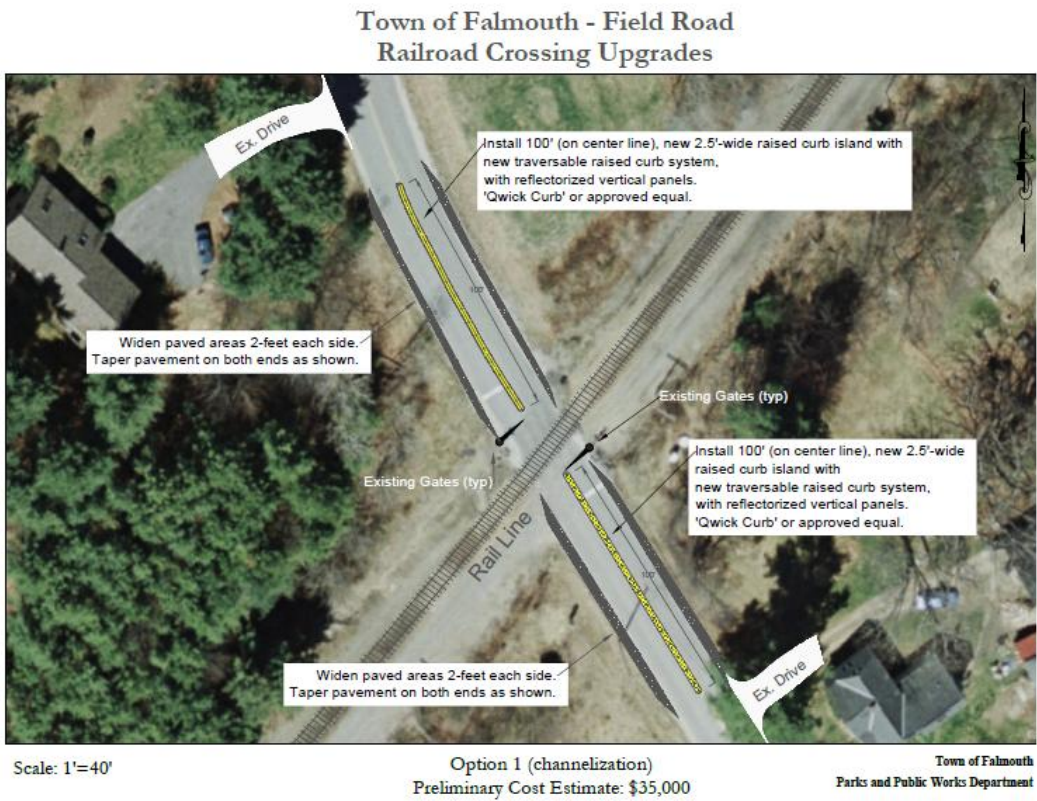
*"As I'm guessing you're already aware, a gate extending across both lanes of traffic, such as you're suggesting, would not qualify as an SSM [Supplementary Safety Measures], as defined in the Reg.[Regulations]. It is, however, an arrangement that you could certainly propose as an ASM [Alternative Safety*

Measure] ..., as defined. Doing so, of course, would negate the possibility of any automatic approval that would be enjoyed by using all SSM's.

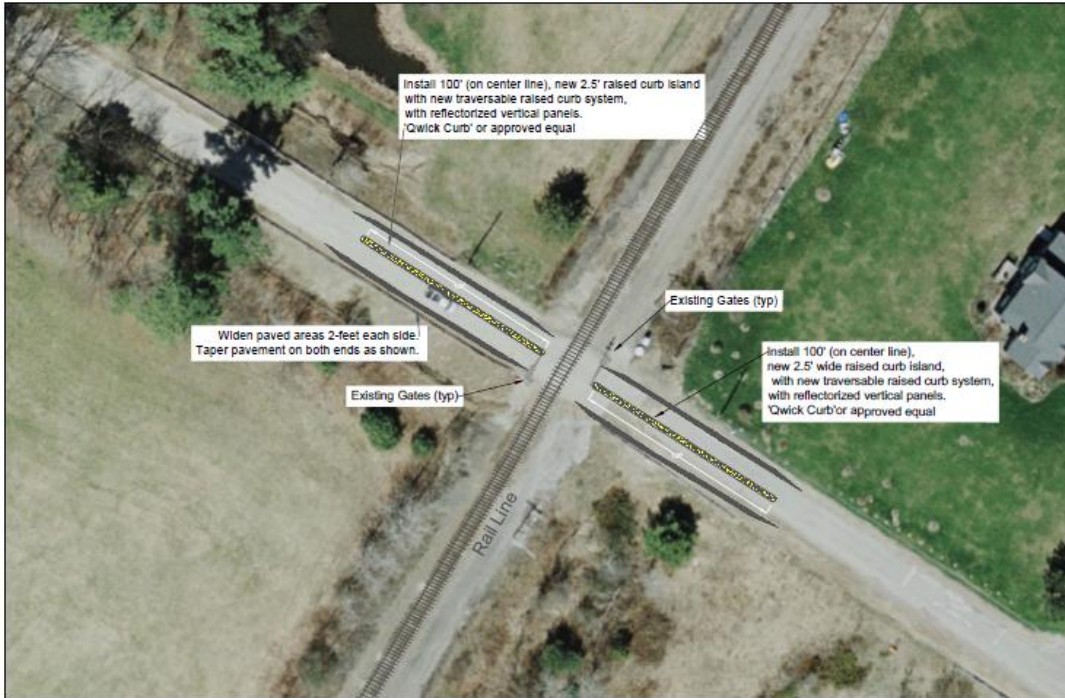
Use of ASM's triggers the application and approval process. Although my knowledge of any such arrangements elsewhere in the country is very sketchy, I do believe there have been certain isolated cases where they may have been approved, due to unusual and/or mitigating circumstances. I do know that Washington has expressed some heartburn with respect to this concept – due mostly to the gate timing issue. However, that having been said, I feel safe in stating that such an application would surly receive serious consideration – no guarantees of approval, of course."

**COSTS ESTIMATES**

Crossings	Cost Estimate	Required for QZ?
Blackstrap	\$27,000	Optional
Falmouth	\$30,000	Optional
Field	\$35,000	Mandatory
Woodville	\$35,000	Mandatory
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$70,000-127,000</b>	



## Town of Falmouth - Woodville Road Railroad Crossing Upgrades

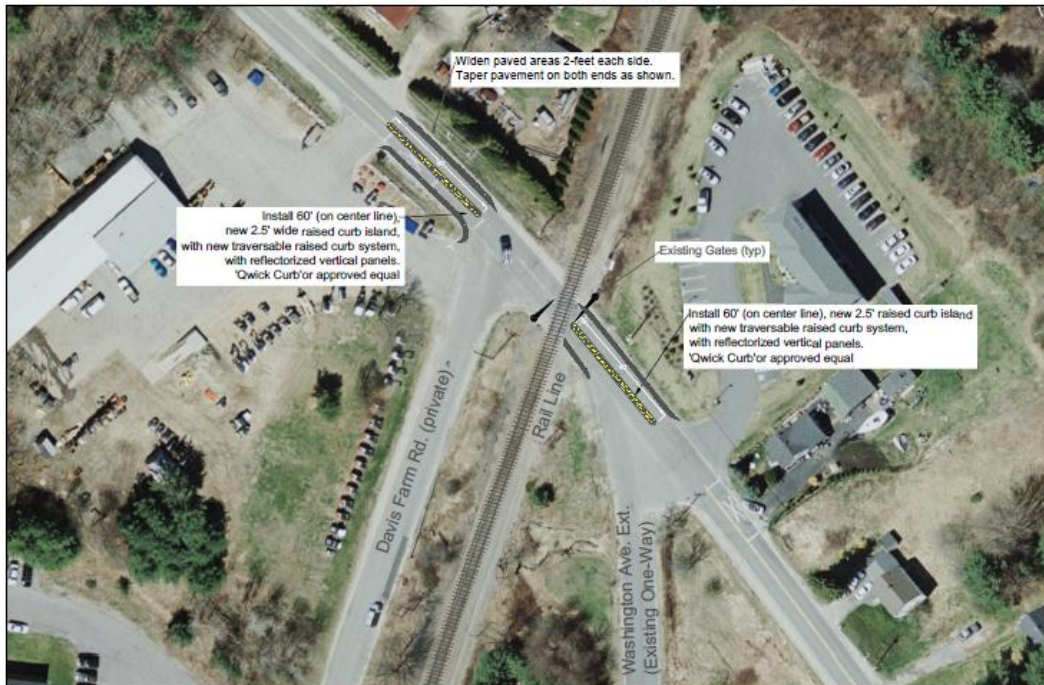


Scale: 1"=50'

Option 1 (channelization)  
Preliminary Cost Estimate: \$35,000

Town of Falmouth  
Parks and Public Works Department

## Town of Falmouth - Blackstrap Road Railroad Crossing Upgrades

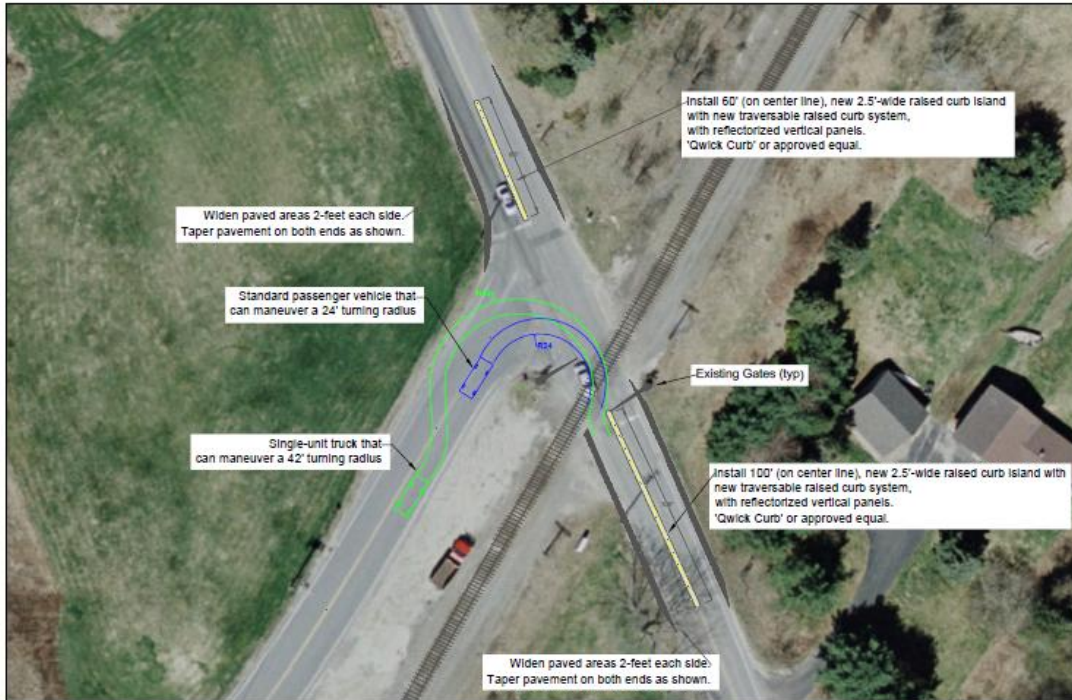


Scale: 1"=50'

Option 2 (Channelization)  
Preliminary Cost Estimate: \$27,000

Town of Falmouth  
Parks and Public Works Department

## Town of Falmouth - Falmouth Road Railroad Crossing Upgrades



Scale: 1"=50'

Option 3 (Channelization)  
Preliminary Cost Estimate: \$30,000

Town of Falmouth  
Parks and Public Works Department

### TIMELINE

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|---------------------|--|
| November 28:        | Council holds Public Hearing and decides on preliminary (informal) action to proceed with Quiet Zone process (or not)                                |
| December 2011:      | (If decision is to proceed) Council order to transfer funds from Undesignated Fund Balance to be used for construction/improvements designed by PPW. |
| Winter 2012:        | (If decision is to proceed) Complete required paperwork (notices, notification/application, etc.)  |
| Spring/Summer 2012: | (If decision is to proceed) FRA approval (or whatever is needed from FRA).   |
| Future (TBD):       | (If decision is to proceed) Commence construction only if the Downeaster expansion is guaranteed.  |