U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad
Administration**

1120 Vermont Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

JUN 27 2006

Ms. Katherine Parker
Department of Public Works & Engineering
Traffic & Transportation Division
Post Office Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

Dear Ms. Parker:

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has reviewed the revised quiet zone application you submitted February 7, 2006, on behalf of the city of Houston, Texas. The application contains the elements required by 49 C.F.R. §222.39(b), and the required comment period has elapsed, with some comments provided to the FRA.

Both the State of Texas and the Union Pacific Railroad provided comments that appear to the FRA to be substantive. In particular, the State of Texas has advised that on the four access roads that are treated as one-way streets with gates (US 59 North Service Road, US 59 South Service Road, IH 610 North Service Road, and IH 610 South Service Road), the advance warning signs should be installed on both sides of each roadway. This is consistent with guidance in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Therefore, advance warning signs should be placed on both sides of the roadway at these locations.

The Union Pacific Railroad and the FRA's Region 5 Crossing Manager both provided comments about the Alternative Safety Measures (ASMs) placed at several crossings within your proposed quiet zone, as follows:

1. At San Felipe Road (758512N), Westheimer Road (758513V), and Bissonnet Street (758517X), the vertical panel nearest the lowered gate arm is several feet from the gate tip, leaving room for a vehicle to drive around the gate relatively easily. Additional vertical panels will need to be added to the end nearest the gate arm, to discourage motorists from circumventing these warning devices.

2. The curbs at South Braeswood (758521M), West Bellfort (758523B), and Willowbend Boulevard (758525P) are not six inches high. Since these curbs do not meet the minimum height requirement for non-traversable curbs, the effectiveness rate assigned to non-traversable curbs may not apply. Therefore, please consider adding vertical panels or tubular delineators to the curbs installed at these crossings. Otherwise, revised effectiveness rates will need to be provided for the curbs installed at each of these crossings.

The Union Pacific Railroad is also correct in noting that the correct inventory number for the IH 610 North Service Road is 912020F. It is cited in your submissions as 912020M. Please submit a correction to all parties who received a copy of your revised quiet zone application.

In addition, the State of Texas, the Union Pacific Railroad, and FRA regional staff has noted the importance of maintaining the ASMs in order to retain their effectiveness.

Apart from the comments provided above, the FRA takes no exception to the analysis used to derive estimates of effectiveness for the proposed Alternative Safety Measures. Accordingly, the FRA finds that implementation of the proposed Supplementary Safety Measures and ASMs, in conjunction with the conditions listed in this letter, will result in a Quiet Zone Risk Index for the proposed quiet zone that will be at or below the Risk Index With Horns (the risk that would be present if the horns were still sounding).

After successful installation of the proposed Supplementary Safety Measures and Alternative Safety Measures, including implementation of the conditions cited above, and compliance with all applicable quiet zone requirements contained within 49 CFR §§ 222.25, 222.27 and 222.35, the City of Houston may submit its Notice of Quiet Zone Establishment in accordance with the requirements of 49 C.F.R. §222.43.

Sincerely,

Jo Strang
Associate Administrator for Safety

cc: Mr. Steve Berki, UPRR
Mr. Dale Hill,
Mr. Steve Calles, Texas Department of Transportation
Mr. Gary Trietsch, P.E., Texas Department of Transportation
Mr. Darin Kosmak, Texas Department of Transportation
Mr. Michael S. Marcotte, P.E., DEE, City of Houston
Mr. Thomas Healy, KCS
Mr. Lyn Hartley, BNSF
Mr. Alvin Richardson, Amtrak
Mr. Richard C. Scott, Harris County Flood Control District
Ms. Carolyn Cook, FRA