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Will SunRail commuter trains bring more noise?

Officials say the commuter system will be shorter, quieter than freight and Amtrak trains

By Rachael Jackson, Orlando Sentinel

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Like **12** SunRail will bring lots of toot-toots and whoo-whoos to Central Florida. But how much noise should people expect from the dozens of daily commuter trains that will ride the region's tracks?

SunRail officials say the noise will be no worse than the rumbling sounds freight trains and Amtrak cars regularly send through communities on the existing rail line. Still, they are trying to mitigate blaring horns and earthshaking clamor.

Some cities are also hoping to create "quiet zones," though Gov. Charlie Crist recently vetoed Winter Park's request to fund equipment for crossings there.

Though SunRail officials don't expect noise to be an issue, Winter Park city Commissioner Beth Dillaha thinks it would have been better to build the system along Interstate 4 to avoid disrupting neighborhoods.

"What is it going to do to the quality of life of the neighborhoods that are closely located to the rail corridor?" said Dillaha, who also has questioned spending city funds on the system. "What does it do to the property values? I don't know. These are big unknowns, and they're really significant."

Here's what officials say to expect from the 61.5-mile system scheduled to start in late 2013:

Quiet zones

Federal law requires train engineers to sound a horn of at least 96 decibels — a bit louder than a jackhammer — when approaching a roadway crossing that, like most of the 126 on the SunRail line, has only two gates. However, in a designated "quiet zone," where four gates block vehicle access from both sides of the track, horns can stay silent.

After Crist's budget veto of \$3.5 million that would have helped pay to beef up 12 crossings in Winter

