



TOWN OF NEEDHAM
TOWN HALL
Needham, MA 02492-2669

**Needham Line Commuter Rail
Proposed Service Modifications
Frequently Asked Questions**

Town staff and representatives of the Select Board meet regularly with community partners, including the MBTA. During a recent meeting, representatives of the MBTA suggested that the Town could request a pilot program to reduce train horn noise while the quiet zone design is underway. The potential modification is an option offered to the Town and not a proposal initiated by the MBTA. The Select Board will hold a hearing on June 25, 2024, to gauge community interest in such a proposal prior to making a decision whether or not to ask the MBTA to implement the pilot.

What is the proposed service modification?

The first and last trains on the Needham line would terminate at Needham Junction Station as opposed to Needham Heights. On these two trains, there would be no service to Needham Center or Needham Heights Stations. The specific modifications are:

- Weekdays: The 5:05 AM inbound train from Needham would depart from the Needham Junction Station and the 12:13 AM outbound from Boston would terminate at Needham Junction Station
- Weekends: The 6:10 AM inbound train from Needham would depart from the Needham Junction Station and the 10:15 PM outbound from South Station would terminate at Needham Junction Station

How many trains per day are affected?

Two trains per day – the first and last train of the day. The time of the first and last trains is different on the weekday versus the weekend schedule.

What is the purpose of this proposed service modification?

The Select Board asked the MBTA about options for reducing the number of train horns in Needham while the Quiet Zone project progresses. Specifically, the Board asked the T to identify solutions that could reduce train noise during the late night/early morning.

Will the service changes be permanent?

If the modifications are implemented, the Town may ask the MBTA to restore the trains in the future, such as after the implementation of a Quiet Zone.

Would the proposal reduce train noise in Needham?

For each of the two round trips impacted, the proposed modifications would eliminate eight of the current ten grade crossings at which engineers are required by federal regulation to sound the train horns. In total, sixteen horn soundings would be eliminated

daily at the earliest and latest hours. Train horns would still need to be sounded at the Golf Course crossing adjacent to the Hersey stop for the two modified round trips.

Why does the modified service not terminate at Hersey Station, eliminating the need for trains to sound their horns at the Golf Course crossing?

The Select Board discussed this concept with the MBTA. Keolis, the commuter rail operator, has reported that the train cannot turn at Hersey because that station is located in the middle of a signal block. We have asked the MBTA if that situation could change in the future and await their response.

When and for how long will trains be idling at the Needham Junction Station?

The two daily trains terminating at the Junction Station would idle for approximately 15 minutes as they prepare for the return trip to Boston. All other trains will continue to service Needham Junction as an intermediate station stop. In line with current operations, trains will not idle or be housed overnight in Needham.

How will the proposed modification impact noise near the Junction Station?

As noted above, twice daily, the train will idle for approximately 15 minutes at the Junction Station, which will account for a longer duration of noise than that which currently exists when the train services the station as an intermediate stop.

Will the late train remain at Junction Station overnight?

No. The train will idle for approximately 15 minutes and then return to Boston.

Has an environmental study been completed on the proposed modifications?

No.

Will the Select Board be voting on this proposal at the June 25th meeting?

No. The purpose of the June 25th public hearing is to allow the Select Board to get feedback from residents on the proposal.