

**DATE:** October 11, 2006

**TO:** Salt Lake City Planning Commission

**FROM:** Nick Britton, Principal Planner

**RE:** Staff Report for the October 11, 2006 Planning Commission Meeting

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**CASE#:** 400-06-15

**APPLICANT:** Salt Lake City Transportation Division

**STATUS OF APPLICANT:** City Staff

**PROJECT LOCATION:** 100 South at 700 West



**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** District 4, Council Member Nancy Saxton

**COMMUNITY COUNCIL:** Downtown Community Council

**SURROUNDING ZONING DISTRICTS:**

<b>Northwest</b>	G-MU Gateway Mixed Use District
<b>Northeast</b>	G-MU Gateway Mixed Use District
<b>Southeast</b>	G-MU Gateway Mixed Use District
<b>Southwest</b>	G-MU Gateway Mixed Use District

**SURROUNDING LAND USES AND OWNERS:**

<b>Northwest</b>	Government Building/Land Utah Department of Transportation
<b>Northeast</b>	Exempt The Denver & Rio Grande Company
<b>Southeast</b>	Office Howa Construction
<b>Southwest</b>	Industrial Manufacturing ATEN, Inc.

**REQUESTED ACTION/PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

The Salt Lake City Transportation Division is requesting that the City close a portion of 100 South at approximately 700 West. The portion of road requested for closure is approximately 120 feet in length, extending from the east line of the future UTA commuter rail right-of-way in the east to the west line of the Union Pacific right-of-way in the west (Exhibits A and B).

The requested street closure would close an unprotected at-grade railroad crossing, thereby creating a safer intersection and precluding an expensive rail crossing upgrade. The proposed closure would also facilitate development of the area and create a Quiet Zone that does not require trains to blow their horns when passing through the area. The road would be closed with a locked gate.

Currently, 100 South comes to a dead end at I-15/I-80 just west of the 100 South and 700 West intersection. The 700 West improvements end at the north end of the intersection. Under the proposed closure, a new outlet for 100 South would be created which would route traffic around the block and back to 600 West. Northbound traffic on 700 West will be permitted to make a u-turn on the remaining stub of 100 South, west of the proposed closure (see Exhibit B).

**APPLICABLE LAND USE REGULATIONS:**

**Salt Lake City Code:**

Chapter 2.58 regulates the disposition of surplus City-owned real property.

**Utah Code:**

Section 10-8-8 regulates a request for action to vacate, narrow, or change the name of street or alley.

**MASTER PLAN SPECIFICATIONS:**

There are three master plan documents that are applicable to this area. The land use policy document that guides development in this area is the Central Community Master Plan, adopted in 2005. For the area in which the closure is proposed, the Central Community Master Plan refers to the recommendations set forth in the Gateway Specific Plan, adopted in 1998. The intersection for this proposal is located in the I-15/Railroad Sub-district, which is home to the proposed Gateway Commons Park and the Amtrak station. The Gateway Specific Plan also indicates that this intersection is the northern edge of a proposed 80-acre tract of open space, between I-15 and the Union Pacific Railroad from 100 South to 900 South. The desire to establish more residential uses in the entire Gateway district makes a Quiet Zone all the more desirable. According to federal law, all trains must blow their horns at unprotected rail crossings. Closing the unprotected crossing at 100 South and 700 West would facilitate the creation of that Quiet Zone which would, in turn, create a better environment for residential uses.

The Transportation Master Plan's Major Street Plan identifies 100 South as a local street and does not anticipate the need to extend 100 South to the west because of I-15 or 700 West to the north because of the railroad tracks.

**COMMENTS:**

The comments received from pertinent City Departments/Divisions and the Community Council are attached to this staff report for review. The following is a summary of the comments/concerns received:

*City Department/Division Comments*

**A. Transportation Division (Barry Walsh)**

The Transportation Division is the petitioner, and fully support the proposed street closure.

**B. Building Services (Larry Butcher)**

Building Services had no comments on this petition.

**C. Police Department (Melina Nagai)**

The Police Department had no significant concerns about this proposal.

**D. Engineering**

No comments were received from engineering.

**E. Property Management**

No comments were received from Property Management.

**F. Fire Department**

No comments were received from the Fire Department.

**G. Public Utilities Department (Jason Brown)**

Public Utilities had no objection to the proposal as long as the department has access to the sewer, water, and/or storm drain within the closed portion of the road for maintenance.

**H. Department of Airports**

No comments were received from the Department of Airports.

**I. Planning Division**

Local streets can be dedicated or closed as needed to service adjacent private property, as determined to be necessary by the various City Departments and Divisions.

*Community Council Comments*

**A. Downtown Community Council**

The plan was presented by Staff to the August 23, 2006 meeting of the Downtown Community Council. No objections were raised and those in attendance were generally supportive of the proposal. There were questions about the timeline of this project and other closures. No other comments were received by Staff.

**ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:**

100 South is identified as a local street in the Salt Lake City Transportation Master Plan. It dead-ends to the west at I-15 just past 700 West. The partial street closure as requested would not take away any adjoining properties' access or frontage.

The proposed closure would create two "L"-shaped intersections. Traffic heading north on 700 West would be allowed to make a u-turn on the segment of 100 South west of the closure. After turning around, traffic would then head south on 700 West toward 200 South. Traffic heading west on 100 South would be forced to make a right turn onto a new road at approximately 700 West which would wrap back around to 600 West (See Exhibit B for a map of the proposed street closure and location of the proposed new road).

The primary purpose of the rail crossing closure is for safety and noise mitigation reasons. The present crossing is unprotected—there are no gates and no signals—and therefore would need to be upgraded unless the street closure is granted. The closure would increase safety at this site by eliminating an unprotected at-grade rail crossing and would establish a Quiet Zone that would aid in development of the area. The internal

departments that have endorsed the closure are Public Utilities, Police, and Transportation (who initiated the proposal). No comments were received from Fire, Building Services, Engineering, or Property Management.

The Planning Commission will need to review the street closure request as it relates to the following Salt Lake City Council Policy Guidelines for Street Closures and Findings.

**Salt Lake City Council Policy Guidelines for Street Closures and Findings:**

- 1. It is the policy of the City Council to close public streets and sell the underlying property. The Council does not close streets when the action would deny all access to other property.**

**Discussion:** Closing this portion of 100 South will not deny access to any adjacent property. Access to adjacent properties will still be available from other portions of 100 South, 600 West, and 700 West. The property would be retained as City-owned property.

**Finding:** The proposed street closure will not deny access to adjacent properties and the property will not be sold.

- 2. The general policy when closing a street is to obtain fair market value for the land, whether the abutting property is residential, commercial or industrial.**

**Discussion:** The property in question will not be sold because this proposal originated from within the City.

**Finding:** The property will be retained by Salt Lake City.

- 3. There should be sufficient public policy reasons that justify the sale and/or closure of a public street and it should be sufficiently demonstrated by the applicant that the sale and/or closure of the street will accomplish the stated public policy reasons.**

**Discussion:** The proposed closure will eliminate an unprotected railroad crossing and increase the safety of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The closure will also facilitate future development of the area by creating a Quiet Zone.

**Finding:** In addition to increasing the safety of the intersection, the closure will encourage future development in the area due to the presence of a Quiet Zone.

**4. The City Council should determine whether the stated public policy reasons outweigh alternatives to the closure of the street.**

**Discussion:** The public policy reasons supporting closure of the street are discussed in section 3 above. The alternative to closing the street is to keep it open and upgrade the intersection with a gate and flashing lights. This upgrade may also increase safety in the area, but closure of the intersection will provide for greater safety. The upgrade will not address the desire to create a Quiet Zone in the area for development reasons.

**Finding:** Given the increase in safety and the impact this closure would have on the potential redevelopment of the area, the best alternative is to close the road as proposed. This request complies with this standard.

Staff finds the following regarding petition 400-06-15, requesting 100 South be closed at the rail crossing at 700 West:

1. The Central Community Master Plan and the Gateway Specific Plan supports the development of the area as open space with parks and residential uses. A “quiet zone”, which would be created by this rail closure, would help facilitate that development.
2. The Salt Lake City Transportation Master Plan supports the closure.
3. The reduction in noise from train whistles helps the financing and livability of residential uses in the area.
4. Staff believes that there are few reasons vehicular or pedestrian traffic would need to cross at this intersection since no businesses or residents use the 100 South crossing at 700 West for access. Any vehicular traffic will be adequately routed back to through roads.
5. The long-term interests of the Gateway neighborhood and surrounding area are enhanced by this closure. It increases safety by eliminating an unprotected at-grade crossing and promotes development with the creation of a quiet zone.
6. The necessity for an engineer to blow a train whistle will be greatly reduced in the area through adoption of a Quiet Zone ordinance and upgrade of rail crossings.
7. The benefit to implementing Master Plan policies, including residential development, outweighs the potential traffic inconvenience.
8. There is sufficient public policy to support the closure of the 100 South rail crossing.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission forward a positive recommendation to the City Council regarding the closure of 100 South at the 700 West rail crossing to pedestrian and general vehicle access

- Attachments:
- Exhibit A – Letter Requesting Road Closure
  - Exhibit B – Maps of Proposed Closure
  - Exhibit C – Departmental/Division Comments
  - Exhibit D – Photographs

**Exhibit A**  
**Letter Requesting Road Closure**



**Exhibit B**  
**Maps of Proposed Closure**

**Exhibit C**  
**Department/Division Comments**

## **BUILDING PERMITS**

Nick,

I have no comments.

Larry

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## **TRANSPORTATION**

July 17, 2006

Nick Britton, Planning

Re: Petition 400-06-15, Partial closure of 100 South at 700 West.

The division of transportation review comments and recommendations are as follows:

We are the representatives for the city in this request to close the railroad crossing at 100 South 700 West in conjunction with the Rail Road track realignment and the Commuter Rail alignment impact to an at grade unprotected crossing, expanding the Quiet Zone program, and too preclude the cost of up grading this crossing.

Sincerely,

Barry Walsh

Cc     Kevin Young, P.E.  
          Kurt Larson, P.E.  
          Brad Stewart, Utilities  
          Brad Larson, Fire  
          Larry Butcher, Permits  
          Craig Smith, Engineering  
          John Spencer, Property Management.  
          File

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## **POLICE**

Thank you for the memo on this project proposal.

There are no significant police concerns with regard to this proposal.

### **Melinda Nagai**

Community Mobilization Specialist

Community Action Team

Salt Lake City Police

(801) 799-4638 office

(801) 799-4651 fax

[melinda.nagai@slcgov.com](mailto:melinda.nagai@slcgov.com)

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## **PUBLIC UTILITIES**

Dear Nick,

Public Utilities has review the above mentioned petition and takes no exception to the closure as long as there is access to the sewer, water and/or storm drain located within the closed portion of the road for maintenance.

Jason Brown, PE

**Exhibit D**  
**Photographs**



100 South looking east



100 South looking west



Looking northeast at the proposed location  
of the road back to 600 West



700 West looking south