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A Homeowner Describes the Noise Living Close to the Train Tracks

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A couple of weeks ago I wrote a column about NIMBYs, the “Not In My Backyard” crowd that moves to a home near the train, airport or highway and then complains about the noise.

I received a very thoughtful reply from one reader which I’d like to share, in edited form, to give us all a different perspective on this issue of housing vs. transportation:

“I write this as someone who lives 500 feet from the Waterbury (train) branch, who gets regularly blasted by the train whistle. The situation is not as simple as someone moved next to the train and then complained about it. Sometimes people make decisions to live somewhere based on what they can afford.

I moved from Queens, New York to Connecticut in 1988 and spent the next 11 years renting rooms in

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people's houses because that was all I could afford at the time. Some houses were on quiet streets. One was 500 feet from the Merritt Parkway, which was a steady "woosh," but bearable, as it was almost like white noise.

The worst highway situation was when I lived in Fairfield, 250 feet from I-95. This house is near the approach to the rest area, and truck drivers downshift with the resulting engine roar.

The rent for a bedroom in the house was \$250 per month in 1993, but as low as it was, I couldn't take the noise any longer, and eight months later, moved to a house in Stratford that was 1,000 feet away from Route 8, a bit noisy due to the concrete pavement at the time, but far quieter than living by I-95.

I bought my condo (in Milford) in 1999 because that was what I could afford at the time, and I still live here because moving to a larger unit (hopefully in a quieter location) is out of my price range. When I bought it, I was vaguely aware that the railroad tracks were nearby, but that was not a factor in my purchase.

My living room faces the train, and I can see it pass by in the winter when the leaves are off the trees. My bedroom is shielded from direct view of the train because it faces a different direction and another building attached to mine is between my bedroom and the train, but the noise is still plenty loud.

Prior to the recent schedule changes, the last train passed at 1:30 a.m. and the first one in the morning passed at 4:30 a.m. With the new trains on the schedule, those times are now 2 and 4 a.m. My complex gets two sets of whistle blasts because we are between two crossings.

While one could say that people knew the train (or highway) was here when we bought (or rented), I can also put forth the idea that the railroad needs to recognize that a neighborhood grew up around it and should do its best to be a good neighbor.

Sincerely,

Tom

Milford, Connecticut

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Jim Cameron has been a Darien resident for more than 25 years. He is the founder of the [Commuter Action Group](#), sits on the [Merritt Parkway Conservancy](#) board and also serves on the Darien RTM and as program director for Darien TV79. You can reach him at CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com.