

# EVANSTON ROUNDTABLE

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## Neighborhood Makes Noise About Noise

By Anna Sanders

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In a community-organized gathering on July 1, residents of the neighborhood east of the Central Street Metra station discussed with Metra workers possible solutions to the frequency and volume of the station's announcements.

After their conversation, the workers lowered the volume of two of the station's speakers. Metra spokesman Michael Gillis said that the workers believed the neighbors "seemed to be pleased with what was done."

"We received a complaint about volume, so our guys were up there adjusting the volume," explained Mr. Gillis. He added that the Metra occasionally gets complaints from various stations, including the Central Street station, and that Metra workers are dispatched to the stations and the volume is lowered accordingly.

Residents became concerned last October when they said the station's arrival reminders and policy announcements had become louder and more frequent.

"It's very loud," said Betsy Baer. "I can hear it all the way to my house which is a block away."

Mr. Gillis said that he did not know if the volume had recently increased. "But," he said, "in the past 18 months we've been switching over to an automated system." Mr. Gillis said that the announcements had been a little more frequent in the past week because of changes in Metra procedures as a result of the Taste of Chicago.

Alderman Jane Grover, 7th Ward, in which the station is located, was present at the neighborhood discussion and has been mediating community concerns since the problem began. "She's been great," said Natalie Wainwright, whose house is directly across the street from the platform.

During the discussion, Metra workers attempted to placate the neighbors by explaining the necessity for the frequency and volume of the announcements to Ald. Grover and residents. They said the announcements were intended to keep passengers safe.



Natalie Wainwright, Betsy Baer, Caroline Winkler, Alderman Jane Grover, 7th Ward, and Nancy Lee meet across from the station on July 1 to discuss the volume and frequency of announcements coming from the Central Street Metra station.

Mr. Gillis said he did not know the specific language of the Americans with Disabilities Act, but said that the announcements were a safety measure. "It's more about customer service," he added. "It's a provision to help [them]."

However, Ald. Grover noted to the present workers, "Everything you need to know is in writing on signs," on the station's platform and that the station's speakers are directed to the "residential neighborhood as opposed to the commercial district."

Ms. Wainwright said she and her family can hear the announcements loud and clear inside her house. She added the announcements are most irksome during rush hours, when arrival reminders begin six minutes before the train gets to the station or when trains are running late. When asked, Ms. Wainwright said she was also worried about how the noise from the speakers would affect her home's property value. "Who'd move into a house with this kind of noise problem?" she said.

Nancy Lee, whose house is also across from the station, said she is most bothered by the ringing that declares a train's arrival. "There's all sorts of sounds we're concerned with ... [But] we're here for the announcements."

The neighborhood seemed pleased with the volume change made. "It's not perfect, but it's a big improvement," said Ms. Wainwright. "I can work in my garden again."

Editors Note: Natalie Wainwright is a proofreader for and contributor to the

RoundTable

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