

Joyce Smith

From: Carol Abernethy on behalf of Cal Horton
Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2004 1:27 PM
To: 'shawn.thompson@duke.edu'
Cc: Sally Greene (w); Bill Strom; Cam Hill; Dorothy Verkerk ; Ed Harrison; Jim Ward (w) ; Kevin Foy; Mark Kleinschmidt ; 'Jim Ward'; 'Edith Wiggins'; Toni Pendergraph; Bruce Heflin; Cal Horton; Flo Miller; Joyce Smith; Ralph Karpinos; Sonna Loewenthal (sloewenthal@nc.rr.com); Owen Franklin; Catherine Lazorko; Emily Dickens
Subject: Citizen Comment RE: Jake Brakes within Chapel Hill city limits

A copy of your email message has been forwarded to each Council Member.

Carol Abernethy
 Exec. Asst., Manager's Office
 Town of Chapel Hill

-----Original Message-----

From: Shawn Thompson [mailto:sct4@duke.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2004 11:40 AM
To: Town Council
Subject: Jake Brakes within Chapel Hill city limits

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Shawn Thompson and I am the owner of the property at 800 S. Columbia St. I am writing to ask for your assistance in dealing with the unreasonable noise caused by dump trucks travelling on Columbia St. In particular, I am writing about the use of "jake brakes" on the stretch of Columbia between Westwood St. and the intersection of 15/501/54.

Jake brakes help trucks save brakes down steep inclines by using the engine to slow the vehicle. Unfortunately, this process produces an extremely loud noise from the engine and exhaust system. Because of this noise, many towns and communities throughout the country have expanded their noise ordinances to include these types of devices. I am happy to followup with examples, if you like.

If a jake brake was truly necessary on S. Columbia St. then I would not have an issue. However, I have observed that it is only a subset of the trucks that actually use them. Most trucks use their regular brakes going down the hill with no apparent problems. It is just a few of the trucks (the same ones every day) that continue to use the jake brake when travelling south on Columbia. Likewise, these trucks are usually travelling well above the posted 35 MPH speed limit, making them unsafe as well as noisy. It is also true that the hill itself is a relatively short one such that using the regular brakes for a limited time should not cause undue wear. It seems logical that a truck travelling at or near the posted speed limit should not have the need to use a jake brake. I believe, too, that some truckers are using their brakes for entertainment rather than necessity. It is well known that truckers like to use their jake brakes because of the noise (similar to the way Harley riders like their bikes to be loud).

I recognize as well that this could also be a muffler problem instead of a jake brake problem. The company that makes the brakes, Jacobs Vehicle Systems, has provided some interesting information at http://www.jakebrake.com/content.php4?doc_uid=17#FAQ9. However, discussions I have had with the Chapel Hill Police Department about enforcement of the noise ordinance and muffler requirements have thus far generated little progress.

I would also have no issue if this were only a temporary problem but I fear that this is not the case. With the seemingly continuous construction at the University, I realize that the steady flow of trucks coming off campus is not likely to abate any time soon.

I have spent two years listening to this unreasonable noise and am ready for a positive change. I ask that the Mayor and Town Council do one of two things: either pass an ordinance against jake brakes within the city limits at the first possible opportunity or ask the police department to start enforcing the muffler and noise requirements stipulated by the state and town.

I am happy to meet in person to explain my position further. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,
Shawn Thompson
800 S. Columbia St.
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
919-225-0523