

New Jersey Department of Transportation

TRAFFIC NOISE MANAGEMENT POLICY

PREAMBLE:

Traffic noise is the most pervasive and most acutely perceived negative impact of transportation on the quality of life for residents living next to our highways. Our roads are the most intensively used in the nation. As our state continues to develop and as we strive to maximize the efficiency of our existing highways, there will be an ever increasing noise impact on the quality of life for our residential neighbors.

Therefore, the Department must adopt a realistic, comprehensive policy which recognizes that noise impacts of traffic growth cannot be eliminated. However, just as we strive to make incremental improvements in the safety and efficiency of our highway network, traffic noise must be managed through a similar incremental, comprehensive approach, to reduce its pervasive impacts on our state's residents.

POLICY:

NJDOT will follow a comprehensive approach to manage traffic noise encompassing the following three areas:

1. Reducing noise at the source
2. Education regarding traffic noise and appropriate land use planning
3. Measures to block traffic noise

1. REDUCING NOISE AT THE SOURCE:

- ◆ Coordinate with the state police to insure that vehicles on our highways operate with adequate muffler systems and comply with existing federal noise regulations.

- ◆ Integrate the Traffic Noise Management Program with the selection of pavement types for new roadways and for resurfacings, by considering open graded noise reducing pavements for NJDOT roadways traversing residential land use areas.

2. **EDUCATION REGARDING TRAFFIC NOISE AND APPROPRIATE LAND USE PLANNING:**

- ◆ Conduct a comprehensive education program for citizens, legislators and municipal planning and engineering officials regarding:
 - The nature of traffic noise - what it is, what can be done about it; and, eliminating some common misunderstandings.
 - Designing residential developments adjacent to highways to avoid future noise impacts.
- ◆ Propose legislation amending the Municipal Land Use Law to require developers to include measures to address traffic noise impacts for new residential developments proposed along state roads.

3. **MEASURES TO BLOCK TRAFFIC NOISE:**

- ◆ NJDOT will follow Federal Code 23 CFR 772 in analyzing noise impacts and developing cost effective mitigation measures. This regulation describes two sets of circumstances, Type I and Type II, for which noise studies are performed:

Type I - Noise impact studies for new roadways and improvements to existing roadways. These studies are a required component of project development and noise impact abatement is an integral part of the project scope.

Type II - Noise impact studies of existing roadways to improve quality of life, where no transportation improvement project is planned. These studies and construction of mitigation are not required to satisfy any Federal mandate.

- ◆ Noise barriers will be built where they are desired by the community and meet the benefit and cost effectiveness criteria set forth in the appendix to this policy.
- ◆ In circumstances where a noise barrier would exceed cost effective criteria, communities will be allowed to volunteer a non-monetary contribution (easements, earthen fill material, etc.) in the amount necessary to bring costs to below our ceiling.
- ◆ When cost effective, include absorbing barrier surface treatments whenever an existing residential area is opposite a proposed noise barrier.
- ◆ As part of the Governor's "New Jersey First" vision for including aesthetic enhancements in highway projects, use architectural treatments and context sensitive design in the noise barrier design process.
- ◆ Establish a program to enhance the appearance of existing barriers through architectural treatments and landscaping.
- ◆ Where noise barriers are not feasible, public perception of traffic noise impacts will be addressed, when requested by the community, through landscaping measures and/or visual screening to reduce the perceived impacts of traffic on the quality of life.
- ◆ When feasible, provide open space buffers adjacent to highways in accordance with the Governor's Open Space Initiative.

TYPE II NOISE PROGRAM:

As a quality of life measure, the Department will evaluate and propose cost effective noise reduction measures for residential properties impacted by highway construction which was not evaluated under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and, therefore, not considered for noise impact mitigation (generally prior to 1975). These communities are contiguous to a finite number of freeway miles and mitigation is currently estimated at \$200 million to address.

- ◆ The purpose of this program is to address the long standing noise problems of communities which pre-existed the construction of these highways.
- ◆ Consideration of mitigation for residential development which occurred after highway construction will be on a case by case basis where the development is intermixed, or adjacent to, pre-highway construction and mitigation is incidental to protecting pre-existing homes.
- ◆ Construction of noise mitigation will require a supporting resolution from the affected community.
- ◆ The eligibility criteria for the Type II program are:
 1. Residential communities located along limited access highways built before traffic noise mitigation was required by NEPA (construction completed during or before 1975).
 2. A Type I Noise Study was never completed for the highway section under consideration.
- ◆ The priority order for conducting noise studies and constructing mitigation is:
 1. Ongoing studies.
 2. Communities left out of the ongoing Type II Noise Study projects because they declined to cost share.
 3. Eligible corridors with previous NJDOT investment in data and analysis.
 4. Other eligible corridors based on the age and magnitude of the noise problem.
- ◆ The Department shall pursue Federal participation in the Type II program with the understanding that Federal participation will be limited as described in 23 CFR 772.
- ◆ The Department will program funds to address this problem within a finite period. Once completed, no additional Type II noise mitigation will ever be considered for existing highways.