Fredericksburg Extension (Fred Ex) Project

Noise Barrier Frequently Asked Questions

ABOUT NOISE BARRIERS

What is a noise barrier?
A noise barrier is a solid barrier between the highway and homes along the highway that is designed to reduce traffic noise. The maximum height of a noise barrier is 30 feet.

How are the potential locations for noise barriers selected?
The potential locations that are selected for a noise barrier are locations at which the noise level will exceed 66 decibels or will exceed by 10 decibels or more as a result of a road project.

What is a "decibel"?
A "decibel" is the unit used to measure the intensity of a sound or a degree of loudness.

Who pays for noise barriers?
Noise barriers for the Fred Ex Project will be funded by Transurban.

VOTING ON NOISE BARRIERS

I am a resident of one of the locations that have been selected as a potential location for a noise barrier. Will I have a say on whether the noise barrier is constructed?
If you are determined to be a "benefited receptor unit owner and/or resident" (in other words, you would benefit from the noise barrier), you will be asked to vote on the noise barrier. Voting will begin in the early fall of 2020 after the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have approved the Final Noise Abatement Decision Report. The results of the vote will be incorporated into the final noise barrier plans, which will be available in early winter.

I am not in an area selected as a potential location for a noise barrier to be constructed, but I would like for one to be considered in my area. Can I propose that a noise barrier be constructed where I live?
VDOT's noise barrier evaluation process follows federal regulations set by the FHWA. These regulations dictate how locations are assessed for noise barriers and how a determination is reached to install one. For more information about the steps involved in the noise barrier evaluation process for residents, visit *bit.ly/VDOTNoiseBarriers*.

How is the location of a proposed noise barrier determined?
As part of the environmental analysis conducted during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis, VDOT performs a noise impact assessment. This includes identifying noise receptors (such as residences, schools, parks, etc.), conducting noise monitoring in the field, and identifying impacts. The proposed noise barrier locations are established from this assessment.

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Who determines whether a resident is considered a "benefited receptor"?
Engineers use computer modeling to determine which residents qualify as benefited receptors. The modeling is based on factors such loudest hour of the day, topography, distance from the road to residences, and the sound that is produced by different types of vehicles. Benefited receptors are receptors shown in the noise study to have a predicted noise reduction of 5 decibels or more from the proposed noise barriers.

Do non-resident property owners get to vote, too? Is their vote weighted the same as homeowners?
Non-resident property owners who are determined to be benefit receptors will be eligible to vote. Their votes will be given a weight of 3. As a comparison, the votes of homeowners who are also residents will be given a weight of 5.

Do renters get to vote, too? Is their vote weighted the same as homeowners?
Renters who are determined to be benefit receptors will be eligible to vote. Their votes will be given a weight of 2. As a comparison, the votes of homeowners who are also residents will be given a weight of 5.

How does the voting work for residents of an apartment building?
The maximum height of a noise barrier is 30 feet. Residences that are higher than the final "top" elevation of the noise barrier are not considered to be benefited from the noise barrier. Residences that are below the elevation of the top of the noise barrier will be considered benefit receptors and the owner of the multifamily dwelling unit will be granted one vote per benefited unit.

How are noise opinion surveys issued?
Noise opinion surveys will be sent by certified mail. If an insufficient number of initial noise opinion surveys are returned within 21 days, a follow-up noise opinion survey will be mailed. Residents will have 14 days to return the follow-up noise opinion survey.

Where can I find information that will help me decide how to vote?
Your noise opinion survey will let you know where to find information on noise barriers.

How long will I have to respond?
You will have 21 days to respond to the initial noise opinion survey, and, if necessary, 14 days to respond to the follow-up noise opinion survey, beginning with the day you receive the noise opinion survey.

How is the decision made on whether or not to construct the noise barriers?
After the votes have been collected, the noise barriers at each location will be analyzed based on the number of votes and the weights of the votes. VDOT will decide whether to construct the noise barrier based on results from the voting process.

What minimum response is required?
The noise opinion survey will have instructions on responding. You may vote either yes or no, or you can simply not vote. Non-responses are not considered to be respondents. At least 50 percent of distributed noise opinion surveys on the first attempt are required for the result to be finalized. The majority of responses after the second attempt will determine the outcome of the vote.

When and how will I be notified of the decision?
VDOT will prepare an addendum to the noise study showing the results of the voting and how VDOT reached a determination on the construction of a noise barrier at each location. The addendum must be approved by FHWA and when that's done, the addendum will be made available to the public.

NOISE BARRIER SPECIFICATIONS AND AESTHETICS

What are the dimensions of a noise barrier?
The maximum height of a noise barrier is 30 feet.

How can I see what the noise barrier will look like?
The design and aesthetic of the noise barriers being proposed as part of the Fred Ex Project are predetermined. Benefited receptors will receive a photo of the proposed wall design along with their noise opinion survey.

NOISE BARRIER INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE

What can we expect during the noise barrier installation in our community? Night work? Noise? Dust?
VDOT is concerned with noise generated during the construction phase of projects. Noise barrier construction may include some night work. Steps will be taken to mitigate noise, but residents may experience some level of noise during barrier construction. VDOT follows its 2007 Road and Bridge Specifications, Section 107.16(b.3) to reduce the impact of construction noise on the surrounding community.

How much vegetation will we lose?
Vegetation will be removed as required to construct the walls. This will be limited as much as possible and is typically approximately a 10-foot buffer on each side of the wall.

Who will maintain the noise barriers?
VDOT maintains and repairs noise barriers that are built on State rights-of-way.

REFERENCE POINTS FOR QUESTIONS

For questions or concerns about the noise barrier voting or installation process, please contact:

- Kelly Hannon, VDOT, **kelly.hannon@vdot.virginia.gov**, **540-374-3344**
- Brent McKenzie, 95 Express Lanes, **bmckenzie@transurban.com**, **571-326-5609**

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