

I-395 HOV Ramp and Auxiliary Lane Extension
Questions and Answers – Noise Walls

1. How did VDOT determine noise walls were an option for this project?

This project is federally funded and follows federal policies. In accordance with the federal policy a preliminary noise study to determine if noise abatement (noise walls) may be needed was completed by VDOT in December of 2011. The study indicated that noise walls needed to be further considered on this project. Also in accordance with the federal policy a more in-depth noise study has been completed based upon the final design. This study, which is located on the VDOT project website, further determined that noise walls were warranted, feasible, and reasonable for this project.

2. I live in a multi-story building and the residences below me are considered benefitted and receive a vote, but I do not. Why am I not considered benefitted like they are?

The maximum height of a noise barrier is 30 feet. For multi-story multi-family residences the noise analyst draws a horizontal line from the top of the proposed noise barrier directly to the multi-story unit and analyzes where the line intersects the building and below. If a residence is located above this line, it is not considered to be benefitted because noise is still reaching the receptor by getting over the noise wall.

3. How does VDOT know who to send the voting surveys to?

Once the benefitted residences were identified (see figures in the noise report), mail forwarding addresses were verified with the HOA/Civic Associations (if they were available) and were also verified with the City of Alexandria website for real estate properties. Those properties that had a mail forwarding address were assumed to be rented properties and two surveys were sent, one to the residence and one to the forwarding address.

4. When will the surveys go out to benefitted receptors and when are they to be returned?

The survey ballots will go out on December 2nd. These ballots will arrive by certified mail and will come with a pre-stamped return envelope. Simply fill out the ballot and return it by the deadline of **January 2nd** and it will be counted. Only returned voting ballots will be counted.

5. How is the final decision made on whether or not to construct the noise walls?

After the votes have been collected, each wall will be analyzed individually based on the votes it receives. Variables such as location of receptors relative to the wall, whether a vote is being cast as an owner or a renter, and whether or not the voter is impacted or just simply benefitted will be taken into account when reviewing the ballots. VDOT will then use professional judgment based on the noise study, votes received from benefitted residences, and other public outreach to

determine whether or not to proceed with constructing the noise wall. An example of how professional judgment may be put into practice for the decision is described below.

From Section 12.4.1 of the VDOT Highway Traffic Noise Impact Analysis Guidance Manual:

Weighting system: Professional judgment shall be exercised when tallying the votes before a final determination is made. Examples of exercising professional judgment include, but are not limited to: the votes of impacted and benefited receptors shall be given more consideration versus the non-impacted and benefited receptors; the votes of impacted and benefited front row receptors shall be given more consideration versus the second row impacted and benefited receptors; and property owners shall be given more consideration versus the renters. A quantitative example is provided: If 10 front row impacted and benefited receptors vote in favor of the barrier and 12 second row impacted and benefited receptors vote against the barrier; less than 50% of the community are in favor of the barrier. However, greater consideration to the front receptors should be given as they are proposed to experience greater noise levels. Consult VDOT Central Office Noise Abatement Staff for further guidance.

6. How can the public know what VDOT based their final decision on?

VDOT will put together an addendum for the current noise study showing the results of the voting, including how each received ballot voted, and how a final determination on the construction of the noise walls was reached. This addendum must then be approved by the FHWA and once that is done it will be made available to the public. It is possible that some noise walls will be built, while others will not, depending on how the voting goes.

7. What information is available for me to review on this matter?

VDOT posted the FHWA approved noise study on November 18, adding to the other noise abatement resources on the project's webpage. Many of the questions answered here are described in additional detail within those resources if you have further questions. VDOT is also available to help answer any questions during this time frame to help voting citizens make an informed decision.

8. I've seen some construction going on already on I-395. How could construction have already started when we haven't voted yet?

The current construction on I-395 is on the inside shoulder of the northbound lanes. This work is being done to strengthen the pavement on that shoulder so that traffic may be shifted at a later date to allow work on the outside shoulder of I-395. This work has to be done for this project whether or not the noise walls are built. No construction involving the noise walls will be done until a final determination has been made by VDOT and approved by the FHWA.

9. I'm looking at the maps in the final noise study and I see a bunch of colored dots on the maps, what do these mean?

Each dot represents residences that are of interest in the study. The colors represent the following:

- Dark Blue – Impacted and Benefited with 7 dB(A) or more noise reduction
- Light Blue – Impacted and Benefited with 5-6 dB(A) noise reduction
- Green – Not impacted, but benefited (5 dB(A) or more noise reduction)
- Maroon – Impacted and not benefited (less than 5 dB(A) noise reduction)
- Yellow – Not benefited or impacted

Dark blue, light blue, and green dots indicate areas where votes will be collected. These dots do not necessarily represent one individual vote, but may represent multiple votes in the area to avoid a cluttered map.