



MEMORANDUM

To | Wlad Wlassowsky, City of Oakland
From | Victoria Eisen
Date | January 3, 2013
Project | Oakland Caldecott
Subject | **Questions/Answers at 9/27/12 Soundwall Study Meeting**

This memo documents the questions that were posed by participants at the September 27, 2012 meeting to discuss the potential to pursue further noise studies on the SR 24 corridor near the Caldecott Tunnel, and the panelists' responses. These panelists included the following:

- WW: Wlad Wlassowsky, Transportation Services Division Manager, City of Oakland
- GK: Glenn Kinoshita, Air/Noise Studies Branch Chief, Caltrans District 4
- LM: Lydia Mac, Senior Landscape Architect, Caltrans District 4
- PD: Pablo Daroux, Principal Acoustics Engineer, Wilson Ihrig & Associates

Q1: What is the relationship between the actual noise measurements in Rockridge and the Alameda CTC's thresholds for soundwall construction?

A1: The pre-NBSSR study measurements at various locations fell below the Alameda CTC's criteria of 65dB, sometimes by 1-2 dB. The worst-case modeling predictions looking at the future traffic situation as part of the study evaluation are higher. -PD

Q2: Why does Alameda CTC's policy require 100% of first row houses and 75% of other houses expected to experience a 5dB sound reduction with a soundwall in place to sign a petition while the proposed City policy requires just 2/3 of houses projected to experience at least a 5dB sound reduction?

A2: Alameda CTC's policy guides the competition for funding for soundwall construction, whereas the policy presented at the meeting will guide the allocation of funding for soundwall studies, namely a Noise Barrier Scope Summary Report (NBSSR). CTC has no policy for advancing studies. -WW

Q3: Would a transparent soundwall reflect noise differently than a standard concrete block design?

A3: No. -GK

Q4: Will the soundwalls be sufficiently effective to warrant the cost of studies and construction?

A4: The pre-NBSSR determined the construction of projects #7 and 8 (Eastbound Vicente to Broadway and Westbound Ross to Telegraph) would be cost effective based on federal standards. Each does not exceed \$45,000 per dwelling unit projected to experience a minimum 5 dB noise reduction (based on 2002 costs). -GK

- Q5: How would soundwalls constructed on SR 24 surrounding the Rockridge BART station change the experience of passengers waiting on the platform?
- A5: Caltrans does not have much experience in situations like these, but soundwalls in this location are expected to result in bouncing noise between them. -GK
- Q6: Can “jake” brakes be prohibited in this section of freeway?
- A6: No. Caltrans would be faced with a legal response from Jacobs Vehicle Systems, the “Jake Brake” manufacturer, if they prohibited a trademarked, allowable compression braking system in a selected area. Jacobs says the problem lies with poorly working or illegally altered mufflers on trucks, not the system itself. -GK
- Q7: Does Caltrans have experience manipulating noise to make it sound more melodic?
- A7: No. -GK
- Q8: Some of the highway through Rockridge is elevated. In these locations, the noise is louder underneath. Will soundwalls benefit these situations?
- A8: Soundwalls will not reduce noise directly under highway overpasses, but nearby houses will benefit. -GK and PD
- Q9: Is there data on the effect of soundwalls on increasing or decreasing property values of nearby homes?
- A9: Not that I’m aware of. -GK
- Q10: If there is support by property owners for soundwalls or soundwall studies along only a portion of the length of either project, could a soundwall study be done on a smaller segment?
- A10: Yes it is possible and we do alterations to soundwalls to make them cost effective. It would depend on the will of our partners and Alameda CTC. -GK
- Q11: If Highway 24 were being built today, would soundwalls be required?
- A11: If built today, the question would be answered during the project’s environmental phase. Noise would be identified as a significant impact and mitigations including soundwalls considered. If during the public participation portion, people decide that although soundwalls quell the noise they are not desirable, a decision could be made by the City and Caltrans, that the soundwalls would not be built. -WW
- Q12: Would soundwalls be effective at reducing particulate matter?
- A12: Yes, soundwalls will block some, but not all, particulate matter. -GK
- Q13: Can the funding under consideration for this noise study be used for something else if the studies are not pursued?
- A13: Yes, if the money is not used for noise studies, it will be used for capital projects further down the Caldecott Tunnel Settlement Agreement project list. -WW

Q14: What was the source of funding of the transparent soundwalls recently erected on I-580 in San Leandro and the cost per linear foot?

A14: The transparent soundwall on I-580 in San Leandro was on the original soundwall retrofit program list from the mid-1990s, and Caltrans funded it. I do not know the cost per foot right now but can look it up. -GK

Q15: How long after the NBSSR for the transparent soundwalls on I-580 in San Leandro was completed were the soundwalls constructed?

A15: Twenty years.