

# Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL  
THROUGH: Legislative Committee  
FROM: City Manager  
SUBJECT: Update on Soundwalls in Pasadena

December 8, 1998

## RECOMMENDATION

This report is for information only.

## BACKGROUND

In 1989, the Caltrans Retrofit Soundwall List was developed as a priority list of soundwall construction projects. The 1989 priority list was created after scoring every segment of freeway in California based on noise and other factors. Los Angeles County freeway scores were lower than many other parts of the State and were therefore placed at the bottom of this priority list. As funding dwindled over the years, Los Angeles County was left with the largest number of unfunded soundwall needs (approximately \$180 million).

In 1997, SB 45 (Kopp) significantly changed the way in which these projects were funded and removed funding responsibility from Caltrans to local county programming agencies. The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) now partners with Caltrans on soundwall projects. Caltrans evaluates the need, ranks or prioritizes the projects, and designs and constructs the soundwalls and LACMTA programs the funds needed for design and construction. Funding for soundwall projects is based on a four-year funding cycle, the number of soundwalls Caltrans staff can deliver, and other regional funding priorities.

The City of Pasadena tracked several soundwall funding bills over the past year, one of which made it to the Governor's desk, AB 1686 (Wildman). On September 21, 1998 the Governor vetoed AB 1686, which would have provided 50 percent funding for projects on the 1989 Priority List to come from the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) prior to these funds being allocated for statewide programs. Soundwalls in the City of Pasadena are not on this 1989 Priority List (also referred to Tier I through Tier IV), but were added to a subsequent list (Tier V). A map is attached highlighting Pasadena's proposed soundwalls (Exhibit 1). Even with this legislation, it remains unclear as to which priority projects come first. Similar legislation may be introduced next year and the LACMTA Board anticipates adopting a soundwall funding policy.

The LACMTA has identified \$34.8 million for soundwalls to be allocated over the next four years. However, the list of projects on the 1989 priority list that are ahead of Pasadena's projects will cost approximately \$180 million. There is no clear indication as to when or how the remaining projects will be funded.

Soundwalls were once constructed at a height of approximately eight feet. Since that time height requirements increased to approximately twelve feet to compensate for larger trucks. The northernmost section of soundwalls located along the 210 freeway north of the 134/210 interchange will have the height of the soundwall increased approximately four feet as part of the construction of soundwalls along this segment. (Please see Exhibit 1 attached.)

It should also be noted that two additional requests for soundwalls in the Pasadena area have been made recently. One request came from the Norton Simon Museum (at the 210 Freeway and 134 Freeway interchange), and the other from the East Arroyo Resident's Association (for the west portion of the 210 freeway north of Mountain Street). When a request is made for a soundwall and is not included on the priority list of soundwalls identified for construction, the Department of Transportation conducts a noise study. If the noise study shows that the area meets the criteria for a soundwall, funding and construction schedules are identified. The Norton Simon Museum request did not meet the State's noise criteria; the East Arroyo Resident's Association's request did meet the State's noise criteria and has been submitted for funding. It is not yet clear when a decision by the LACMTA on the status of funding the East Arroyo Resident's Association request will be made.

The Acting Public Works and Transportation Director recently received a letter from the State Department of Transportation indicating that two candidate soundwall projects will be studied in the City of Pasadena. The two study areas are along both sides of the 210 (Foothill) Freeway, one between Marengo Avenue and east of El Molino Avenue and the other between Los Robles Avenue and Wilson Avenue. The letter does not indicate when these studies will be conducted.

Additionally, these two soundwall projects were included with another in a High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) package submitted from Caltrans to LACMTA in June 1998. The third project is on both sides of the 210 (Foothill) Freeway between North Rosemead Boulevard and North Baldwin Avenue. All three of these projects are either on the Retrofit Soundwall List or on the HOV program list. However, projects that made a list aren't guaranteed funding at this time.

The City of Pasadena requested a soundwall study be conducted along the east side of the 110 (Pasadena) Freeway, south of Glenarm Street and adjacent to Blair High School. Caltrans notified the City that the noise analysis has been completed and that this location is not eligible for soundwalls because the sound readings fell below the standard criteria for schools.

Finally, there are soundwalls proposed for the 710 Gap Closure Project in Pasadena, once that highway project is approved.

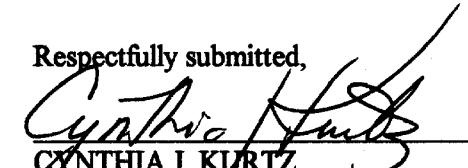
**FISCAL IMPACT**

Since proposed legislation was not signed by the Governor, the process of funding soundwall projects remains in the hands of the LACMTA. The LACMTA may adopt a soundwall funding policy early next year. It is unclear at this time whether such a policy would provide any benefit for the Pasadena-area soundwalls.

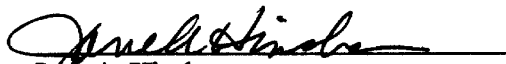
The question has been raised as to splitting up the construction of soundwall segments so that each segment could be considered separately. Approval remains in the hands of the LACMTA. Caltrans would prefer to construct entire segments to reduce the number of complaints from residents who aren't getting their portion constructed. However, they will comply with such a request if the City will handle complaints arising from citizens for the unconstructed portions.

Council has asked if it is possible for the City to fund the construction of soundwalls in Pasadena. Funds that could be utilized for soundwall construction are now being spent on safety-related projects. Should the Council wish to fund soundwalls, a determination would need to be made as to which safety projects would not be completed. The estimated cost for the soundwalls on the 210 freeway total approximately \$4 million.

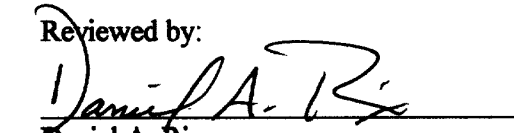
Respectfully submitted,

  
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