

Summary of the Questions/Comments Received and
ODOT Responses at the May 19, 2016 Public Meeting
Held at the Chamberlin Hill Intermediate School (600
West Yates Ave., Findlay, OH 45840) to Discuss the
Propose Noise Wall Project along Western Avenue

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The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by ODOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 11, 2015, and executed by FHWA and ODOT.

Public: “Were alternative materials considered instead of a wall, like trees?”

ODOT: “Vegetative screening doesn’t do anything to reduce noise, so we didn’t look at that, but we have different materials for the wall, like concrete and fiberglass so that’s pretty much our options for noise reductions.”

Public: So, the wall materials will be concrete, and something else?”

ODOT: Fiberglass is the other option, it’ll be one or the other.”

Public: “Is this material that will need maintenance over time, because I have witnessed walls that need extreme maintenance, there is plants growing through them, it’s very unattractive and terrible to drive past them...so, who maintains it, and how often does it get maintained?”

ODOT: “ODOT is building the wall so ODOT will be responsible for maintaining it and we expect our walls to last 25 or 30 years.”

Public: “In the decibel evaluation, was that all current time period, or was there any projection into the future?...more traffic and changes on the highway and so forth. My second part to that question is if this doesn’t go through today, is there a limitation on when the subject can be brought up again?”

ODOT: “For the traffic report, we used the existing traffic. If you double the traffic, it only raises the noise 3 decibels so it is not really going to change the design of the wall we have right now but we can update it, so if the traffic is a little more than what we have right now, that’ll be okay and it won’t really change the design that we have right now, effective for the community.”

Public: “And the second part of the question is, is there a limit to whether or not this can be brought up, or taken into resurvey?”

ODOT: “That’s a really good question, if it doesn’t go through now, will you have another chance, is that what you’re saying?”

Public: “Yes, like next year, or 5 years. Is there a limit to when we can bring it to discussion again?”

ODOT: “That’s a really good question, I would say it’s really unlikely that if you don’t get it now, then you may not. Unless, we add lanes to the highway which would cause for a revisit to the community and we’ll deal with the noise wall opportunity if we don’t get the 50% today.”

Public: “Was the noise from the airport considered in the consideration for this wall?”

ODOT: “The noise from the airport was not considered for the study, just the highway traffic.”

Public: “What percentage of benefitted receptors properties’ pre-date the current configuration of Route 15?”

ODOT: “That’s a really good question. I don’t think we calculated that percentage, but if I had to take a guess, I would say at least 50%. We don’t have a policy on what percentage of your community has to pre-date the freeway route for us to move forward with analysis. We saw that there was a good percent, maybe 30, 40, 50% of the community pre-dated the four lane, divided freeway, so we thought we don’t have anything telling us not to look forward with analysis and see who was interested in a noise wall, so that’s what we did.”

Public: “You mentioned the decibels going up and 3 decibels every time, and if they’re projecting that the wall will last 25 years and every 5 years it increases 3% does that mean we shouldn’t build the wall right now?”

ODOT: “I believe what I said was “when traffic doubles, the decibels only go up by 3, so we’re not going to worry about what traffic will be in 20 years.”

Public: “My question is, I fly into that airport.....not every day, but once in a while, now if we’re going to put this wall up, the wall should eliminate airplanes, and that’s not going to fly in this town because we have to have those jets fly in. If you put a study down there and listen to those jets fly in and go off, those decibels are going to be a lot higher than a semi hitting *unable to hear*. I stood down at Western Avenue and a couple other streets, and timed them with a timewatch. Any place between 3 and 7 seconds, somebody will hit one of those, not all the time, and that’s all the noise there is. We moved in here 50 years ago, and I like seeing the sky, and I like seeing the horses in the open space....with the big wall, that’s not going to go. And who is going to paint the wall when someone graffiti’s it with 4 letter words that nobody wants to see. Now that’s my question.”

ODOT: “Like I said, ODOT will take care of that maintenance and if there are graffiti issues, we’ll take care of that. But statewide, I have not seen that as a huge issue. I’ve been with ODOT for 27 years, been doing traffic noise work for 8 years and I’ve seen it as less and less of an issue, but still, the potential is there. ODOT will take care of all that maintenance.”

ODOT: “And again, you mentioned that airport over there, and that’s something we will be doing as part of this project, is coordinating with the airport to see if they have any concerns with potentially putting a wall near their airport because there are restrictions as to how close you can build these things to other structures.”

Public: “Has anyone contacted Marathon Pipeline?”

ODOT: “Yeah, we did reach out to Marathon Pipeline.”

Public: “What did they say?”

ODOT: “They told us that they have a pipeline easement that runs in that median. So that is something we are going to try to do during the development process, is work around the pipeline.”

ODOT: “It is part of the project development process that we look into these buildings and we’ll have to do some engineering to see if a wall will fit in there, and not affect the pipeline.”

Public: “I used to sketch the pipeline, and based on the amount of space for the easement that is required and there has to be a certain amount of clearance, plus if there is a spill or leak in the line they have to be able to get to it. Obviously, if there is something in the way, that is going to hinder their response.”

ODOT: “That is definitely one of the first things we are going to address with marathon is the location of those lines.

Public: “Yeah, I think that’s probably a good one. Now I just have one other question, I used to be in the transportation side of business and OSHA used to have regulations about decibels that could be calculated based on tires and engines and speed. I forget what that speed is, but as vehicles would go by, microphones would pick up the sound, and that was the federal government’s way of reducing noise pollution, ya know, the environmental protection. There were some standards relative to how much noise the sound of my truck transmits. I don’t know if those methods are outdated, I was just curious if that could be a factor.... If the trucks were quieter, because I think most of the noise comes from trucks.”

ODOT: “Yeah, that’s exactly right & we did follow those rules and criteria so that’s what we do. And I think the OSHA thing is more for the trucking industry, and not the D.O.T.”

Public: “Two houses over from Western Ave. and what I’ve noticed most about the traffic is that trucks are the noisiest of the vehicles that go by on the road. Can the rumble strips be removed and put smaller ones in? Like the ones they have on 224 where the rumble strips are only 3 inches wide instead of 14.”

ODOT: “The rumble strips are a statewide standard that we have decided many years ago to improve the overall safety of the roadway itself and to be put on the edges of every 4 lane divided highway.

These strips are a standard size and dimension and we cannot divert from that. Doing so could result in compromised safety of the roadway, so we have to stay with the same size rumble strips.”

Public: “I live nearby the highway and have documentation dating back to 2002 from the city of Lima, and with an Ohio Senator. We had many phone calls, emails, and messages. We did a study back in 2007 about the homes built prior to the construction of the highway. Personally, I completed that on my own and submitted that to ODOT, which at the time was ignored, but is now being in the latest letter that we received from you guys. I have documentation from 2002, hoping to get this project completed.”

Public: “This is another question about property values, I don’t know if there are any realtors in the house tonight, but that would be another big issue that we need to be concerned about. Obviously, you could argue it either way. But my question is, from other experiences and similar situations, has a wall had any effect on property values, either good or bad? Do they tend to increase or decrease our values? The closer your property is to the wall, I would think that those houses would have higher decibels effects.”

ODOT: “We had that concern raised earlier and we took a look at it, and it does go both ways. We don’t have any data for this area, so we recommend contacting a realtor and getting a professional input.”

Public: “I know there have been many studies about separating the highway from a lot of the folks that aren’t so good that run up and down the highway. Do you have any real information on that?”

ODOT: “So there are requirements about how far back this needs to be from the road, so what goes into our design is safety and meeting those distance requirements. And I imagine you’re not totally concerned with it, but it would be another barrier between a car running off the highway and your home.”

Public: “I was more concerned with the bad people that run up and down the highway, the drug runners, knocking people off the road”

ODOT: “Oh, we just have standards on how far back off the road a wall needs to be & where we do have walls close to the road, there have been some vehicle strikes and required maintenance but there hasn’t been any real research on that, that I’m aware of.”

Public: “I live on Bluebonnet Dr. My husband and I moved there in 1971, so we’ve been there for a long time. Some people in my area were lead to believe that the noise from the highway was affecting our hearing, some were told that “all your neighbors have signed this, don’t you want to support them?” and it was also mentioned that our Senator was a part of this and that he would encourage. We have found out that maybe this wasn’t the case, and here in the school, how much noise do you hear from the highway? It’s pretty quiet. We spend a lot of time outside and I brought some photographs that I did. I stood on Western Ave. and took a picture of the sunset, then I drove to Bowling Green and took a photo of the noise wall that surrounds the baseball field up there. I do not want to wake up and say “look at that beautiful noise wall.” I do not want to live by the Berlin wall. When he asked us to sign I said “no, I won’t do it, and I’ll fight this until I die.” That’s my feeling.”

Public: “I lived here in 2007 when we had the flood, and when the flood was here, there was no traffic on the highway. I walked outside and went “what happened? what’s wrong?” and realized that there wasn’t the constant rumble of traffic. My question is, wouldn’t it be quieter for everybody with the wall up?

ODOT: “Yes, noise will be reduced. I’m not sure how far back it will be reduced but it would benefit everyone up to a certain extent.”

Public: “We are all neighbors, but if we want to go sit on our front porch, that is what we’ll see, is that wall. We have daughters. Across the highway, there are horses, my daughter has special needs, and she rides horses for therapy. She won’t sit still to eat for 2 minutes, but she’ll sit and watch those horses for 20 minutes. That wall will block her view. All we will see is that wall. Highway traffic sounds don’t keep us up at night.”

Public: “If the wall is constructed, are there any landscaping plans to obscure the ugliness of a brick wall?”

ODOT: “I see what you’re saying, and that’s more of a planning decision. As of now, there are no plans for that, but it is definitely something that we’ll take into consideration.”

Public: “I also live on Western Ave., and I also brought pictures of the sunset versus the wall. I do not want to look at a wall every day. It would be very, very close to my house. Also, you sent out various studies and I read them all. One stated the biggest factors...the amount of traffic, the speed of traffic, and the amount of trucks. I was wondering, did you consider lowering the speed limit to possibly lower the decibels?”

ODOT: “No. We didn’t. We cannot lower the speed limit of a U.S. highway. The speed limit is 65. That is the speed limit for that type of roadway. Quite frankly, we did a speed study out there and discovered that traffic moves faster than 65 so to try to lower the speed on the highway, we would either have to do a study proving that the current speed is too dangerous, or that traffic generally moves slower than the posted speed limit for whatever reason. By law, the speed limit is 65.”

Public: “I live right across from the school. I just want to know, how and when did you get the decibels? Was it done with a machine set up in yards? Did you do it driving by? Did you do it three times a day? How did you get those numbers?”

ODOT: “Those numbers are computer generated it is a requirement for traffic noise control. We take field measurements to give us an idea of the noise level. Then we plug that info into the model to validate the model that we constructed.”

Public: “Was that done at various times of the day?”

ODOT: “I do not recall.”

Public: “How technical and real did you get these numbers?”

ODOT: “We used the computer model to gather our information and calculate the noise levels....along with speed limit, elevations, and other factors.”

Public: “In the 16 years that we’ve lived in our condo, we’ve have three relatively serious discussions about selling. In all of these discussions, the topic came up about the noise, and not once did anyone ask about the sunsets. In our opinion, it would definitely help the real estate value.”

Public: “We’ve lived there since 1988, and the discussion that ODOT is bring about, leads to the topic of the snowdrifts that will bury the interstate due to the wall. I’m assuming ODOT will add snowplows to keep the interstate clean. We just love the sunsets, and I sit on my porch every day and after all these years, I can still hear pretty good.”

Public: “I’d like to speak about the wind. A couple years ago, we had a real strong storm that tore up all the landscaping and roofing. I think this wall would have prevented a lot of this damage and a lot of the issues that we saw during this time. Another thing I would like to comment about is litter that comes off the highway. We clean it every day. The wall could provide us with added protection against highway litter. Also, I’d like to speak a little bit about the speed limit. The new ramps on the highways are going

to be a much smoother transition, and trucks are going to be going much faster than they are today, and in the future they'll be producing much more noise. Also, I have a letter from Lima's Kirk Slusher via Senator stating that his intentions to start the project in October 2015."

Public: "One big sheet of plexi-glass. Protected from the sound and the sunset is right there."

Public: "What determines the length of the wall? The people in the condos seem to want it, and others don't. Can you shorten the wall?"

ODOT: "That is something we're going to look into. The issue is that it benefits less people, in turn, making it more expensive, so we have to stay in budget."

Public: "I know walls are popular right now, even Trump wants to build one between Texas and Mexico, but that's not what this society is about. We don't even have a fence. Philosophically, people just be sure that you want another wall in our society."

Public: "When we moved here, I worked nights and slept in the day time. I didn't get woke up, but I did by real estate agents trying to buy my house. Our properties have high demand. My opinion is, people check it out for noise and schools. I'm all for the wall."

Public: "I'm the Findlay airport manager and I don't want to say either way, but you guys have contacted the FFA, and basically we have determined that there will be no effect on the airport and or approach sites."

Public: "Are power lines included in your plans and where they're located?"

ODOT: "They are."

Public: "If you look at the approach way of the runways, the power lines would extend them much more, and how would the wall affect the power lines, and in turn, the airport?"

ODOT: "I don't know the answer to that question but the city has considered light poles. I'm new to this whole thing and I can't say how high they will be. It will be coordinated with the airport during our design phases."

Public: "Monetarily, will we be affected in any way? Will our taxes increase or decrease?"

ODOT: "The money comes from a federal fund so the money is already there. I don't have any inclination that your taxes will be affected." *Dan explains where taxes go*

Public: "I think the key here is, this is a highly desirable neighborhood, and a lot of people would like to move in. Right now, it's kind of a turnover area. There are a lot of seniors who built homes there, selling their homes to young people. I think we need to be careful here. Home values are still going up. When I moved back in here, I was aware of the airport and airport noise, but it didn't bother me. The highway is sort of like a grandfather clock. It's annoying at the beginning, but after a while, you get used to it. I just want to be careful that the wall does not affect the reasons people move in and out of this neighborhood. It is highly desirable, and young people are moving back in. I'd just hate to lose all of that."