Your Voice Matters!
OUTER POWELL
Transportation Safety Project

September 2021

SOUND WALL INFORMATION

The road changes in the Outer Powell Safety Transportation Project area will result in a slight noise increase, impacting some property owners and residents close to the road. Sound walls are the most common tool used to mitigate noise. We have identified sound wall locations that provide the required benefits and meet ODOT and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) standards. A vote among eligible property owners and tenants to determine whether or not to construct these sound walls will be held in September 2021.

BACKGROUND

We are designing and constructing improvements to help people get around busy Outer SE Powell Boulevard more safely. The project stretches between I-205 and the Portland/Gresham city limits, just east of SE 174th Avenue. Safety improvements will reduce the frequency and severity of crashes and help vehicles, pedestrians, transit and bicyclists share the road with fewer conflicts. Learn more about the project at OuterPowellSafety.org.

A project noise study determined that the improvements will slightly increase the levels of noise from the roadway along both sides of SE Powell Boulevard within the project area. When noise reaches a certain level, ODOT assesses the benefits of constructing a sound wall. If the assessment reveals that a sound wall will provide adequate benefits based on ODOT and FHWA standards, construction of a sound wall to offset noise generated from the roadway is considered. Ultimately, construction of a sound wall depends on the outcome of a vote among property owners and residents who will benefit from the wall.

What size would the sound walls be and what would they look like?

Sound walls range from eight to fourteen feet in height (subject to topography) and may vary in length depending on the needs of their locations. Sound walls are generally constructed at the edge of the roadway to maximize noise reduction. The wall will be made of concrete post and panel or concrete masonry block, similar to sound walls built in the first phase of the project. Final wall finish will be determined later in the design phase.

Sound wall constructed in Phase 1 of the project

Your Voice Matters!
OUTER POWELL
Transportation Safety Project

SOUND WALL INFORMATION

September 2021

How does ODOT decide who gets to vote on a sound wall?

Each benefitted property owner or resident gets one ballot. A benefitted owner or resident is someone who owns or lives at a home that would experience a noise decrease of at least five decibels if a sound wall were built. More than half of the eligible voters must submit a ballot to move forward with the sound wall construction during the initial voting outreach. More than half of the votes received must be "YES" for a wall to be built. A tie or 50/50 vote means no wall. If the initial voter response is less than 50%, the project team will conduct a second round of voter outreach. A majority vote will then determine the outcome, even if less than 50% of the eligible voters submit a ballot.

How are votes counted?

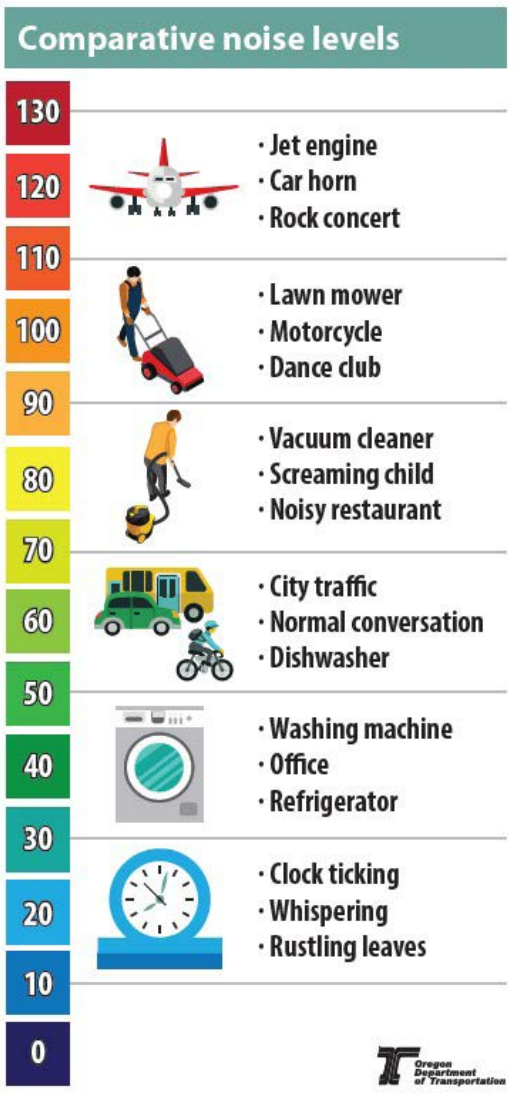
Each property owner gets one vote. A tenant residing at a single-family residence also gets one vote. In multi-unit dwellings, all eligible tenant votes are tallied to equal one collective vote and the property owner also gets one vote. For each wall, collective tenant votes and individual property owner votes are tallied to determine if a wall is constructed or not.

What are the anticipated changes in noise levels?

Today, noise levels at properties near SE Powell Boulevard range from 45-70 decibels. After the project is built, noise levels close to the roadway will range from 47-71 decibels, potentially decreasing by as much as four decibels and increasing up to five decibels in certain locations. ODOT evaluates noise mitigation at properties that exceed 65 decibels.

What are the impacts of sound wall construction to properties?

If there are existing materials or items where the wall would be built, such as vegetation or fencing, crews will remove it prior to construction. Construction of a wall will cause some noise and limited access. Sound walls can cause shading to surrounding areas, such as yards. ODOT will maintain the wall and any adjacent vegetation on the SE Powell Boulevard side of the wall. Property owners are responsible for maintaining vegetation on their property along their side of the wall.



What is a decibel?
A decibel is a unit used to measure sound levels. Decibels help us understand and define how loud or quiet something is.
Note: Humans do not usually notice a change in noise of three decibels or less.

QUESTIONS? CONTACT US

Hope Estes
Community Affairs Coordinator
Hope.Estes@odot.state.or.us

Oregon Department of Transportation