



# Metro Board Approved Policy

## Soundwall Implementation Policy

*Adopted: September 27, 2007*

### Historical Perspective

Prior to 1998, Caltrans was responsible for the Soundwall Program. With the passage of Senate Bill 45, the responsibility for delivering the Soundwall Program was transferred to Metro with no corresponding funding source. Metro inherited a backlog of soundwall projects totaling nearly \$2 billion.

To assist with delivering the program, in April 2000, the Metro Board adopted the Soundwall Implementation Policy. This policy provides guidance in delivering the program and was based on the State approved criteria at the time of adoption.

## **SOUNDWALL IMPLEMENTATION POLICY**

At its regular meeting in August 1999 the California Transportation Commission acted to fund the May 1989 Soundwall Retrofit List off the top of the 2000 STIP Fund Estimate. Accordingly, LACMTA staff has coordinated with Caltrans District 07 to ensure the systematic design and construction of these soundwalls pursuant to current State laws and regulations. Correspondingly, the LACMTA establishes the following policy to ensure the expeditious delivery of the remaining critically needed soundwalls throughout Los Angeles County:

- I. **LACMTA Responsibilities:**
  - A. LACMTA shall seek funding from local, state and federal revenues and establish an appropriate level of funding in LACMTA's Long Range Plan for the construction of soundwall projects and continue said funding allocation until all of the soundwalls on the POST 1989 Soundwall Project List (including soundwalls that yet to be identified) are delivered.
  - B. LACMTA shall seek to deliver the soundwalls on the POST 1989 Soundwall Project List based on their Priority Index Number. To maximize cost effectiveness, it is envisioned that some May 1989 Retrofit Soundwalls and some of the Post 1989 Soundwall Projects will be consolidated via the extension of contiguous POST 1989 Soundwall Projects and project limits would be extended up to ½ mile to mitigate noise levels that exceed the 67 decibels. Such modifications to the POST 1989 Soundwall Project List will be based on technical engineering analysis. Other freeway segments that have been identified as requiring soundwalls after 1989, as well as the freeway segments requiring soundwalls that have yet to be identified, will also be prioritized by Priority Index Number. These new soundwalls will be implemented after the delivery of the May 1989 Soundwall Retrofit List and the current POST 1989 Soundwall Project List unless a local agency contributes funds to advance the project (see Local Agencies Responsibilities below).
  - C. The ranking criteria adopted by the Board at its January 27, 2000 meeting will apply to the POST 1989 Soundwall Project List. This revised criteria includes the provisions currently contained in the Section 215.5 of the State of California Streets and Highways Code which is currently in force and modified by the following over-riding new criteria, Nos. 1 and 2:
    1. *Highest consideration shall be given to freeway segments where High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) lanes were constructed, but warranted soundwalls were not built as part of the HOV project (Phase I).*

2. *Within Phase I, the following defined extenuating circumstances will receive the highest priority in implementation in Phase I:*
  - a) *Priority will be given to those freeway segments where HOV lanes have been constructed and soundwalls were installed on one side of the freeway only. The construction of the soundwall on the opposite side of the freeway shall be given priority for construction provided; for example, residential areas or a school are located on the unmitigated side of the freeway.*
  - b) *Schools sites where noise mitigation was not provided.*
3. Consideration shall be given to residential areas which were developed prior to the opening of a freeway.
4. Any capacity-enhancing project, such as HOV lanes, or adding mixed flow lanes which result in a significant and measurable increase in ambient noise levels above the 67 dBA threshold.
5. Cost effectiveness: Projects costing no more than \$77,000 per residential unit protected by the proposed soundwall are considered to be cost-effective. In calculating cost effectiveness, all living unites immediately adjacent to the freeway which will benefit by a 5 decibels or more reduction in noise levels are counted.
6. Significant benefit: The noise barrier must provide a minimum of 5 decibels ambient noise reduction.
7. A majority of the occupants in close proximity to the freeway resides there prior to the time the freeway route was adopted. The city or county requesting the soundwall must provide documentation on the percentage of original occupants still residing along the freeway.

Note: The existing criteria for school noise mitigation, wherein noise levels exceeding 52 dBA must be mitigated, is contained in section 215.5 of the State Streets and Highway Code currently in force will be applied under this policy.

- D. The POST 1989 Soundwall Project List will be prioritized and delivered in two phases in conformance with the revised ranking criteria adopted by the LACMTA Board at its regular board meeting on January 27, 2000:
  - Phase I will contain all soundwall projects along freeway segments where HOV lanes were constructed without the warranted soundwalls.
  - Phase II will contain all other soundwalls including soundwalls identified prior to the adoption of this policy.

- E. For capacity enhancing projects (i.e., HOV or widening projects) which require a soundwall(s), LACMTA shall program sufficient funds to such projects (when funds are available) so that the cost of the soundwall(s) is a part of the capacity enhancing project construction cost.
- F. Funding Program:
  - 1. The \$34.8 million currently identified in the RTAA for delivery of the May 1989 Soundwall List will be reserved for the delivery of the POST 1989 Soundwall Projects;
  - 2. The funding for the balance of the POST 1989 Soundwall Project List will be addressed as part of the LACMTA Long Range Plan Update, 2000.
- G. The LACMTA Board Adherence to this Policy – Any changes or exceptions to the policy shall be made by 75 percent majority – 10 votes to pass.

## **II. Caltrans Responsibilities:**

- A. Caltrans shall comply with federal and state requirements and guidelines regarding noise mitigation and highway soundwalls. Caltrans shall follow the Highway Design Manual (Topic 1104-Highway Traffic Noise Abatement). This includes the inventory of qualifying areas and the calculation of the Priority Index Numbers which shall be based on the current Caltrans policy and guidance contained in the Caltrans Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol (CaTNAP) and the Technical Noise Supplement (TeNS), and modified by the LACMTA Board action above.
- B. Caltrans will review, cooperatively with the LACMTA, the POST 1989 Soundwall Project List and “rebundle” the projects, consolidating contiguous soundwall segments pursuant to Section I.B (above) and will apply to revised ranking criteria adopted by the LACMTA Board, to produce a more cost-effective and expeditious delivery of the POST 1989 Soundwall Projects.
- C. Caltrans agrees to work with LACMTA staff to reduce the project development cost (currently amounts to 45 percent of the construction cost) to a level that is consistent with other state freeway infrastructure project development costs (i.e. 20 to 30%). These development costs include preparing plans, specifications and construction engineering. Furthermore, Caltrans and LACMTA staffs will work to reconcile and reduce the average of \$3.7 million cost per mile for the POST 1989 Soundwall Projects.

- D. Caltrans shall update the cost of soundwalls every two to five years.
- E. Caltrans shall absorb all costs associated with developing the Priority Index Numbers and the Noise Barrier Scope Study Reports (NBSSR).
- F. Caltrans shall include in their estimates for capacity enhancing projects (i.e., HOV or widening projects) the cost of any required soundwall(s).

**III. Local Agencies Responsibilities:**

- A. Exceptions shall be granted to local agencies wanting to accelerate the construction of soundwalls, if a local agency meets one of the following legislatively mandated criteria:
  - 1. Current state legislation allows local agencies to move soundwall projects to the top of the priority list by contributing a minimum of 33 percent (non-refundable to the local agency) of the soundwall project's design and construction cost. Local agencies shall follow the Streets and Highway Code 215.6. This policy will allow local agencies to contribute 33 percent towards a project on the POST 1989 Soundwall Project List in order to move its project up on the list. Note: This option will terminate if the enabling legislation (Section 215.5, Streets and highways Code) is repealed.
  - 2. A local agency may use its local funds to design and construct a soundwall. LACMTA will reimburse the local jurisdiction (without interest) for the full cost of the design and construction of a project when that project comes up on the priority list for consideration.
- B. The design and construction cost of any modifications to the standard wall (i.e., special design features or aesthetic enhancements) which are requested by a local agency shall be paid for by the local agency.
- C. Allow local agencies trade Proposition A Local Return Funds for State or Federal Funds through the LACMTA.