

Barriers to help block road noise in McKownville

Nine structures will set Thruway Authority back \$16 million

By CHARLES WIFF

wiffc@spotlightnews.com

Few locals would argue the Thruway's importance for area traffic and commerce. Few who live near it would argue its auditory impacts.

For residents of McKownville, the never-ending drone of traffic along the arterial roadway is an old story. But it's one that should come to an end when the Thruway Authority installs nine noise barriers between exits 23 and 24.

"Many of the homes back on to the Thruway. They are certainly familiar with the noise," said Don Reeb, president of the McKownville Neighborhood Association.

The project will be a part of a \$115 million reconstruction project between the two exits. An approximately 6-mile stretch of the road will be repaved and a third lane will be added in both directions. The project will be paid for by Thruway tolls.

The nine barriers will cost about \$16 million, according to a Thruway Authority official,

and impact about 220 residences. All said, that's more than \$72,000 per affected residence.

According to a statement gleaned from an authority spokesperson, adding the barriers is the only way to get the project going forward.

"Under federal regulation and state policy, the New York State Thruway Authority is required to study and mitigate noise impacts to adjacent landowners as part of any project that adds a lane of traffic to the roadway. The authority is required by regulation to build the barriers at these locations unless the residents don't want them," according to the authority.

The authority's plans for the area included a noise study conducted by Clough Harbour & Associates that found peak noise levels for the areas to be from the mid-60s to mid-70s dBA, the equivalent of a gas lawn mower from 100 feet or a vacuum cleaner indoors. The study also predicted noise levels would increase in the future.

While neighbors have been canvassing the authority for the barriers for years, the improvement project offered the opportunity for them to



The view of the Thruway from the end of Kelton Court in McKownville. Homes that border the Thruway will be shielded from the noise of traffic by barriers set to be installed as part of reconstruction project between exits 23 and 24. The cost of installing nine barriers will total \$16 million.

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be installed, said Reeb.

The project will go out to bid in November, and work is slated to begin in 2011. The southbound lanes will be addressed first, then the northbound side. The project is expected to be

wrapped up by August of 2013.

The original plan was to build 10 barriers. When canvassed, a majority of residents in the easternmost part of the easternmost part of the project—on Kenosha

Street, Mountain Street and Southern Boulevard—said they didn't want the barriers.

In the other areas, however, the response was firmly in the affirmative. Residences on Bohl Avenue, Mereline Avenue, Kelton Court, Rose Court, Edgecomb Street, Holmes Court, St. Sophia's Apartments, Hemlock Lane, the Woodscape Subdivision, Vaughn Drive, the Strawberry Lane Community and Woodlake Apartments will all be affected.

Reeb said the

association would like to see similar barriers for homes abutting the Northway on roads like Providence and Mercer streets, but the Northway is controlled by the state DOT.

It's still a major victory for many in the neighborhoods abutting the road, he said.

"I've gotten a number of e-mails from the neighborhood saying, 'Is it really true?'" Reeb said. "It's a pleasure to write back to them and say, 'Yes it is.'"