

Noise barriers

How do noise barriers work?

Noise barriers reduce noise by blocking the direct travel of sound waves from a source (highway) to adjacent homes or businesses, forcing the noise over the top or around the barrier. The barrier must be high enough and long enough to block the view (line of sight) of the highway. This allows a noise barrier to provide a perceivable noise reduction.

Noise barriers cannot prevent noise from reaching homes on a hillside overlooking a road, or buildings that rise above a barrier. Noise barriers are most effective for the first one or two rows of homes at distances up to 200 feet to 300 feet from the barrier.

When will WisDOT decide where noise barriers will be built?

- A noise analysis is completed during Draft EIS preparation. Existing and future (construction + 20 years) sound levels are evaluated to determine if an alternative carried forward for detailed analysis has noise impacts.
- Measures to mitigate the impact are evaluated if the analysis indicates a noise impact will occur. Noise barriers are one possible method of mitigation.
- The preferred alternative is identified in the Final EIS. Noise mitigation measures determined to be reasonable and feasible are described. If noise barriers are the proposed mitigation method, a separate public involvement process is initiated to determine if barriers will be constructed.
- Those property owners and tenants receiving at least an 8 decibel reduction in noise levels will vote on barrier construction. The barrier will be constructed if the Department receives a vote of “Yes” by a simple majority of those providing a vote.

