

9/11/05

## **Darien, IDOT OK pact for sound wall**

**By Erin Sauder**

Staff writer

The Darien City Council approved an agreement Sept. 6 with the Illinois Department of Transportation for a sound wall to be placed along a stretch of Interstate 55.

A sound wall separates the highway from adjacent residential or commercial areas for the purpose of reducing roadway noise. It can be made from a variety of different materials ranging from wood to concrete to aluminum.

Final costs can vary greatly, and the pre-engineering and amount of money that is ultimately allotted for the project will determine the scope of the work, according to Scott Coren, assistant to Darien City Administrator Bryon Vana. The most likely material for this sound wall is concrete because the wood walls deteriorate fairly quickly, he said.

The wall could be placed anywhere between Lemont Road and a half-mile west of Route 83, Coren said.

Vana said the agreement with IDOT gives the city access to the \$1.4 million in federal funds secured last year by U.S. Rep. Judy Biggert, R-13th District, of Hinsdale.

"This state requirement that we have an agreement with IDOT helps us to solidify and keep the grant money available for us for a period of years. There's not enough money to construct the wall yet," Vana said.

The city plans to apply for a matching grant from the state.

Vana said he will meet with City Council members to determine the next step in the project.

"We don't want the expectation to be that this project has been approved. There are still a lot of questions. Where is the wall going to be constructed? Where is the money going to come from? This wall is not going to be paid for by general city revenue," he said.

The city has three years to begin working on the project before the grant can be rescinded.

Several residents praised the council for taking this step.

"This process has gone back a number of years," said resident Joan Wayman, who along with Peggy Concannon spearheaded residents' efforts to get the ball rolling on the noise study several years ago and has been working with the city ever since. "Thanks for getting us this far."

Residents in Concannon's area near I-55 are concerned not only about noise, but safety; at Frontage Road and Carlisle Court, surface roads are lower than the expressway, she said.

"This area is extremely dangerous. We had two accidents this summer. It's a serious safety issue," she said.

Wayman agreed.

"This is not just a sound-wall issue. You're definitely getting more bang for your buck," she said.

Darien Mayor Carmen Soldato said he questions how much the city should be relying on the federal government for funding.

"We're all turning to the government for our local needs. We want to get the project done, but when are we going to stop asking the federal government to pay for the project? I think the equitable thing to do is to find the money to pay for it," he said.

Concannon said there are many avenues the city could pursue.

"If the funding is out there, we'd be crazy not to go after it," she said.

Temi Latinwo, an IDOT representative who attended the Sept. 6 meeting, told council members it would behoove the community to take a look at using federal dollars.

"If this community doesn't use them, another community will," she said.

**Erin Sauder's e-mail address is:**  
esauder@libertysuburban.com