

# Woodridge's request for sound wall nixed

By Don Grigas

Staff writer

If a three-quarter-mile-long sound wall is to be constructed along the north side of Interstate 55 between Woodward Avenue and Lemont Road, funding will have to come from the village of Woodridge or sources other than the Illinois Toll Authority.

At a Feb. 16 workshop, Woodridge Village Board and staff members heard a report by Phillip Modaff, director of public works, that the proposed project did not meet Illinois State Toll Highway Authority requirements and would not be included in that organization's future work plan.

Woodridge officials had appealed to the authority to build a 15-foot-high, 4,500-foot-long sound wall as a noise barrier for residents living north of I-55 between Woodward Avenue and Lemont Road, and had met with authority officials over the past few months "with no success," Modaff said.

Modaff said the Toll Authority will fund construction of a sound wall on the south side of I-55, but not along the north side.

"It's safe to say we don't see any encouraging signs," Modaff said.

According to Peggy Halik, assistant village administrator, "the door to Toll Authority funding is closed."

"However, we will keep our eyes open for other funding sources and will certainly avail ourselves of those if the opportunity arises," Halik said.

Modaff said the authority cited two key factors for rejecting the proposal: Only a small number of existing homes in the Vicente Subdivision -- about seven or eight -- would actually benefit from the construction, and the average cost per "benefited residence ... greatly exceeded reasonable standards for construction of a barrier."

The estimated cost of building a sound wall, 15 feet high, 4,500 feet long, is \$1.7 million.

"According to the Toll Authority the cost of a noise barrier cannot exceed \$24,000 per benefited residence, and the (\$240,000) estimate for the applicable Vicente homes is 10 times higher than allowed," Modaff said.

Even if some Gallagher & Henry homes were included into the formula, Modaff said, the average-per-benefited home still would be \$42,000, significantly over the authority's target.

According to the authority's adopted policy, homes in the Gallagher & Henry subdivision cannot be included in the formula because they were platted after 1999.

According to Toll Authority policy, residents along a toll road can appeal for the construction of a sound wall -- which reduces the decibel level of traffic for neighboring homes and businesses -- if their homes were platted before 1999, and are within 500 feet of the proposed sound wall.

It is unlikely Woodridge would contribute funds for the construction of a sound wall, Modaff said.

The Toll Authority is expected to construct a sound wall on the south side of I-55 between Woodward Avenue and Lemont Road within the next few years.

The village appealed to the Toll Authority instead of the Illinois Department of Transportation with its proposal because, Modaff said, the southern extension of the North-South Tollway west of the target area would result in increased traffic because of the extension and new ramps connecting I-55 with the I-355 extension.

"The impact, the source of the noise, would come from the toll road, not I-55," Modaff said.

According to Modaff's report, engineering consultants contacted by Woodridge advised staff, "It would be extremely difficult to make an argument supporting Woodridge's demand that the Toll Authority be responsible for construction of a noise wall on I-55."

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