

Residents say sound wall payment does not include all who benefit

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WOODRIDGE, IL -

A group of Woodridge residents living north of Interstate 55 east of Woodward Avenue say they are torn between feeling happy a new sound wall may be built along I-55 near their homes and resentment over a village of Woodridge plan they say will force them to subsidize the project with more than their fair share.

During a Village Board workshop Aug. 2, several residents agreed to endorse the plan being brokered by the village. The plan would require the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority, some residents, the village, and home developer Gallagher and Henry to share in the estimated \$2.4 million cost to erect a 17-foot sound barrier along the northern part of I-55 east of Woodward Avenue.

But most residents at the meeting said they also were upset over which homeowners will be called on to contribute to the plan and which ones will be left out.

"This clearly is not fair to all the residents who will have to share in the cost of a new sound wall because other residents living close to the expressway, but not in the proposed special service area, will benefit from the wall yet not have to contribute," said Geri Dominic, of the 9100 block of South Somerset Lane.

"This plan is being shoved down our throats," Dominic said.

Dominic was one of about 10 residents who attended the meeting.

"I have mixed feelings about the plan," said Robert Mathis, of the 1200 block of South Somerset and president of the Vicente Homeowners Association.

"I would rather go forward (with the plan) rather than be subjected to elevated noise levels, but I also am not happy because I feel like we are being slapped on both cheeks," he said.

For the plan to move forward, the village said it will require a minimum of 51 percent of the 46 homeowners living in a proposed Special Service Area to agree to co-funding the proposal, and 100 percent would be required to sign a waiver indemnifying the village.

If either condition is unmet, the deal is off, officials said.

"It's time to either fish or cut bait," said John Perry, village administrator.

Each homeowner in the Special Service Area would be required to repay over 20 years an equal share of the \$632,000 in bonds the village is expected to issue for the project.

The village would provide \$316,000, the homeowners the other \$316,000. The cost to each of the 46 homeowners would be \$343 per year for 20 years.

Residents said they were upset over the fact more than 10 homeowners living in the Smoter subdivision east of the Special Service Area are not included in the proposed special district, but the sound wall would supply a barrier for their homes.

"I just don't think it is fair for the 46 homeowners to absorb the cost for other homeowners who also will benefit from the wall. We shouldn't have to pick up the freight for those other owners. ... Let's keep it fair to all," Dominic said.

The plan being proposed by the village will not be amended to include other homeowners, officials said.

"The plan we have before us is the one we have before us. ... There is no other plan," Murphy said.

For more than a year the village and some residents living in the Vicente subdivision have urged the tollway to build a sound wall just east of Woodward Avenue.

Last year the plan lost momentum for a variety of reasons, but recently the tollway notified the village it would consider constructing a sound wall if about \$1.5 million in funding over and above the tollway's pledge of \$910,000 could be arranged.

"They (the tollway) are going to be erecting other sound walls along the new I-355 south extension within the next year, and indicated they would bid out a new sound wall to its contractor for us even though it wasn't in their initial plan as long as we could get all parties to agree (to the plan)," said Chris Bethel, director of public works.

At the workshop trustees, staff and Mayor William Murphy sought public feedback to determine the plan's feasibility.

"Based on the feedback we received, staff is expected to bring an agreement to the board for consideration at the Aug. 16 meeting," said Murphy.

Some residents also said they were concerned Gallagher and Henry has yet to commit to the plan in writing, and there is no contingency plan in the event the cost of the wall is more than the most recent estimate of \$2.4 million.