

Transportation Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7057

AN ACT CONCERNING THE INSTALLATION OF SOUND BARRIERS BY THE

Title: DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.

Vote Date: 3/12/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/26/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Transportation Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill requires the Connecticut Department of Transportation to, by October 1, 2025, develop a schedule to fund noise barrier construction for certain projects based on the priority list that was developed in previous legislation and to fund noise barrier construction according to this schedule. It also requires the DOT to publish the schedule and status of each noise barrier construction project on its website. This bill aims to provide relief for families that live near the I-95 corridor and face several environmental and health effects from the noise congestion that has plagued these communities, while helping their property values improve as well as their overall quality of life.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Garrett Eucalitto, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Transportation

Commissioner Eucalitto opposes the bill, noting the requirement for a funding schedule requirement was already provided and acknowledging the Type II Statewide Noise Analysis submitted to the CGA on February 22, 2024 pursuant to Public Act 23-135, which estimated construction costs at \$270 million. Noted the CTDOT does not have the staffing required to move this project forward, the time frame of implementation would 15-20 years, and that the Department's is mainly focused on replacing existing walls. He laid out the lengthy and thorough process to get projects to the construction phase, as well as design costs, which are 10% of the construction costs and noted the additional challenges and potential needs of each site that could cause problems.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Kristin Luntz, President, Riverside Association

Ms. Luntz supports the bill, says noise barriers protect the physical and mental health of residents in Riverside and that the noise in this area is above the state and federal limit. The highway overpass over the Mianus River is not only noisy, but also dangerous to the people and property below. Notes a time when her car's rear window was smashed when a large piece of debris fell from the overpass onto her parked car.

Olivia Luntz, Manager of Education and Outreach, Greenwich Historical Society

Ms. Luntz supports the bill, notes the impact the highway noise has on visitors to the Greenwich Historical Society, which is constant inside and outside. Noise pollution has a negative impact on physical and mental health and a negative impact on learning.

Michael Murrer, Managing Director, Wedbush Securities

Mr. Murrer supports the bill, noting that NY placed sound barriers and it benefitted the citizens of a densely populated residential area. Says it is simple and cost effective to put the barriers up and that this issue impacts everyone regardless of socioeconomic status (but notes there is a significant low-income housing population within earshot of the highway).

John Roberts and Patricia Roberts, Coalition Leaders, Greenwich Neighborhood Association to Reduce I-95 Noise

Mr. Roberts and Ms. Roberts support the bill, highlighting the noise pollution that continues, impacting health, learning, well-being, and property values. Supports sound barriers, and notes specific congestion point according to a study from INRIX, specifically the stretch of I-95 South between Westport and Greenwich, the high volume in general and the increased noise from large trucks when traffic slows down. Notes the great impact achieved when Stamford at Exit 7 and 8 got sound barriers, and notes that the truck traffic has moved up since COVID and the downshifting is loud.

Andrea and Bruno Cilio, Residents of Greenwich

Both Mr. and Mrs. Cilio support the installation of sound barriers by the Department of Transportation. They write that their backyard is directly facing I-95 and over the 18 years they have lived in their house the noise from the highway has increased due to the uptick in the number of drivers on the highway. The loud noises from tractor trailers and motorcycles traveling at high speeds cause their house to vibrate, the glasses in their cabinets to vibrate, and has impacted their sleep.

Thomas Darmawan, Resident of Westport

Mr. Darmawan lives adjacent to the 17SB exit ramp on I-95. He writes that there is a sound barrier nearby, but it stops at the Norwalk/Westport line. He also writes about the unregulated use of the Jake Break, a truck accessory that makes their exhaust sound like a machine gun. This accessory is of particular irritancy without any sound barrier. The construction along that

stretch of the highway has also removed the natural sound barriers that used to be there exacerbating the problem.

Christine Engles, Resident of Old Greenwich

Ms. Engles expressed support for this bill and spoke about how the noise of I-95 near her house produces so much noise that it is impossible for her kids to play outside without getting overwhelmed by the sound of highway traffic. She further sites that studies have shown that prolonged exposure to high levels of noise can contribute to increased stress, difficulty concentrating, and even longer-term health issues like high blood pressure. Without the barriers, she writes, they are exposed exhaust, pollution, and debris.

Lawrence Flinn, Jr. Resident of Greenwich

Mr. Flinn Jr. wrote in support of this bill citing residents' inability to enjoy their own homes in peace and the health issues that could arise from being subjected to high levels of noise. He further elaborated by pointing out that sound barriers have proven to be successful for other communities.

Mia Heuston, Resident of Greenwich

Ms. Heuston expressed support for this bill and wrote that the sound coming from I-95 has increased so much over the years that she can no longer enjoy her backyard. She wrote that she even has conducted various sound tests and found that the decibels are way over the healthy limit.

Antonio, Paolo, and Lauren Impellizzeri

Mr. Impellizzeri, a grandfather, wrote in support of this bill citing his concern for his grandchildren. He writes that the nonstop noise has made it difficult to enjoy the outdoors, and that his house shakes whenever large trucks drive by making it hard for him to have a conversation in his own house. He writes further that the flashing lights from police cars shine right into his window in the middle of the night, disrupting his sleep. He often sees people pull over to the side of the road to relieve themselves and the pollution from the highway can cause respiratory problems, not to mention devalue his home. He writes in his testimony, "As someone who has worked hard to make this house a home, I find it troubling that something as basic as peace and quiet has become a luxury." Paolo and Lauren further write that in support of the bill citing the high levels of noise disturbing sleep, the health and stress issues that come with prolonged exposure to extreme noise, and the enjoyment of their own property. They further write that the sound barrier can act as a partial barrier against toxic pollutants that come from the highway. The barrier will also increase the value of their homes as buyers are more likely to invest in properties that have some level of sound mitigation. It will also create a layer of privacy from the road and prevent debris from entering residential areas. Lastly, they write that by having the sound barrier, the psychological effects of being consistently exposed to loud noises, such as stress and anxiety, will decrease.

Christopher Lagano

Mr. Lagano testified in support of the bill. In his testimony he wrote that his house shakes from the constant noise and sound vibrations from the highway to the point where he has had to replace windows and plant Green Giant trees in his yard, all at his own expense.

Michael Murrer, Managing Director, Wedbush Securities

Managing Director Murrer testified that he is in full support of sound barriers on I-95. He writes that sound barriers would benefit everyone in all socio-economic classes and cites New York's Westchester County's utilization of sound barriers to mitigate I-95 traffic to great effect.

Several residents and individuals submitted testimony in support of the bill, noting the decreasing quality of life in their neighborhood with the highly elevated traffic noise from trucks downshifting and increasing levels congestion throughout the day and night, which prevents sleep and good health with air pollution and debris from the highway being exposed to children. The noise can also affect cognitive impairment in children, as well. Several complaints were made about the removal of grass and vegetation that served as "natural" sound barriers.

- Lauren Ackerley
- Noreen Agri
- Steven Annunziato
- Rosaura Artola
- Paul Barrett
- Cynthia Borcharding
- John Bridge
- Chantal Buck
- Friederike Buck,
- Hannes Buck
- Jochen Buck
- Andrew Cohen
- Heather Corrow
- Ryan Corrow
- Matt Cosby
- Pablo Eizayaga
- Eileen Fargis
- Marie Fernando
- Tyrell Fernando
- Jennifer Flatow
- Joanne Graham
- Ren Harman
- Spencer Harman
- Mariano Henin
- Linda Hsu
- Philip Janoff
- Jennifer Kruper
- Stephen LaVersa
- James Mack

- Bruce MacLennan
- Paul Marcussen
- William McGowan
- James McKay
- Michael McNulty
- Janice Merrill
- Jennifer Miller
- Anthony Narvaez
- Rebecca Narvaez
- Karen Peetz
- Rob Pepin
- Gregory Piccininno
- David Ploog
- Madhunika Raghavan
- John Roberts
- Scott Roth
- Chelsea Schaeffer
- Lauren Schiatta
- Daren Schneider
- Jeremy Steidl
- Susan Steidl
- Anamaria Terepka
- Jenniefr Zulli

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Lynn Coker, General Manager, Outdoor Advertising Association of Connecticut

Mr. Coker opposes the bill, noting that there is an increasing trend in shopping centers, factories and office buildings near highways being converted into residential areas. Notes that sound could prevent the sight of commercial entities from motorists on the highway, eliminating their value or negatively impacting them. Notes that if this legislation passes a financial impact statement to include the impact on commercial properties.

Reported by: Sam Erickson & Patrick Riley

Date: 3/13/2025