

Strategies to Deal with Politically Sensitive Noise Situations

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**Washington State
Department of Transportation**

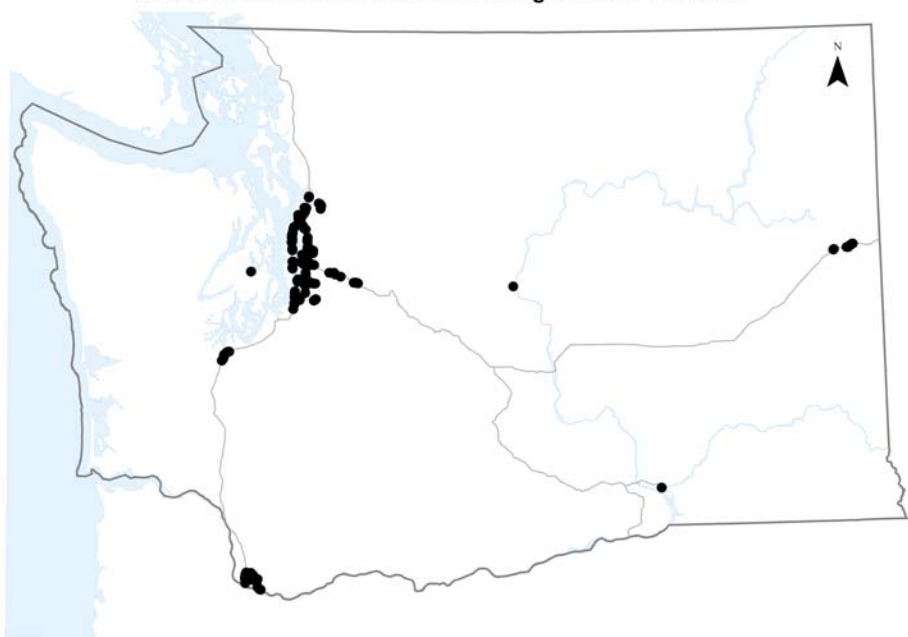
Have you heard this?

- I just moved here...when are you going to build a wall for me?
- My kids are at risk of a car flying into my backyard!
- I thought I wanted the barrier – but I didn't think it'd be THIS tall
- I love my view – but my neighbors really want this wall.
- Its ugly! The concrete makes me want to cry...
- A wall will keep all the air pollution and dirt from coming into my yard.
- This wall is too short
- What do you mean I have too much land to qualify for a barrier – I pay more taxes than anyone!
- Noise is much higher than you said it would be

And mostly...

- What do you mean you plan to expand the roadway toward my house and I don't qualify for a barrier?

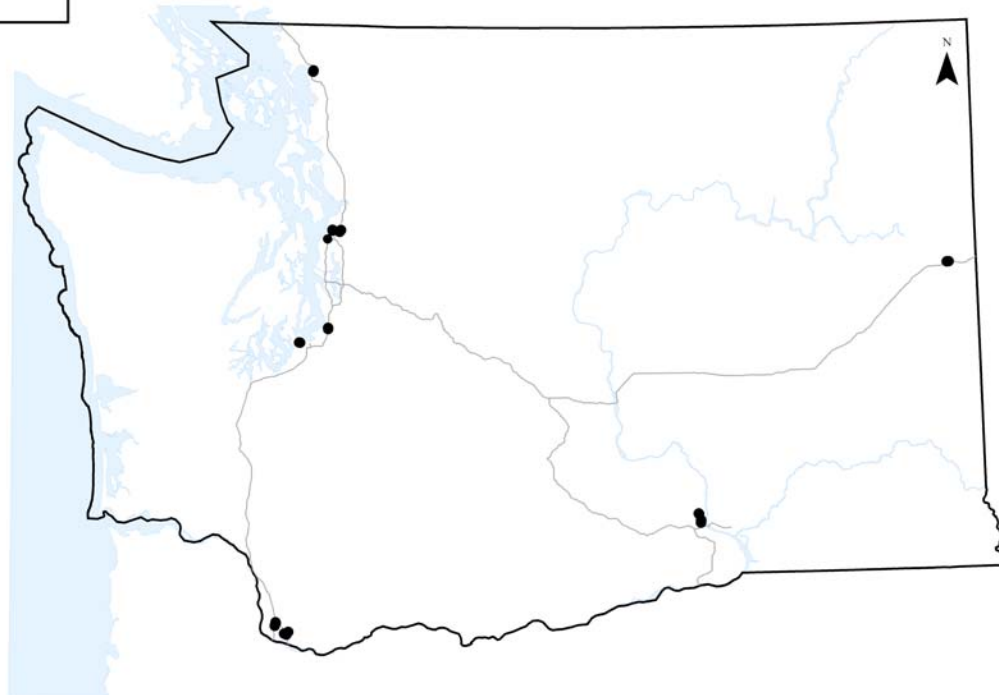
Noise Barriers Constructed in Washington from 1963-2004



Washington Score Card

- 79.3 miles of noise barriers – 1963 to 2006 (and growing)
- Avg current cost - \$53/ft²

Noise Barriers Constructed in Washington in 2005-2006



- Have Type 1 program – Type 2 program – starting “Noise Proviso”
- Actively looking at Noise Compatible Land Use options

Process

1. Set ground rules and stick to them...
2. Listen
3. Listen
4. Listen
5. Empathize
6. Explain
7. Be Fair
8. Be Firm
9. Be Innovative & Flexible
10. Manage Expectations – Live up to your word

Ground Rules

(even with written communication)

- All speech & actions respectful
- Only one person talks at a time
- Talk for yourself only – don't assume someone else's perspective
- All comments are valid comments

Listen

(don't even both trying to explain at first)

- Let everyone talk by turn...
- Capture concerns...write them down and confirm then (flip charts, notes and recaps, pictures)

Empathy

- Identify what connects you with them...
 - Your choices
 - Your house
 - Your field experiences

Explain

(and know what you're talking about)

- When all their issues are on the table...then you talk about noise during “your turn”
 - Start simple
 - Explain terms – checking back to assure you're not too slow or fast.
 - Explain outcomes – fair & equitable
 - Point to regulations – make rules plain
 - Draw pictures or bring graphics (beware of pitfalls of design visualizations)

Be Fair

- Show how your process is equitable for everyone
- ...yet their personal experience is still valuable and unique to themselves (a persons home is his/her castle)

Be Firm

(There are good reasons for what you do)

- The budget is limited for everyone in the state
- There are multiple priorities that projects need to meet (safety, maintenance, etc)
- Consistency is key...if we change what we do in your situation, we must also change it for everyone
- Equal protection clause of US constitution, Environmental Justice
- Not all neighborhoods and people think the same way – many are concerned about wasting money on noise mitigation
- L_{max} is not used for a very good reason...

Be Innovative & Flexible

(Green to Gray at Community Scale...and know where your bosses stand on the issues **beforehand**)

- Maintenance dirt – road sweepings
- Projects with excess earth nearby
- Technical assistance if they want to build their own – perhaps help with local height variance requests
- Local Improvement Districts (LIDs)
- Solid fencing
- Creative vegetative plans (You plant? They plant?)
- Bus stops – sidewalks - extra policy protection?
- For folks getting a barrier – put up a pole that show the **real** height

Manage Expectations

- Barriers and blocking site doesn't make it quiet – it just mutes
- New pavement doesn't make it quiet – it just mutes
- Not everyone will have the same experience – it depends on where you are
- If promise an outcome (especially aesthetic improvements...make sure the project engineer & contractor actually follow through)
- Vegetation always starts small...have patience (and a backup plan if vegetation dies)

...admit mistakes

if any...

And take a class in public speaking.

Good luck...

Questions?