

The hills of the Pike are alive with sound barriers

By Erin Smith/ Staff Writer

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The Massachusetts Turnpike Authority will finally build a sound barrier along Lincoln Street this year, but the fence will cover only half the street and will serve more to block snow than noise, state officials said last week.

Eight-foot tall screening fences will flank either side of an existing brick wall, providing 2,600 feet of highway coverage, or about half of the nearly mile-long stretch of Lincoln Street that faces the Turnpike.

The cedar wood fence being installed along Lincoln Street will serve more as a snow barrier than a sound barrier. The fence will keep snow off city streets when plows push snow into a newly constructed break, down along Lincoln Street, said Doug Hanchett, Turnpike Authority spokesman. Hanchett said the fence would provide some noise-reduction benefits.

A Turnpike Authority chief engineer will present the designs at the Allston Civic Association meeting at the Honan-Allston Library on Wednesday at 6 p.m.

State Rep. Kevin Honan said neighbors have been contacting his office for nearly a decade requesting that a barrier be put in place along Lincoln Street.

"This is a major victory and I know there are some people with concerns, so I urge them to come to the meeting," Honan said.

Barrios wants more

But state Sen. Jarrett Barrios said he would continue to lobby for a barrier that covers the entire length of Lincoln Street.

"We're making progress and moving in the right direction, but I don't see this as a solution by any stretch of the imagination," said Barrios.

Last fall Barrios, Honan and other local politicians met with Massachusetts Turnpike Authority officials to revive stalled talks of adding a sound barrier for Lincoln Street residents. Lincoln Street was rated No. 9 on the Turnpike Authority's list of the top sites most in need of a sound barrier.

So far, five of the 17 have received barriers.

In January, Turnpike Authority officials told the TAB there were no current plans to build a Lincoln Street this year.

But on Feb. 1, just a few days after the TAB printed that article, the Turnpike Authority board unanimously voted to award D & R General Contracting Inc. the Lincoln Street sound barrier contract for about \$195,000.

The project is included in a larger \$7.4 million deal to repave pike roads near Boston and build new break-down lanes, including one along Lincoln Street.

Public's turn?

With the Lincoln Street fence design completed and the contract awarded, it remains to be seen how much a public process will be involved in next week's meeting.

"I agree that it's quite perplexing," said Barrios, who stressed a community input process in his negotiations with the Turnpike Authority.

Last January, Hanchett told the TAB that the Turnpike Authority valued the importance of public hearings and that residents are always consulted about the design and material type of new barriers before construction.

"When we build these things, we talk to the local people," Hanchett told the TAB in January. "We don't try to ram anything down anybody's throat. We try to be good neighbors to all the communities we pass through."

The Turnpike Authority has been plagued by allegations of mismanagement as its Big Dig project has run billions of dollars over budget. But Hanchett still called it a "stupid question" when asked why the Turnpike Authority would consider paying contractors twice to work on Lincoln Street instead of completing the entire fence this year.

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