

## Turnpike officials block out Allston's noise complaints

By **Erin Smith**/ Staff Writer

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Residents want a little respect from the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority and demand to know why suburbs such as Newton get an unfair number of sound barriers.

"I can't tell you how many communities I have had to go to and say, you're not on the list. At least, you folks are on the list," Kevin Coen told residents during last week's Allston Civic Association meeting.

Coen, director of legislative affairs, said the Turnpike Authority's budget doesn't permit the Turnpike to build every sound barrier at once and there were no plans to build one on Lincoln Street in the near future.

Using the Turnpike Authority's own study, Lincoln Street is the ninth loudest site in the state. But, for reasons not entirely clear, the Turnpike Authority ignores its own study and ranks the state's sites by federal guidelines, which drops Allston to 17th on the list.

So far, five of the 17 sites have received barriers.

"When you start thinking about cost, Allston is your golden goose and there's nothing coming back to us," said ACA president Paul Berkeley, noting that Allston-Brighton tollbooths generate the largest revenue. "We should be at the top of the list, not No. 17."

Moving up

Some residents questioned the appearance that suburban communities seem to be ranked as higher priorities. The Turnpike Authority ranked the sites in 1992, but residents argue that density in the neighborhood has increased over the last 13 years and moved Allston higher on the list.

The MTA will add an 8-foot high cedar fence between Lincoln Street and the Turnpike when contractors build a breakdown lane from Waverly to Franklin streets this summer. Coen said the fence will do more to keep snow from overflowing into neighborhood streets than to decrease Turnpike noise.

"It's not a noise barrier. Someone said, 'I want a noise barrier.' Well everyone wants a noise barrier," said Kevin Coen, Director of legislative affairs for the MTA.

The MTA officials said more breakdown lanes are being added along the Turnpike to increase safety for commuters.

"So that the people in Newton have a safer commute and we get nothing," said Alcott Street resident Tom Lally.

Coen said the MTA could return later to add a sound barrier to Lincoln Street. But residents were skeptical that Turnpike Authority contractors would return later and knock down the fence just to add 4 additional feet.

Higher please

Sound barriers are typically between 12- to 20-foot high.

"By the federal formula their using, Newton has a higher noise level because cars drive at faster speeds through there," said state Rep. Kevin Honan.

But the studies don't take into account the noise generated by larger tractor trailers downshifting as they approach the Allston-Brighton tolls, Honan said.

Honan said he is starting a subcommittee next week with nearby neighbors to make recommendations to the MTA.

The fence will only cover about half of the nearly mile-long stretch of Lincoln Street that faces the Turnpike and Honan is hoping the entire length of the street can be included in construction plans.

(Editor's Note: Residents with questions can contact Michael Swanson , MTA Chief Engineer, 10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160, Boston, MA 02116.)

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