

SR 376 A62 Commercial Street Bridge Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Question # 1:

Why are sound barriers not being considered as part of this project as noise levels along I-376 (Parkway East) in this area are considerable?

Response:

As per the Code of Federal Regulations, the Commercial Street Bridge Project is classified as a Type III project. Type III projects are not eligible for a noise analysis because they are essentially roadway or bridge projects on the same alignment. The only time we consider a noise analysis and potential sound barrier installations is when we have a transportation project that increases the number of through lanes on the highway or any of the other situations listed below that are classified as Type I projects. In those cases, we conduct a noise study to determine if a sound barrier is warranted (66 dBA or higher in noise levels). Below is an excerpt from Publication 24, PennDOT's Project Level Highway Traffic Noise Handbook, that defines the policies and types of projects as it relates to noise abatement consideration.

It is PennDOT's policy to assess the highway traffic noise impacts of a transportation improvement project and to give consideration to the appropriate avoidance and/or abatement measures for those projects with noise impacts identified. Projects are classified based on the scope of the improvements, and the appropriate level of noise analysis as outlined below should be performed.

Type I Project - It is PennDOT's policy to assess the highway traffic noise impacts of transportation improvement projects and to give consideration to the incorporation of appropriate avoidance and/or mitigation measures into the design and construction of those federally aided and/or 100% state-funded Type I transportation improvement projects which have potential noise impacts. In order to consider incorporation of noise abatement measures, the appropriate level of highway traffic noise analysis must be completed to adequately answer all portions of the warranted, feasible, and reasonable criteria, which therefore justifies the recommendation to construct the proposed highway traffic noise mitigation measure. Proposed transportation improvement projects which are considered a Type I highway traffic noise project include the following:

(1) The construction of a highway on new location; or

(2) The physical alteration of an existing highway where there is either:

- (i) *Substantial Horizontal Alteration. A project that halves the distance between the traffic noise source and the closest receptor between the existing condition to the future build condition; or,*
 - (ii) *Substantial Vertical Alteration. A project that removes shielding therefore exposing the line-of-sight between the receptor and the traffic noise source. This is done by either altering the vertical alignment of the highway or by altering the topography between the highway traffic noise source and the receptor; or,*
- (3) *The addition of a through-traffic lane(s). This includes the addition of a through-traffic lane that functions as a HOV lane, High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane, bus lane, or truck climbing lane; or,*
 - (4) *The addition of an auxiliary lane*, except for when the auxiliary lane is a turn lane; or,*
 - (5) *The addition or relocation of interchange lanes or ramps added to a quadrant to complete an existing partial interchange; or,*
 - (6) *Restriping existing pavement for the purpose of adding a through-traffic lane or an auxiliary lane; or,*
 - (7) *The addition of a new or substantial alteration of a weigh station, rest stop, ride-share lot or toll plaza.*
 - (8) *If a project is determined to be a Type I project, then the entire project area as defined in the environmental document is a Type I project.*

**Per FHWA FAQs issued in January 2015, the addition of an auxiliary lane is considered a Type I project if it is in excess of 2500' in length.*

Type II Project – Federally-Funded

Type II projects are proposed federal and/or federal-aid transportation improvement projects for highway traffic noise abatement (construction of noise barriers) on an existing highway. PennDOT does not currently participate in a Type II program. If the Department chooses to participate in a Type II program, a priority system, based on a variety of factors, must be developed and approved by the FHWA. The development and implementation of Type II projects are not mandated under CFR 23 U.S.C 109(i) and are, therefore, not required or typically supported with federal aid. If supported, a federally funded Type II transportation improvement project must adhere to the guidelines laid out in 23 CFR 772. The appropriate level highway traffic noise analysis must be completed to adequately answer all portions of the warranted, feasible, and reasonable criteria, which therefore justifies the recommendation to construct the proposed highway traffic noise mitigation measure. Questions regarding Federally Funded Type II Projects should be directed to PennDOT Central Office Environmental Staff.

Type II Project – State-Funded

PennDOT periodically receives requests for highway traffic noise abatement along existing roadways. PennDOT does not actively participate in funding Type II highway transportation noise abatement projects due to resource constraints. In cases where noise abatement is legislatively directed for specific geographic areas, the projects must meet all Department criteria for warrants, feasibility and reasonableness in order for the noise abatement to be constructed.

Type III Project – These projects include those not classified as a Type I or Type II. These can include rehabilitation of an existing highway (non-capacity improvements), online bridge replacements/rehabilitations, non-through lane intersection improvements (i.e., turning lanes), etc. Generally, the list of projects described in 23 CFR 771.117(c) and (d) comprise the list of Type III projects (with some exceptions as outlined in FHWA’s Highway Traffic Noise: Analysis and Abatement Guidance, page 18). When evaluating a potential Type III project, it is essential that the project elements be thoroughly reviewed to assure that none of the conditions or potential noise effects previously listed in the Type I Project paragraph exist. In certain instances, this review could require some simplified FHWA TNM noise analyses to confirm the non-existence of potential noise impacts.

Additional information may be obtained from the following resources:

- Code of Federal Regulations (23 CFR 772) - [Electronic Code of Federal Regulations \(eCFR\)](#)
- FHWA guidance – <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/noise/>
- PennDOT Publication 24 “Project Level Highway Traffic Noise Handbook” - <https://www.dot.state.pa.us/public/pubsforms/Publications/PUB%2024.pdf>

Question # 2:

Emergency Services provided by the City of Pittsburgh to Swisshelm Park residents rely on Commercial Street for access. Will the Design Team coordinate with emergency service providers to ensure there are no interruptions to this critical service during the closure of Commercial Street?

Response:

During the Final Design Phase our Design Team will coordinate with nearby Emergency Service providers to inform them of the project schedule and anticipated closures for both Commercial Street and I-376 for continuity of services. A Public Officials’ Meeting and Public Open House will be held during the Final Design Phase to relay tentative closure dates to the public and to ensure appropriate coordination with emergency service providers.

Question # 3:

What is the best source for project updates as the project nears the construction phase?

Response:

Please visit the District 11-0 Website for project updates and notifications by utilizing the following link: <https://www.penndot.gov/RegionalOffices/district-11/PublicMeetings/AlleghenyCounty/Pages/CommercialStreetBridgeReplacement.aspx>

At your convenience you can also contact the PennDOT Project Manager, Mike Szurley, at miszurley@pa.gov or 412-429-5035 with any questions.

Question # 4:

Will bike lanes be included in this structure replacement project?

Response:

As I-376 (Parkway East) is a limited-access highway, bike lanes will not be incorporated as part of the design process. Additionally, no existing bike facilities exist to tie into along I-376 as the structure is positioned outside the portal of the Squirrel Hill Tunnel.

Question # 5:

Will the Frick Park Trail be maintained during construction?

Response:

The Frick Park Trail will be maintained during construction to the extent possible. Closures of the trail within the project limits are anticipated for erection of the steel members and during the 2-3 week closure of I-376 to perform the lateral slide of the proposed structure. Notifications will be provided in advance of any closures to inform trail users. Shielding will be provided over the trail during construction activities to protect trail users.

Question # 6:

What is the anticipated timeframe for the closure of I-376 Parkway East?

Response:

The tentative schedule shows the closure of I-376 and Commercial Street occurring for 2-3 weeks during the month of July within the 2025 construction season. This schedule will be further refined as the design team progresses Final Design activities. A Public Open House will be held during Final Design phase to communicate anticipated closure dates to the public.

Question # 7:

Will the design team consider single face concrete barrier in lieu of the proposed PA Bridge Barrier which utilizes a rail element?

Response:

The design team is currently evaluating the barrier type for the Commercial Street Bridge. Details will be further refined as the project progresses during the Final Design Phase.

Question # 8:

Are any capacity improvements anticipated as part of the structure replacement?

Response:

No capacity improvements are included within the scope of work. The proposed typical cross section will provide two (2) eastbound and two (2) westbound travel lanes.

Question # 9:

An access road to the Summerset at Frick Park Townhomes is under design to tie into Commercial Street. Will both projects occur at the same time?

Response:

The design team has been coordinating with the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA) regarding enhancements being made to the Summerset at Frick Park Townhomes parcel. Coordination will continue during the Final Design phase to ensure these projects do not interfere with one another regarding access or planned roadway closures.

Question # 10:

With the increased capacity of the proposed structure will hazardous materials be permitted to travel along this corridor?

Response:

Given the close proximity to the Squirrel Hill Tunnel, hazardous and flammable materials are already restricted from utilizing the corridor. The increased capacity of the proposed structure will not change the hazardous material restrictions which are currently in place.

Question # 11:

Outside of the 2-3 week closure of I-376 Parkway East will there be any traffic restrictions?

Response:

During peak hours two (2) lanes of traffic will be maintained at all times in both the westbound and eastbound direction. Short-term shoulder and single lane closures may occur overnight and during the weekend to perform roadway widening, ITS updates, and to deliver materials to the project site. A weekend closure may be necessary to install the proposed sign structures in advance of the lateral slide. All restrictions will be communicated in advance through PennDOT District 11-0 Press Releases.

Question # 12:

During the 2-3 week closure of I-376 Parkway East will the contractor work around the clock?

Response:

Yes, the construction schedule will be extremely aggressive and will require the contractor to be on-site around the clock. Night work is anticipated to meet this aggressive schedule.

Question # 13:

Will the design team modify the intersection between the Frick Park Trail and Commercial Street?

Response:

There is potential for the existing intersection to be modified as part of a permanent trail realignment which his being coordinated with the City of Pittsburgh during the Final Design Phase.

Question # 14:

Will any improvements be made to the South Braddock Avenue or Squirrel Hill Interchange as part of the project?

Response:

No improvements are anticipated at this time. Given the higher traffic volumes that are anticipated at these interchanges, off-duty police officers will be positioned strategically at signalized intersections to ensure the steady flow of traffic.

Question # 15:

How will the project site be restored post construction? Will the existing trees be surveyed and replaced?

Response:

A detailed site restoration/landscaping plan will be developed during the Final Design phase. During Preliminary Engineering, a tree survey was performed to document the existing tree species and diameter at breast height (DBH) of all trees so that any tree which is removed can be replaced on a 1" for 1" basis.

Question # 16:

Will Commercial Street be repaved post construction given the transport of heavy equipment and construction materials?

Response:

This will be further reviewed during the Final Design phase with the City of Pittsburgh.