

# Sound barriers recommended

By **STEPHEN PAUSE**

As part of its draft Environmental Impact Statement regarding the 6.7 mile reconstruction of the Thruway between exits 23 and 24, the state Thruway Authority has recommended 10 of the 15 noise barriers originally proposed for the area along the highway.

The EIS, compiled by Clough Harbour and Associates, LLP, described the project as designed to alleviate traffic congestion, improve the pavement conditions, and have the potential for better response times by emergency personnel. The bulk of the construction will involve the addition of a third lane in the median that would service traffic in both directions.

Don Reeb, president of the McKownville Improvement Association, said he was pleased with most of the recommendations for the sound barriers, but was disappointed that others were left out of the plans.

All five of the barriers within the town of Guilderland that were included in the study were recommended by the EIS, but five within the city of Albany and town of Bethlehem were deemed too expensive or not effective enough to be included.

"Based on the analysis, the remaining five barriers would not provide a substantial noise level reduction and/or would involve a cost-per-unit benefit that greatly exceeds \$50,000; thus, these barriers were eliminated from consideration," the EIS said.

Reeb said the Schoolhouse Road barrier, which was not one of the 15 included in the EIS, was turned down because of the way the state conducts its sound survey. He said the state only took into account the impact on residences, not the businesses, such as the pediatrician offices on Schoolhouse Road.

Reeb said the association

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plans to make its suggestions heard at the upcoming public hearing.

Guilderland Town Supervisor Ken Runion said that his office is still reviewing the document and would comment at a later date. In a letter dated March 1, 2005, Runion expressed the concerns of residents about the noise impacts of the project and stressed that noise barriers should be built to protect the neighborhoods.

Bethlehem Town Supervisor Theresa Egan had similar comments in letter dated Feb. 23, 2005. Both letters were included as part of the study.

The roadway of I-87 will be reconstructed with new pavement that is expected to have a life of 50 years. The travel lanes and shoulders will also be redone.

There were a total of six proposals made, and the one chosen was deemed the most

feasible.

The two-year project is slated to begin in 2009 at an estimated cost of \$71.4 million dollars, which will be funded by the Thruway Authority. Approximately \$6.4 million of that will be for the sound barriers.

The reconstruction between exits 23 and 24 is the first

project to come from the Albany Corridor Study, which was conducted between 21A and 25A.

There will be a public hearing to discuss the proposed reconstruction on March 14 from 6 to 9 p.m. at St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church, 400 Whitehall Road, Albany.