



Recycled PVC Environmental Barriers can save Billions of Dollars on Highway and Rail Projects

*Highway and rail improvements under federal stimulus and state road plan will require
increased use of sight and sound barriers*

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LISLE, IL June 18th, 2009 - Mitigating negative quality-of-life impacts of highway and rail improvement and expansion projects is an increasingly important aspect of planning for state and local government transportation officials. The boost in highway work under the federal stimulus highlights the need for more cost-effective and environmentally sustainable sight and sound barriers.

Sight and sound barrier systems made of recycled PVC are as much as one-third the cost to manufacture and install as pre-cast. The cost for pre-cast barriers averages about \$2.6 million per mile of highway, compared to about \$1.8 million for the PVC alternative. Savings derive from much lower manufacturing, transportation and installation costs.

A 2008 report by the group Transportation Alternatives entitled Streets to Live By states that property values increase by 0.4 percent for every point reduction in decibels. That can add up to as much as 10 percent on the value of a home, according to the report.

Pre-cast concrete barriers remain the standard for most transportation agencies despite the availability of lower-cost, more energy-saving alternatives.

For instance, the heavier pre-cast walls require about 330 truck trips per mile of highway barrier construction, as compared to just 7.5 trucks for PVC. Pre-cast requires cranes for installation; not so with PVC.

But many transportation officials have been slow to approve and issue specifications for PVC, preventing developers and contractors from proposing the newer product when they bid on projects.

"It can be a catch 22 when transportation agencies are not aware of newer, cheaper alternatives," said Jim Ford, a principal for Harder, Luckey & Hargrave (HLH). "Developers don't offer it because agencies don't ask for it in their RFPs, and agencies don't ask for it because developers aren't offering it."

HLH makes two brands of recycled PVC products, Tuf-Barrier™ and Silent Protector Plus™. The lightweight systems are designed as reflective (Tuf-Barrier™) or absorptive (Silent Protector Plus™) noise barriers. The products, which have been installed throughout the U.S., have been designed to meet or exceed the standard specifications for noise barrier design.

PVC products have long been produced because of low cost to produce, durability and strength. Additionally, the PVC Tuf-Barrier™ and Silent Protector Plus™ products require no maintenance, are fire retardant and graffiti resistant; attributes that add to the safety and cost savings over the life of the noise barrier.

Most states aren't set up to use the PVC product, even though its in use in some parts of the country, according to Ford. The State of Florida, for instance, will only permit pre-cast on its projects; Illinois still hasn't issued specifications.

An early adopter is Washington State, where the Washington State Noise Wall Cost Effective Aesthetics Task Force in 2008 set in place testing of new barrier materials for the Washington State DOT because of the "potential cost savings." The panel specifically tested and approved the Tuf-Barrier™ system based on the cost savings, aesthetics and maintenance free qualities of the product.

Residents and businesses along major transportation corridors increasingly are demanding barriers. Residents of Hamilton, NJ are so up in arms about the lack of barriers on state's turnpike expansion that last week Mayor John Bencivengo threatened to withhold sewer permits required by the Turnpike Authority. State officials balked at what they said would be a \$3 to \$4 million per mile price increase for the project.

"It just doesn't need to be that way," said Ford, "when you have a product that has been in the marketplace for a number of years, has been tested and proven as effective as the current standards, utilizes recycled materials and reduces energy consumption at a significant cost savings to taxpayers."

Company Profile

HLW Walls is the sole manufacturer of the Tuf-Barrier™, Silent Protector™, and the Silent Protector Plus™ noise wall systems: an industry leader in maintenance free alternatives in the sound mitigation wall industry. With corporate offices in the United States and Canada, HLH Walls sells its unique products worldwide through a network of affiliated dealers. The Tuf-Barrier™ and Silent Protector Plus™ sound barrier systems meet or exceed AASHTO guidelines for key mass requirements, wind loads and decibel reduction criteria.