

Residents want freeway noise relief

By Tim Smith
staff writer

Their homes and properties are in a rural, picturesque pocket of Southfield, located on tree-lined back roads such as Pebblebrook and Pebblestone, east of Inkster Road and north of I-696.

Once it was quiet, too. But with just-begun freeway construction almost in their backyards, residents say trucks seemingly "10 miles long" now produce enough noise to "shake a neighborhood." Litter is tossed from traffic onto their land, which slopes sharply downward from the road.

Residents there have had enough and want protection for their unique section of town. They will petition the Michigan Department of Transportation for a noise barrier.

"We may not win, but at least we'll have our opinions expressed," said Pebblebrook resident Alice Kambouris, whose two-acre property backs up to I-696.

THEY WANT the barrier built on the north side of I-696, west to Inkster Road from Franklin Point Townhouses, to preserve the natural beauty of the region.

But by 1994, most of that stretch will be protected from noise anyway, according to Paul Garceau, assistant district engineer for MDOT.

Garceau said that there are plans to build a 3,400-foot noise barrier that would block freeway sounds from residents of Franklin Point, Franklin Orchard Townhouses and the "eight nearest homes to the freeway" west of the two complexes.

The barrier would be built when a westbound I-696 on-ramp is constructed near Tyler, east of the Pebblebrook/Pebblestone area, Garceau said. He added that it has not been determined whether the barrier will be a concrete wall or dirt berm.

A 2,600-foot barrier also will be built in Farmington Hills, on the freeway's south side, west of Inkster, Garceau said.

Five Pebblebrook homes nearest I-696 will be protected by the noise barrier, said Paul Terran, I-696 representative for the city of Southfield.

One of those is owned by David Fracassi, son of the Southfield mayor. Fracassi said his home is about 40 yards from freeway right-of-way property.



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

The sounds of I-696 near Inkster Road are upsetting some Southfield residents, including Alice Kambouris (left) and neighbor Jessie Galuardi, who want the state to build a barrier

along the freeway's north side to protect their homes from noise. Kambouris' two-acre property backs up to I-696, east of Inkster.

"THE TRAFFIC NOISE you grow used to, and right now it isn't too bad. But it's going to get worse before it gets better," said Fracassi, referring to the I-696 widening project, which began July 11.

"With construction, I foresee a lot of traffic jams. And with the hot weather, there will be a lot of short-tempered people honking their horns," Fracassi said.

However, Garceau said traffic "could double, but the increase in noise would be barely perceptible."

He added that construction noise also shouldn't be a major problem. "With the Lodge (project) we took all the pavement out, and we received very little complaint."

While Fracassi and other residents living close to I-696 will be protected from freeway noise, others likely will not.

TALKS WITH MDOT officials last March indicated that others with natural sound buffers between their homes and I-696, such as Kambouris, probably wouldn't be included in abatement plans, Terran said.

But according to Kambouris — whose ample property includes flood plains, a stream and apple orchard — the natural buffer theory is off the mark.

"The noise vibrates across the valley," Kambouris said. "And the reason people moved to this area is because it was beautiful and quiet,

with a lot of nature and animals."

Pebblestone resident Jessie Galuardi agreed. "I think it's one of the nicest areas in Southfield. We would like to try and keep it like that as much as possible."

But the residents now are bracing for a series of construction projects that they believe will shatter the solitude of their neighborhood.

On July 11, the widening of I-696 from four to eight lanes was begun. That project should be finished by late 1989, Garceau said.

LATE NEXT year, the long-awaited freeway extension through Oak Park, Southfield and Lathrup Village will open to complete what Kambouris described as a "great north-

ern bypass for Detroit."

Meanwhile, the I-696 interchange project near Inkster is being drawn up for 1994, and Tyler will be paved as a link between 11 and 12 Mile.

Adding to the areas woes is construction of a bank building on Inkster's west side, near the I-696 overpass.

"We're going to have a tremendous amount of noise and pollution, in terms of litter dropped from the expressway (after I-696 opens)," Kambouris said.

Galuardi said, "This area's a mess right now. We have everything on all sides."

Fracassi said he hopes the projects won't force him out of the home he moved into about one year ago.

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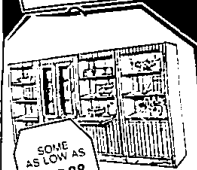
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