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## South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

### Work begins on I-595 sound walls

#### State plans to spend \$28 million on sound walls as part of \$1.8 billion makeover of I-595

By Michael Turnbull

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When Interstate 595 was planned in the 1980s, noise wasn't a big concern.

Nob Hill Road trailed off into dirt south of State Road 84.

Cows were more common than commuters in west Broward County.

It's not so quiet any more.

Nearly 20 years after it opened, the incessant roar of rubber pounding the road has made living near I-595 like waking up next to the Daytona 500.

Relief is on the way for most people whose homes and yards abut the corridor.

A big chunk of the state's upcoming \$1.8 billion makeover of I-595 is \$28 million for sound walls that if stacked end-to-end would stretch more than 11 miles.


Work began this month on the first wall on the north bank of the North New River Canal, the boundary between I-595 and the customized homes of Hawks Landing in Plantation.

At nearly a mile long and 22 feet high, it is the longest and tallest of the barriers planned.

Drivers can't help but notice the concrete pillars rising out of the ground and wonder if the ritzy neighborhood is being given preferential treatment.

"Are government funds going toward sound-proofing the homes of millionaires? I sure hope not," said Erik Martinez, who drives I-595 every day in his commute from Plantation. "The wall is not being put up anywhere else."

State officials say politics play no role in deciding which communities get sound walls and when they get built.



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The Hawks Landing wall must be built ahead of the other barriers because it's tied to construction of a new recreational trail.

Part of the I-595 makeover includes moving a section of the existing trail to the north side of the canal. When I-595 is widened, the new westbound lanes will move next to the canal.

A big crane will be used to install the sound wall panels and that work must be done before the trail is paved.

"There wouldn't be room to get a crane in there to install the noise wall panels without damaging the concrete trail," said I-595 construction manager Paul Lampley.

When engineers surveyed residents on the north side of I-595 about where they wanted walls, some, like those in Hawks Landing preferred them on the north side of the canal. Residents there do not have direct access to the canal.

But in neighborhoods like Plantation Landings and Isla del Sol, some residents have back yards that run to the canal's edge and dock boats there. They preferred the walls on the south side of the canal to preserve that access.

The sand-colored walls will be stamped with images of Florida wildlife and plants.

"The idea is that 595 moves from the Everglades to the ocean so the areas closer to the Everglades will have images that reflect that and then transition into what you would expect to find along the ocean," said I-595 spokeswoman Laila Haddad.

The Florida Department of Transportation decides who gets a barrier by using a formula that takes into account the cost of a sound wall and the number of homeowners who would benefit.

Future sound levels must be expected to reach 66 decibels -- equal to a vacuum cleaner or a noisy restaurant -- to make a community eligible for a noise wall, and the wall has to cut the noise by at least 5 decibels. Also, the wall can't cost more than \$42,000 for each home it benefits.

Engineers initially determined 14 neighborhoods met the criteria. To help more neighborhoods qualify, they averaged the cost of the all walls over the entire 101/2 miles of I-595 that will be rebuilt. Typically, the cost of one wall is averaged for each neighborhood it serves.

That meant seven additional neighborhoods now qualify for noise walls, Lampley said.

But not every neighborhood that qualified wanted the buffers.

Two neighborhoods on the south side of I-595 -- Paradise Village, a manufactured home rental community, and the Palms apartments, both in Davie -- qualified, but the owners of both developments declined to have walls built.

"That's not too uncommon with the owners of a rental property," Lampley said. "They like the visibility from the highway."

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