NOISE 9

9.1 Noise Environment

INTRODUCTION

Midway - Pacific Highway is an urban community with a mix of uses and major transportation facilities. The community has a higher ambient noise level from commercial and industrial land uses, freeways, major streets, aircraft operations, and rail operations. Figure 9-1 illustrates the projected future noise contours from freeways, major roads, and rail lines. The noise contours do not reflect changes in noise levels due to topography such as the freeway elevation above ground level or other physical barriers including vegetation, walls, or buildings. For noise contours specific to airport operations, refer to the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan for San Diego International Airport. As the community's commercial areas continue to grow and expand with new commercial establishments and as the villages and districts develop with mixed commercial-residential developments, instances of exposure to the unwanted effects of noise could become more prevalent in the community.

Motor vehicle traffic noise levels vary based on traffic volume, speed, and mix of vehicles.

NOISE GOAL

- Minimize the exposure of residential and other land uses to excessive noise levels.

Community Noise Equivalent Level, or CNEL, is the noise rating scale used for the evaluation of land use compatibility. The CNEL rating represents the average of equivalent noise levels, measured in A-weighted decibels (dBA), at a location for a 24-hour period, with upward adjustments added to account for increased noise sensitivity in the evening and night periods. The A-weighted filter places a greater emphasis on frequencies within the range of the human ear. The General Plan provides compatibility guidelines for evaluating land uses based on noise levels. The General Plan specifies that noise levels at or below 70 dBA are conditionally compatible for multi-family residential uses if sound attenuation measures are included in project design to reduce the interior noise levels to 45 dBA. While typically incompatible, the General Plan conditionally allows mixed-use residential development along streets affected by vehicle traffic noise levels up to 75 dBA with interior noise attenuation. Typical attenuation measures are addressed in the General Plan. The policies in this Element also provides site planning recommendations for mixed or multiple use developments to address commercial, industrial, and transportation noise.

9.1 NOISE ENVIRONMENT

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY

Noise from light industrial and heavy commercial uses can affect adjacent noise-sensitive uses. Commercial and industrial activity noise is either emitted by activities on site or through truck deliveries. Site planning and integrating noise attenuation measure in new buildings will reduce interior noise levels from commercial and industrial activity.

MOTOR VEHICLE TRAFFIC NOISE

Vehicle traffic noise is related to the traffic volume, speed, and mix of vehicles. Major roadways including I-8, I-5, Rosecrans Street, Camino Del Rio West, Pacific Highway, Midway Drive, and Sports Arena Boulevard are the primary sources of motor vehicle noise within the community. Noise from trucks driving or parked and idling along roads can also be a source of annoyance for noise-sensitive uses. Heavy trucks that support airport freight and distribution operations generate more noise than medium trucks that support commercial and light industrial uses, cars, and light trucks.

RAIL NOISE

Freight trains, intercity rail (Amtrak), commuter rail (Coaster), and light rail transit (Trolley) can generate high, relatively brief, intermittent noise events within the vicinity of at-grade rail crossings where horns and crossing bells are sounded. Federal regulations require trains to sound their horns at all roadway-rail at-grade crossings. Horns, whistles and bells on the moving trolley vehicles, and horns from freight trains, combined with stationary bells at grade crossings can generate excessive noise levels that can affect noise-sensitive land uses. To minimize excess train horn noise, the federal government allows the establishment of train horn "quiet zones." This requires the implementation of safety measures to compensate for the loss of the train horn usage. Additionally, the Mobility Element supports roadway-rail grade separation, since this will eliminate the need for bells and horns at the existing grade crossing and reduce noise.

AIRCRAFT NOISE

Aircraft overflight from San Diego International Airport (SDIA) and related noise affects portions of Midway - Pacific Highway. Aircraft noise can affect people living and working in Midway - Pacific Highway to varying degrees, depending on a person's level of sensitivity. SDIA prohibits most late-night takeoffs to help limit noise impacts.

The community is within the SDIA Airport Influence Area, which is the boundary for the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP). The Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) for San Diego County prepares the ALUCP, and the City implements the ALUCP as discussed in the Introduction chapter. Aircraft noise is one of the factors that the state-required ALUCP addresses with policies for land use compatibility, as

High, intermittent, relatively brief noise events can occur in the vicinity of at-grade rail crossings.

discussed in the Land Use Element. The ALUCP conditionally allows residential and non-residential uses in areas exposed to airport noise at or above 60 dBA CNEL if noise attenuation is provided. The General Plan conditionally allows future multiple unit and mixed-use residential uses in the areas above the 65 dBA CNEL airport noise contour within the SDIA Airport Influence Area to maintain and enhance community character and urban form.

POLICIES

NE-1.1 Address commercial and industrial activity noise that could affect nearby residential uses and other sensitive receptor uses when planning new development.

NE-1.2 Incorporate site planning, architectural features, and/or operational measures as applicable to provide for noise compatibility between uses.

NE-1.3 Include noise attenuation measures in new development to ensure an interior noise level of 45 dBA for sensitive receptor uses near noise-generating activities.

NE-1.4 Ensure that new development is compatible with the noise policies of the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan for San Diego International Airport.

NE-1.5 Coordinate with rail operators to establish a train horn "quiet zone" at the Washington Street and Noell Street at-grade rail crossings as an interim measure to roadway-rail grade separation.

NE-1.6 Utilize site design to create physical separation between noise sensitive uses and noise-generating activities where possible.

- **A.** Consider using building setbacks along streets with high noise levels to increase distance between the street and residential buildings, as well as to enhance the urban realm and pedestrian environment.
- **B.** Consider siting non-residential uses or buildings closer to noise-generating uses or transportation facilities to shield residential buildings from noise, and separate or shield residential uses from delivery areas for non-residential uses for mixed-use and multiple-use developments on larger sites.

NE-1.7 Utilize appropriate operational measures to reduce noise for conditionally permitted commercial uses in areas where eating, drinking, entertainment, and assembly establishments are adjacent to residential uses.

- **A.** Consider appropriate window open/close hours for eating and drinking establishments.
- **B.** Consider lowering the volume of amplified music during the last hour of service.
- **C.** Encourage the use of evening security staff to control crowds as well as loitering after hours.
- **D.** Provide noise attenuation measures to reduce the noise levels generated from the establishment, to the degree possible, within their premises with special attention to "open air" concept establishments (such as beer gardens or large outdoor eating and drinking venues.
- **E.** Encourage bars that serve food to keep their kitchens open after alcohol has stopped being served to encourage a slower flow of people leaving the establishment.

NE-1.8 Incorporate sound attenuation measures such as sound absorbent wall/ceiling materials, sound walls, and dense, drought-tolerant landscaping where commercial uses such as restaurants and bars are permitted, especially adjacent to residential areas.

NE-1.9 Encourage distribution uses located near residential uses to facade or shield loading areas, utilize smaller vehicles, and turn off vehicle engines during loading whenever possible.

NE-1.10 Encourage truck deliveries for businesses to occur on commercial streets during day-time hours with designated commercial loading zones.

NE-1.11 Encourage private waste pick-up franchise hauler agreements with the City to be organized by geographic area to reduce unnecessary frequency of pick-ups and instances of multiple haulers servicing the same area.

NE-1.12 Encourage parking structures adjacent to residential uses to incorporate exterior screening that reduces external noise and light impacts.

NE-1.13 Apply standard noise controls to reduce construction noise levels emanating from new construction to minimize disruption and annoyance to adjacent residential or other noise sensitive uses.

- **A.** Limit construction activity hours.
- **B.** Equip all internal combustion engine-driven equipment with intake and exhaust mufflers that are in good condition, and appropriate for the equipment.
- **C.** Locate stationery noise-generating equipment (e.g. compressors) as far as possible from adjacent residential receivers.
- **D.** Acoustically shield stationary equipment located near residential receivers with temporary noise barriers.
- **E.** Utilize "quiet" air compressors, and other stationary noise sources where technology exists.
- **F.** Encourage construction contractors to prepare a detailed construction plan identifying the schedule for major noise generating construction activities that includes coordination with adjacent residents so that construction activities can be scheduled to minimize noise disturbance.
- **G.** Encourage construction contractors to designate a "disturbance coordinator" who would be responsible for responding to any complaints about construction noise.

Appropriate operational measures should be utilized to ensure that noise from eating, drinking, and entertainment uses does not have negative effects on adjacent residential uses.

FIGURE 9-1: PROJECTED ROAD & RAIL NOISE CONTOURS