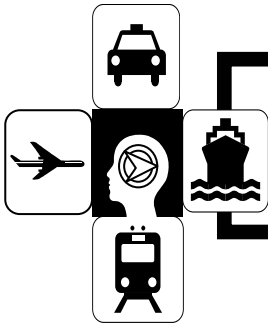


JERSEY DOT'S

"Turning Problems into Solutions"



Tech Brief

Good Neighbor Privacy Fence

Need a solution?
Think Jersey DOT

FHWA/NJ-2003-014

December 21, 2004

SUMMARY

Privacy fencing which is typically 6 to 8 ft in height is a lightweight, non-engineered installation which is not designed to provide noise mitigation. In keeping with NJDOT's Good Neighbor Program, for locations where noise barriers are not required or feasible, privacy fencing can provide a visual screen between the homeowner and the highway. This visual and physical screening has the potential to significantly improve the quality of life for people living adjacent to highways.

Commercially available privacy fencing made of Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) (Fig. 1) or thin precast concrete panels (Fig. 2) can provide an aesthetically pleasing visual screen for both the property owner and the highway user. These fences typically are made as "good neighbor fences" where both sides are visually the same with no front or back. With minor component modifications both PVC and concrete fences are low maintenance installations with an expected life of 25 to 50 years.



Figure 1. Six-Foot PVC Privacy Fence



Figure 2. Thin Panel Concrete Wall – FENCESTONE™

SO, HERE'S THE PROBLEM

At double frontage lots where a highway is located at the rear of a residential property, some separation between the highway and the backyard of the homeowner is desirable. In keeping with NJDOT's Good Neighbor Program, for locations where noise barriers are not required or feasible, privacy fencing can provide a visual screen between the homeowner and the highway. Fencing such as wood, chain link, concrete, and metal have often not provided adequate visual screening, were difficult to build, were ugly, did not last long, or required too much maintenance. The objective of the study was to select an aesthetically pleasing, durable, easy to install, low maintenance privacy fence that would be appropriate for New Jersey.

HERE'S WHAT WE DID...

The team contacted US and foreign transportation agencies to review their privacy fence practices. Fence manufacturers and contractors were approached to gain an understanding of factors affecting the various types of fence installations.

Site inspection of existing fences was conducted to document fence deterioration and distress and evaluated maintenance and repair requirements. The inspections and discussions lead to an understanding of the problems and shortcomings associated with various fence types, materials, and installations. This provided the basis for evaluating and selecting privacy fencing suitable for use in New Jersey.

HERE'S WHAT WE CAME UP WITH

Commercially available privacy fencing 6 to 8 ft high made of PVC or thin precast concrete panels should be used in locations where such fencing can significantly improve the quality of life for people living adjacent to highways. PVC and concrete fencing are typically made with both sides visually the same (with no back side) and are available in aesthetically pleasing styles.

It is envisioned that for the majority of installations, PVC will be the fence material of choice. The PVC fence sections and posts are light and can be readily carried and installed without special equipment. PVC privacy fencing can provide an aesthetically pleasing, low maintenance, economical installation at most locations.

For locations where the fencing is set close to the roadway and where a high volume of traffic is present, the more massive thin panel concrete fencing should be considered. Thin panel concrete privacy fencing is an aesthetically pleasing, more massive, low maintenance solution for special locations where the additional expense is warranted.

THE BOTTOM LINE...

Commercially available 6 to 8 ft. high privacy fencing made of PVC or thin precast concrete panels can provide an aesthetically pleasing visual screen for both the property owner and the highway user. This visual and physical screening has the potential to significantly improve the quality of life for people living adjacent to highways.

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A final report is available online at
<http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/refdata/research/>

If you would like a copy of the full report, please FAX the NJDOT, Bureau of Research, Technology Transfer Group at (609) 530-3722 or send an e-mail to Research.Bureau@dot.state.nj.us and ask for:

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