

# From the Ministries

## **NHTA TO ADD NOISE TO ELECTRIC CARS**

The US National Highway Traffic Administration has proposed minimum sound standards for hybrid and electric vehicles that create noise that can be heard above ambient street noise. NHTSA estimates adding warning noise to all-electric and hybrid vehicles could prevent 2,800 pedestrian and bicycle accidents annually. "This proposal will help keep everyone using our nation's streets and roadways safer, whether they are motorists, bicyclists or pedestrians, and especially the blind and visually impaired," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. The Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act of 2010 required all vehicles traveling less than 18 mph to make a certain amount of noise to alert

pedestrians. Hybrids and electrics would also have to produce a warning sound in reverse. Going forward the sound would change volume and increase to a higher pitch as the vehicle accelerated or a lower pitch as it decelerated. Above 18 mph the vehicles make enough noise to be heard by passersby. NHTSA estimates the cost of a speaker system and digital processor at \$30 to \$35 per vehicle. "Our proposal would allow manufacturers the flexibility to design different sounds for different makes and models while still providing an opportunity for pedestrians, bicyclists and the visually impaired to detect and recognize a vehicle and make a decision about whether it is safe to cross the street," NHTSA Administrator David Strickland said.

## **LONDON ASSEMBLY CALLS FOR ACTION ON HEATHROW AIRPORT NOISE**

Members of the London Assembly's Health and Environment Committee believe alternating runways will provide residents with relief from flight disruption. The politicians also suggested that an independent body should take care of mitigation and compensation schemes for both Heathrow and London City airports, and that a combined noise map is drawn up. The recommendations were made in response to the Government's Draft Aviation Policy Framework consultation. The London Assembly, including Mayor Boris Johnson, unanimously opposes any expansion at Heathrow. To tackle the environmental impacts of aviation, the consultation

response also makes recommendations on research into developing cleaner aircraft and fuel technology. Chairman Murad Qureshi said: "Tackling the impacts of aviation is a big issue, both globally and for the people who live close to airports and bear the brunt of the detrimental effects. They could be in danger of serious health consequences. "As politicians and experts gear up to discuss various options for airport expansion, there are understandably concerns that more runways and airports will bring increased noise and emissions which will seriously affect local residents' quality of life. "It is absolutely critical that the Government gets the policy right and develops the best available advice for airport operators. We urge the Government to take on board these concerns."

## **AUSTRALIAN SENATE REJECTS TOUGHER NOISE REGIME FOR WIND FARMS**

Noise from wind farms was no different

from other noise and calls for tougher planning regulations should wait for the release of a health impact review by the National Health And Medical Research

Council, an Australian Senate committee has found. In a split decision, the majority report discounted claims of health impacts from wind turbines but did not dispute that some people who lived near them felt unwell. Rejecting calls for wind developers to make data available to allow independent monitoring of noise, the committee said state governments should consider an independent authority for review of compliance. It said oversight of wind farm noise should be left to the states. The Senate inquiry accepted evidence that the number of health-related complaints about wind farms was small in proportion to the number of people living near them. And the numbers varied greatly from one facility to the next, for reasons not apparently related to the number of residents in the area. But a dissenting minority report argued

that the federal government should establish and fund an independent expert panel to research the impact of noise generated by wind farms. "The committee received a range of evidence regarding possible links between noise produced by wind farms and health effects," the dissenting report said. "The debate is continuing, however the body of evidence demonstrating the impact of sleep disturbance and sleep deprivation on health continues to grow," said the minority report. The majority report said more than half of submissions were from people who were worried about whether they might experience noise or health effects rather than those who claimed to have already been affected. The committee said there was no evidence of a causal link between the noise from wind farms and symptoms reported by those who lived near them.

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### **CHEAP HOUSING FOR THE 'UNTROUBLED BY NOISE'**

Ontario's Transport Ministry has brought around 100 homes blighted by noise in Windsor, due to the construction of the Herb Gray Parkway. The homes were brought at what would have been market price before the works began, Now they are selling them off at a discount, presumably, to those who are less troubled by noise, Purchasers have to sign a waiver that, post-purchase,

they will not complain about construction noise nor demand that the ministry buys back the house. Local relators are enthusiastic about the scheme. Rocco Mancini said "I'd rather have people in there, it would be better for the whole neighbourhood." And fellow realtor Dan Inverarity commented "I think they (the houses) are good deals... once the construction is done, the values will go up."

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### **CHANGE TO CAR STEREO NOISE ORDINANCE**

Waynesboro (Va) City Council is about to discuss closing - what police call - a loophole in the city's noise ordinance. The change would affect the volume of car stereos during the day. Currently in Waynesboro, music which can be heard from 50 feet away, between the hours of 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., breaks the ordinance. The ordinance amendment would add a restriction that makes it illegal to play music in your vehicle that can be heard 200 feet away. It would allow police to issue a summons to

people who play their car stereos too loudly at any time of day. Police say they get several noise complaints every week. "The problems they're addressing with the change in this ordinance is for the individuals who are constantly blasting their stereos from vehicles, disturbing others in neighborhoods, city parks, even just parking lots," said Cpl. James Thomas of the Waynesboro Police Department. "They're just trying to address complaints that they have received." The proposed amendment would restrict only the noise level coming from vehicles, not from

buildings or bands. The fine for a first violation would be \$100.

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## **LOW FREQUENCY NOISE ORDINANCE PROPOSED**

The Brown County (Wisconsin) Board of Health is considering drafting a low-frequency noise ordinance amid complaints of health problems for residents living near the Shirley Wind Farm in southern Brown County. Testing was conducted in December to find if low-frequency noise generated by wind turbines at the site in Glenmore was responsible for the residents' health complaints. Scientists did not find a correlation but recommended further testing at the site. The Board of Health wants to hire Rick James, an acoustician, to consult and assist in drafting an ordinance and will ask for funds to cover his fees. The board will ask committees of Brown County supervisors for the dollars, not to exceed \$4,000. James previously assisted Calumet County officials in creating a low-frequency noise ordinance. Approximately 50 individuals living near the farm submitted affidavits to the

Public Service Commission, listing health effects, including ear infections, heart palpitations, muscle and joint pain, malaise and other symptoms. The move is celebrated by Brown County Citizens for Responsible Wind Energy, a citizens advocacy group fighting operations at the Shirley Wind Farm. Steve Deslauriers, the group's spokesperson said he is "very thankful" for the board of health's move. "It would be a good ordinance because it would protect citizens from all low-frequency noise, not just (noise) generated by turbines," Deslauriers said. "This counters all the propaganda (from the wind industry)." Clean Wisconsin, the group that conducted the study and advocates for clean energy, said the board of health's move is "premature." "Testing found nothing (harmful) at the Shirley Wind Farm," said Katie Nekola, Clean Wisconsin's general counsel. "An ordinance would be jumping the gun. This would be a big mistake ... a real mistake."

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## **EXTENDING NOISE REGULATIONS**

Hobart (IL) City Council has made additions to its existing noise ordinance. Hobart City Council president David Vinzant said the changes to an ordinance passed less than two years ago are necessitated because of recent complaints. Those complaints have included loud music played at all hours in some neighborhoods and a man repairing motorcycles in his home garage. The previous noise ordinance covered to

loud noise heard inside a closed house between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m., Vinzant said. Under the additions, police or code enforcement officers can issue tickets, with fines of up to \$2,500, to those found to be making loud noise during the daytime. "If I can hear you at anytime, it's too loud," Vinzant said. The only exceptions to the daytime noise restrictions, under the new changes, are home improvement or construction projects, which are allowed between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., and lawn care and maintenance between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

#### **TAKING PROBLEMS TO THE TOP**

An Ontario woman's request to have the province investigate the sound of her 17-year-old neighbour's basketball playing has been rejected by the environment ministry. In late October, Anne Langdon asked the province's environmental commissioner to explore whether the aspiring basketball player's dribbling constituted "excessive noise." Ontario's Ministry of the Environment rejected the Peterborough resident's request this week, determining that the sound of a teen playing basketball was not grounds for a review. "The ministry considers basketball playing a normal residential activity and associated noise is not exceptional enough for an investigation," ministry spokesperson Kate Jordan.

#### **CHAMPION COMPLAINER**

A woman, whose home cost thousands of dollars to soundproof, is still complaining five times a week to Adelaide Airport about aircraft noise - despite living 11km away. Teresa Lock, of Rosewater, accounts for more than half of the 420 complaints about aircraft noise in South Australia lodged with airport watchdog Airservices Australia. Since last December, Ms Lock, 43, has emailed 230 complaints about passing planes and helicopters.