Noise Contour Lines

Photo Source: Colorado Department of Transportation

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A contour line is a graphical depiction of points that are estimated to share a measured characteristic, such as elevation above sea level. With regard to traffic noise modeling for a road improvement, a noise contour line shows where traffic noise levels are estimated to be the same level, usually expressed in decibels.

For Colorado Department of Transportation highway improvements, a contour line can be mapped that indicates a traffic noise impact, such as 66 decibels for residences, or 71 decibels for commercial property. Sites closer to the noise source generally have noise levels greater than the value of the contour line, and properties father away from the noise source have lower noise levels.

Traffic noise contours for existing and future conditions are estimated using the Federal Highway Administration's Traffic Noise Model, TNM.

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