

IMPROVING THE INSERTION LOSS OF TRAFFIC NOISE BARRIER IN  
URBAN AREA

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## ABSTRACT

Noise barriers are the common acoustic measures which are used to minimize the disturbance of traffic noise to residents, especially in suburban and rural areas, these barriers are an effective measure. In a denser built up environment though, they are less effective. It is essential to have an accurate prediction scheme for barrier designs. Poor prediction schemes will lead to an undesired performance of barriers or waste of money for over design. There are often many conflicting design factors that have to be considered when specifying a barrier. The limited space there leads to small source-barrier and barrier-building distances. The latter gives rise to multiple reflections of sound waves between barrier and building. Especially the noise at lower frequencies, are built up by these reflections and could lead to high sound pressure levels. Having a way to reduce these low frequency levels would be interest for many cases where barrier have been applied. Evaluating barrier performance periodically is an important issue for assuring the efficiency of barrier. The international standards state methods for evaluating the performance of a built barrier. The American National Standards Institute ANSI S12.8-1998 has been applied in field measurement for the highway that acts as equivalent site without noise barrier. The noise level measured exceeded the noise limit set by DOE Malaysia. In this study, the empirical formula from ISO 9613-2 has been used to predict the performance of barrier by using the geometry of existing noise barrier for the residential area on the same highway. Similarly, the same method ANSI S12.8-1998 was used to measure the noise level behind the noise barrier at urban residential area. Some of the data obtained still exceeded the noise limit for residential area in urban area. The difference of sound pressure level between prediction and field measurement was then added to the ISO 9613-2 formula to recommend the improvement of insertion loss in term of barrier geometry and the shape of barrier's top.

## ABSTRAK

Penghalang bunyi adalah langkah akustik biasa yang digunakan untuk mengurangkan gangguan bunyi bising trafik kepada penduduk, terutama di kawasan pinggir bandar dan luar bandar, penghalang bunyi ini adalah langkah yang berkesan. Halangan bunyi adalah kurang berkesan dalam persekitaran yang berpadatan tinggi. Itulah penting untuk mempunyai satu skim ramalan yang tepat untuk reka bentuk halangan. Skim ramalan yang teruk akan menyebabkan performansi halangan yang tidak diingini atau kos pembaziran untuk reka bentuk terlebih. Seringnya terdapat banyak faktor reka bentuk yang bercanggah yang perlu dipertimbangkan apabila menentukan penghalang bunyi. Ruang yang terhad mengakibatkan jarak yang kecil antara sumber dengan penghalang dan penghalang dengan bangunan. Ini juga menimbulkan pelbagai pantulan gelombang bunyi antara halangan dan bangunan. Terutamanya, frekuensi bunyi yang lebih rendah, yang ditinggikan oleh pantulan dan boleh menyebabkan tahap bunyi kebisingan yang tinggi. Cara untuk mengurangkan tahap frekuensi rendah akan diminati untuk banyak kes di mana penghalang bunyi telah digunakan. Penilaian prestasi penghalang secara berkala merupakan satu isu penting bagi menjamin kecekapan penghalang. Piawaian Antarabangsa menerangkan kaedah untuk menilai prestasi penghalang yang dibina. The American National Standard Institute ANSI S12.8 tahun 1998 telah digunakan untuk bunyi pengukuran bagi lebuhraya yang bertindak sebagai tapak bersamaan tanpa penghalang bunyi. Tahap bunyi bising diukur melebihi had bunyi yang ditetapkan oleh Jabatan Alam Sekitar (DOE) Malaysia. Dalam kajian ini, formula empirik dari ISO 9613-2 telah digunakan untuk meramalkan prestasi penghalang bunyi dengan menggunakan geometri penghalang bunyi sedia ada bagi kawasan kediaman di lebuhraya yang sama. Begitu juga, kaedah yang sama ANSI S12.8-1998 telah digunakan untuk mengukur tahap bunyi di sebalik penghalang bunyi di kawasan perumahan bandar. Beberapa data yang diperolehi masih melebihi had bunyi bagi kawasan kediaman di kawasan bandar. Perbezaan tahap tekanan bunyi antara ramalan dan ukuran dari

bidang kemudiannya dimasukkan kepada formula ISO 9613-2 untuk mengesyorkan peningkatan IL dari segi geometri penghalang bunyi.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
	<b>DECLARATION</b>	ii
	<b>DEDICATION</b>	iii
	<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	iv
	<b>ABSTRACT</b>	v
	<b>ABSTRAK</b>	vi
	<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	viii
	<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	xi
	<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xii
	<b>LIST OF SYMBOLS</b>	xv
	<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	xvi
	<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b>	xvii
<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1
	1.1 Introduction	1
	1.2 Background	1
	1.3 Problem Statement	6
	1.4 Objective	6
	1.5 Research Hypothesis	6
	1.6 Scopes	7
	1.7 Organization of Thesis	7
<b>2</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	9
	2.1 Introduction	9
	2.2 Insertion Loss of Barriers	10
	2.3 Transmission Loss of Barriers	14

2.4	Finite Barrier	15
2.5	Thick Barrier	17
2.6	Noise Barrier Performance Indices	19
2.7	Absorbent Noise Barriers	21
2.8	Measurement of Barrier Insertion Loss	23
2.9	Atmosphere Effects on Noise Barrier Performance	24
2.10	Effect of the Barrier Shape	28
2.11	Non-Acoustical Characteristics of Noise Barrier	30
2.12	Insertion Loss of Trees and Foliage	32
2.13	DOE Requirement in Malaysia	33
<b>3</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>36</b>
3.1	Introduction	36
3.2	Flow Chart	37
3.3	Test Equipment	38
3.4	Traffic Noise Barrier Insertion Loss Measurements	38
3.5	Selection of Site	39
3.5.1	Site Characteristics	40
3.6	Development of Preliminaries Algorithm	40
3.7	Collection of Data	43
3.7.1	Assumption and Limitation	43
3.7.2	Microphone Location	44
3.7.3	Instrumentation	45
3.7.3.1	Sound Level Meter	45
3.7.3.2	Laser Range Finder	45
3.7.4	Measurement Procedures	47
3.8	Analysis of Data	50
3.8.1	Insertion Loss of Barrier by Field Measurement	50
3.8.1.1	Adjust Measured Levels for Calibration Drift	50

3.8.1.2	Adjust Measured Levels for Ambient	51
3.8.1.3	Compute the Barrier Insertion Loss	51
3.8.2	Prediction of Barrier Insertion Loss by using ISO 9613-2Standard	52
3.9	Correctness and Accuracy Checking	52
<b>4</b>	<b>RESULTS</b>	<b>54</b>
4.1	Insertion Loss (IL) Prediction Result	54
4.2	Insertion Loss (IL) Field Measurement Result	61
4.3	Comparison of Insertion Loss (IL) Prediction and Field Measurement	65
4.4	Comparison of New Insertion Loss (IL)	71
<b>5</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>88</b>
5.1	Introduction	88
5.2	Traffic Noise Measurement without Noise Barrier	88
5.3	Predicted Insertion Loss (IL) of Noise Barrier	89
5.4	Field Measurement for Insertion Loss (IL) of Existing Noise Barrier	89
5.5	Comparison of Insertion Loss (IL) Prediction and Field Measurement	90
5.6	Comparison of New Insertion Loss (IL) base on Corrected Calculation	92
<b>6</b>	<b>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>95</b>
6.1	Conclusion	95
6.2	Recommendations	96
	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>97</b>
	Appendices A - E	100 - 104

**LIST OF TABLES**

<b>TABLE NO.</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
3.1	Variable to determine the Insertion Loss (IL) of barrier	38
3.2	Estimation of daily according to sampling technique	53



## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>FIGURE NO.</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
1.1	Noise level due to traffic for selected areas in various states	4
1.2	Noise level for selected urban residential areas in various states	5
2.1	Diffraction by a rigid barrier	10
2.2	Geometry used in the theory of diffraction	11
2.3	Attenuation of the sound from a point source by a rigid screen as a function of Fresnel number.	14
2.4	Top view of the finite barrier parallel to a highway	17
2.5	Geometry for evaluating the attenuation of a thick barrier	18
2.6	Thick barrier correction factor K	18
2.7	Predicted values of the attenuation provided by a plane screen	20
2.8	Predicted values of the attenuation provided by a 1 m wide earth berm	21
2.9	Pathway of the sound propagation from the source to the barrier's edge for sound walls with or without noise absorption material	22
2.10	Variation of sound pressure level behind barrier in the field	25
2.11	Measure and predicted excess attenuation at a receiver 18m from 2.44m wide, 2.55 m high barrier showing the effect of atmospheric turbulence. Source is 8m from barrier.	26

2.12	Comparison of acoustical performance of noise barriers of various shapes predicted using the source spectrum defined in EN 1793-3	28
2.13	Cantilever noise barrier design on a Japanese highway	30
2.14	Types of material used to construct barriers in the United States (data from Federal Highway Administration, Washington, until 1998)	32
2.15	Linear fits to attenuation above 1 kHz in mixed conifers (squares), mixed deciduous summer (circles, and spruce monoculture (diamonds) and the foliage attenuation predicted according to ISO 9612-2	33
2.16	Maximum permissible sound levels ( $L_{Aeq}$ ) (for proposed new roads or redevelopment of existing roads)	34
3.1	Flow chart of methodology	37
3.2	Plan and elevation view of sound screen	42
3.3	Receiver positions	44
3.4	Solo sound level meter	45
3.5	RION sound level calibrator	46
3.6	Bosch laser range finder	46
3.7	Calibration of sound level meter	48
3.8	Calibrated sound level meter	48
3.9	Laser range finder for distance measurement	49
4.1.1	Insertion loss (IL) prediction calculation parameters base on existing geometry of barrier	56
4.1.2	Insertion loss (IL) prediction for Level 1 to Level 6 base on existing geometry of noise barrier in octave band frequency	58
4.1.3	Measured sound pressure level at six floors receivers at equivalent site before the erection of noise barrier	59
4.1.4	Predicted sound pressure level at six floors receivers after the erection of existing noise barrier	60

4.2.1	Insertion Loss (IL) field measurement in octave band frequency for Level 1 to Level 6 with the present of noise barrier	62
4.2.2	Measured sound pressure level at six floors receivers with the present of existing noise barrier	64
4.3.1	Difference of insertion loss between prediction and field measurement at level 1 to level 6	65
4.3.2	Comparison of sound pressure level in each frequency in octave band between prediction and field measurement at level 1 to level 6	66
4.4.1	New insertion loss prediction calculation parameters (P1)	72
4.4.2	New insertion loss (IL) prediction at level 1 to level 6 in octave band frequency (P1)	73
4.4.3	New insertion loss prediction calculation parameters (P2)	75
4.4.4	New insertion loss (IL) prediction at level 1 to level 6 in octave band frequency (P2)	76
4.4.5	New insertion loss prediction calculation parameters (P3)	78
4.4.6	New insertion loss (IL) prediction at level 1 to level 6 in octave band frequency (P3)	79
4.4.7	New insertion loss prediction calculation parameters (P4)	81
4.4.8	New insertion loss (IL) prediction at level 1 to level 6 in octave band frequency (P4)	82
4.4.9	Comparison of corrected overall sound pressure level for different barrier thickness and height	84
4.4.10	Comparison of new insertion loss for different barrier thickness and height	86

## LIST OF SYMBOLS

$\text{dB(A)}$	-	Decibel (A-Weight)
$\Psi$	-	Diffacted sound pressure amplitude
$r_s$	-	Distance between source and the top of the plane
$r$	-	Distance between the top of the plane and the reception point
$k$	-	Free-field wave number
$Q(\phi, \phi_s)$	-	Function of the edge of the plane radiates sound as a directional sound source
$^{\circ}\text{C}$	-	Celsius
$f$	-	Frequency
$\rho_s$	-	Surface density
$\lambda$	-	Wavelength
$e$	-	Distance between the screens in the direction of the source and receiver
$K_{met}$	-	Correction factor for meteorological influence
$d_{ss}$	-	Distance from the source to the diffraction edge, in meters
$d_{sr}$	-	Distance from the (second) diffraction edge to the receiver, in meters
$a$	-	Distance parallel to the screen measured between source and receiver
$d$	-	Direct distance from source to receiver
$h$	-	Height of barrier
$Z$	-	Path length difference
$C$	-	Speed of sound
$D_z$	-	Barrier attenuation

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

A	-	Attenuation
ANSI	-	American National Standards Institute
BS	-	British standard
CAL	-	Calibration
DOE	-	Department of Environment
FHWA	-	Federal Highway Administration
ISO	-	International Standard Organization
IL	-	Insertion Loss
$L_{Aeq}$	-	Equivalent Sound Level (A-weight)
MMD	-	Meteorological Department
P	-	Proposal
SPL	-	Sound Pressure Level
TL	-	Transmission Loss

**LIST OF APPENDICES**

<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
A	Specification of sound level meter	100
B	Specification of laser range finder	101
C	Site measurement picture at Level 4	102
D	Detail drawing of acoustic barrier	103
E	T-shape at tope edge of noise barrier	104

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Noise is an undesirable by-product of today's modern ways of life. It is defined as unwanted or excessive sound. Various noise surveys show conclusively that road traffic is at the present time is the predominant source of annoyance. Road Traffic disturbs more people than all other forms of noise nuisance combined. Such a finding is not surprising because of the large number of automotive vehicles are produced to meet the demand today. Traffic noise exists at and around every road around the world.

Traffic noise is not continuous. As a vehicle approaches an observation point, the noise level raises, reaches peak, and then when the vehicle drives away, it decreases. Traffic is of course made up a wide variety of vehicle types using the roads at the same time. The noise they collectively produce is complex, irregular, and constantly changing. It varies in pitch and loudness and continually fluctuates.

#### **1.2 Background**

There are generally three common effects of traffic noise. They are speech communication, effects on sleep and health effects. Traffic noise levels will not normally be intense enough to cause hearing damage but may disrupt speech communication and interfere with enjoyment of radio, television, and the use of

gardens or outdoor activities. It restricts the comfortable use of houses by the need to keep windows closed in hot weather. The inability to hear warning sounds will increase the likelihood of accidents.

Although traffic density tends to die down during the sleeping hours, it can nevertheless cause disturbance particularly in more densely trafficked areas. Experiments have been carried out in which sleeping people were subjected to a recording of noise from a passing truck. It has been shown that the level of noise has a bearing on the speed with which people fall asleep, that sensitivity to noise varies with the individual. Some could be awoken by low levels of noise and others could be awoken by high levels of noise. There is also a need to protect sensitive groups and shift workers who sleep during the day. Sleep disturbance from noise exposure will lead to long term health impacts. It produces the relationship between noise and the stress responses. Those stress built up is linked to hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and other medical problem.

Noise barrier have become a very common feature of urban landscape. It is one of the noise controls to the receiver. Any form of solid obstacle between source and receiver can comprise a noise barrier. If the barrier is well designed then it can reduce the noise level in residential area. Barriers should be impervious to sound without cracks or holes and of sufficient height to provide sufficient noise attenuation. Barriers are most effective if placed near to the source of noise or the receiver and are generally ineffective for low-frequency noise. In some instances, sound absorbing material is placed on or in the source side of the barrier to reduce noise builds up there. The majority of barriers are installed in the vicinity of transportation and industrial noise sources to shield nearby residential properties. Unlike building insulation, noise barriers are designed to protect the external as well as the internal environment at a dwelling. Noise barrier has hardly been used for the protection of individual properties because it is more cost effective for the protection of large areas including several buildings. Noise barriers of usual height are generally ineffective in protecting the upper levels of multi-storey dwellings.



Several models to predict the acoustic barriers have been developed since the pioneering works on barrier diffraction of Sommerfeld, Macdonald, and others<sup>[1]</sup>. Design charts of Fehr, Maekawa, and Rathe plus the physical and geometrical theories have made possible the development of some equations and convenient algorithms to predict the attenuation of simple barriers. Kurze and Anderson have simplified the calculation of attenuation by the use of geometrical parameters, such as Fresnel number.

In 1957, Keller proposed the geometric theory of diffraction (GTD) and he stated that the set of diffracted sound rays from the barrier edge, the ray that reached the reception point corresponds to the ray that satisfies Fermat's principle<sup>[2]</sup>. It combines with the practicability of Kirchhoff's approximations with the greater accuracy of the Sommerfeld-type solution. His assumption is the barrier is infinite, very thin semi plan and no reflection on the ground.

In 1971, Researcher Kurza and Anderson presented one algorithm based on the experimental results of Rathe and Redfearn, geometric theory of diffraction from Keller. Maekawa presented a chart based on the physic theory of diffraction and the experimental results<sup>[3]</sup>. His chart shows the attenuation of sound from a point source by a rigid screen as a function of Fresnel number. Another modified algorithm was then presented by Kurze-Anderson to obtain analytical empirical equation. In 1977, K.Fujiwara, Y.Ando, and Maekawa have presented a more accurate method to calculate the attenuation base on the thick barrier.

In 1996, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) published ISO 9613-21 that describes a general method of calculation of attenuation of sound during propagation outdoors. This standard has been adopted widely for practical predictions of the noise barrier insertion loss.

A national ambient noise monitor was carried out by Department of Environment (DOE) Malaysia in year 2009. For monitoring purposes, 'a single 60 minutes sample' on noise level was measured in the morning, afternoon and evening.

Figure 1.1 and figure 1.2 shows the  $L_{Aeq}$  noise levels recorded for selected areas in the various states and selected Urban Residential Areas in various states.

Most of the traffic noise level data collected in the morning, afternoon and evening at commercial business zones and urban residential areas in various states by the Department of Environment (DOE) Malaysia exceeded the noise level specified in The Planning Guidelines for Environmental Noise Limits and Control, 2004<sup>[4]</sup>.

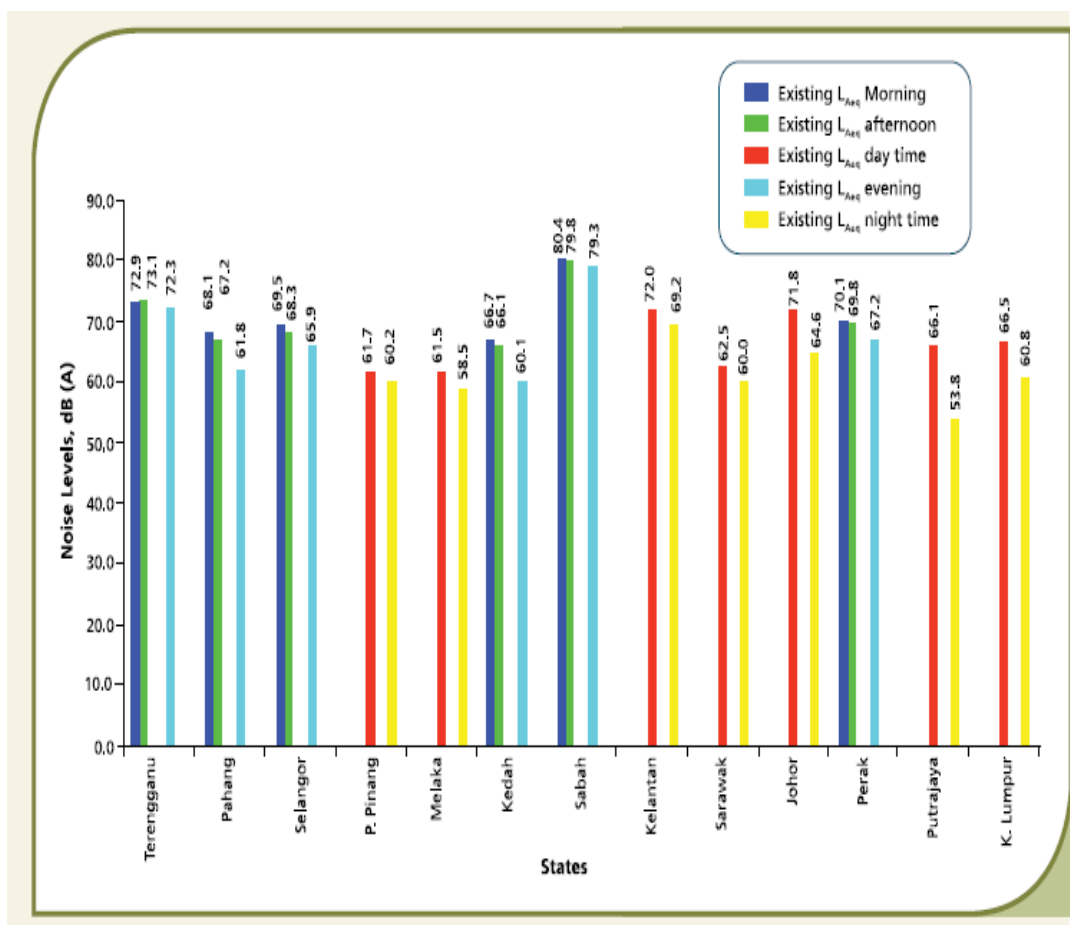


Figure 1.1: Noise level due to traffic for selected areas in various states<sup>[4]</sup>

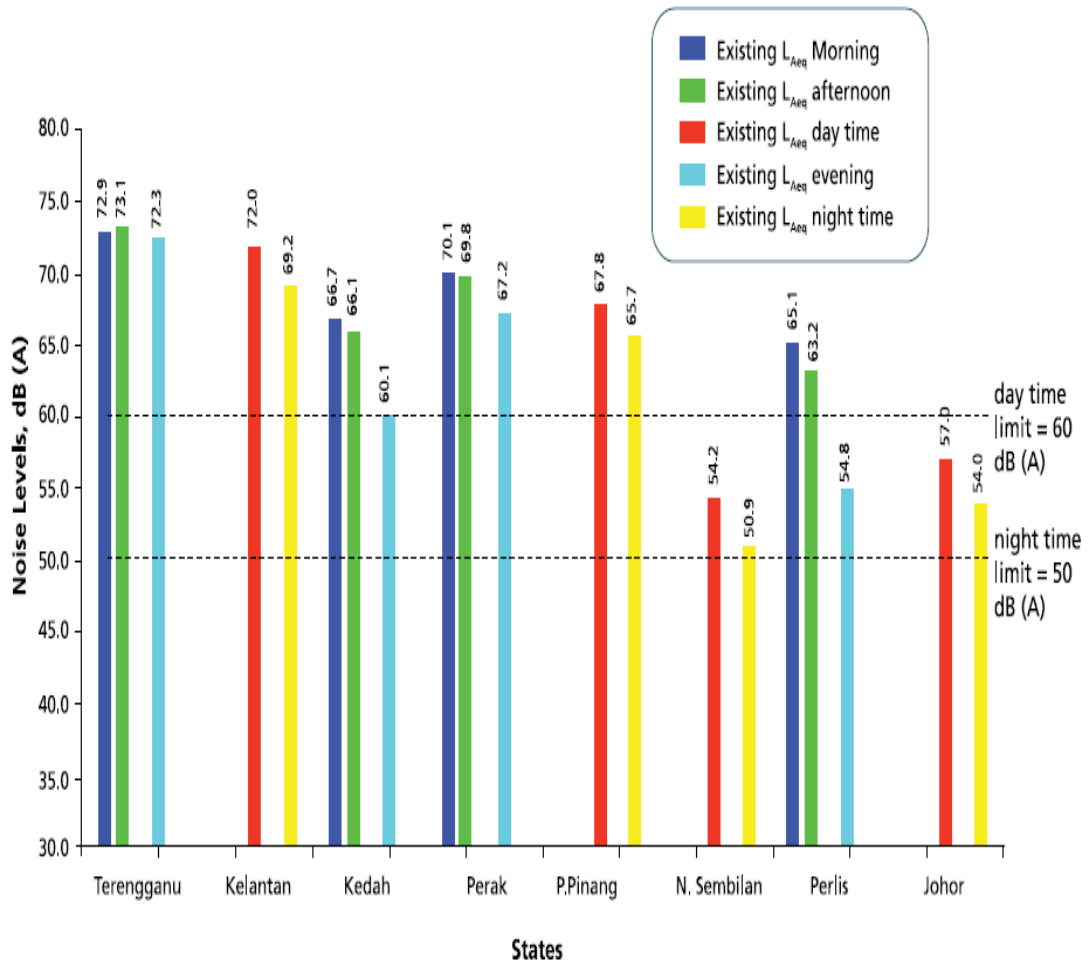


Figure 1.2: Noise level for selected urban residential areas in various states<sup>[4]</sup>

The previous research showed the analytical approach with certain assumptions to design the noise barrier. However, this does not mean that the barrier design is optimum and archives the desired insertion loss due to the factors such as the geometry of adjacent building, meteorological, wind velocity and traffic condition. Thus, the primary criterion in this research is to evaluate the acoustical performance of existing noise barrier in order to improve the insertion loss.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Noise barriers are an often encountered way to reduce the noise exposure at building facade due to traffic noise. These barriers are an effective measure in suburban area. However, these barriers are less effective in a high dense built up urban environment. The limited space there causes the small distance between source to barrier or barrier to source. The increasing of number and variety of vehicle on the road gives rise to multiple reflections of sound waves between barrier and building. There are different frequency of source on the road to be identified, especially the lower frequencies sound wave built up and could lead to high sound pressure levels.

This study shall involve the assessment of existing noise barrier in urban area by taking noise measurement and thereafter evaluate it with the empirical formula to improve its insertion loss.

### **1.4 Objective**

The objective of this project is:

1. To identify the potential improvement of the insertion loss on the existing noise barrier in urban area base on actual noise measurement on site by using a modified form of empirical practical prediction of barrier insertion loss formula.

### **1.5 Research Hypothesis**

Assessment of acoustical performance on the existing noise barrier on site and result obtained from empirical formula published by ISO 9613-2 will not have the similar results whereas the inaccuracy is due to the assumption made in the empirical formula is different with the actual site condition.

## **1.6 Scopes**

The scopes of this project are:

1. To conduct a research on the sources of noise, methodologies for noise measurement and type of traffic noise abatement mean.
2. To collect the data on site selected by measurement using sound level meter.
3. To analyze the data and perform calculation to obtain the acoustical performance of existing noise barrier.
4. To verify, compare and validate through calculation of international standard formula with an actual source of noise data from the road.

## **1.7 Organization of Thesis**

Chapter 1 Introduction consists of background of the research, the objective of this research, the reason conducting this research, and the hypothesis of the result.

Chapter 2 Literature review describes the theory used in this research, and the researches done so far which is related to this research.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology describes on how this research is done. It includes flowchart, identification of research variable, algorithm, collection and analysis of data, steps for the accuracy and correctness of this research is checked

Chapter 4 Results presents the data held by this research for onsite measurement with calculation and the predicted results calculated from empirical formula.

Chapter 5 Discussions presents the observation of performance of existing noise barrier, comparison and explanation of distinguishes between result of measurement analysis and noise prediction calculation from empirical formula and further elaborate on the other factors affecting the insertion loss of barrier.

Chapter 6 Conclusion and Recommendation

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