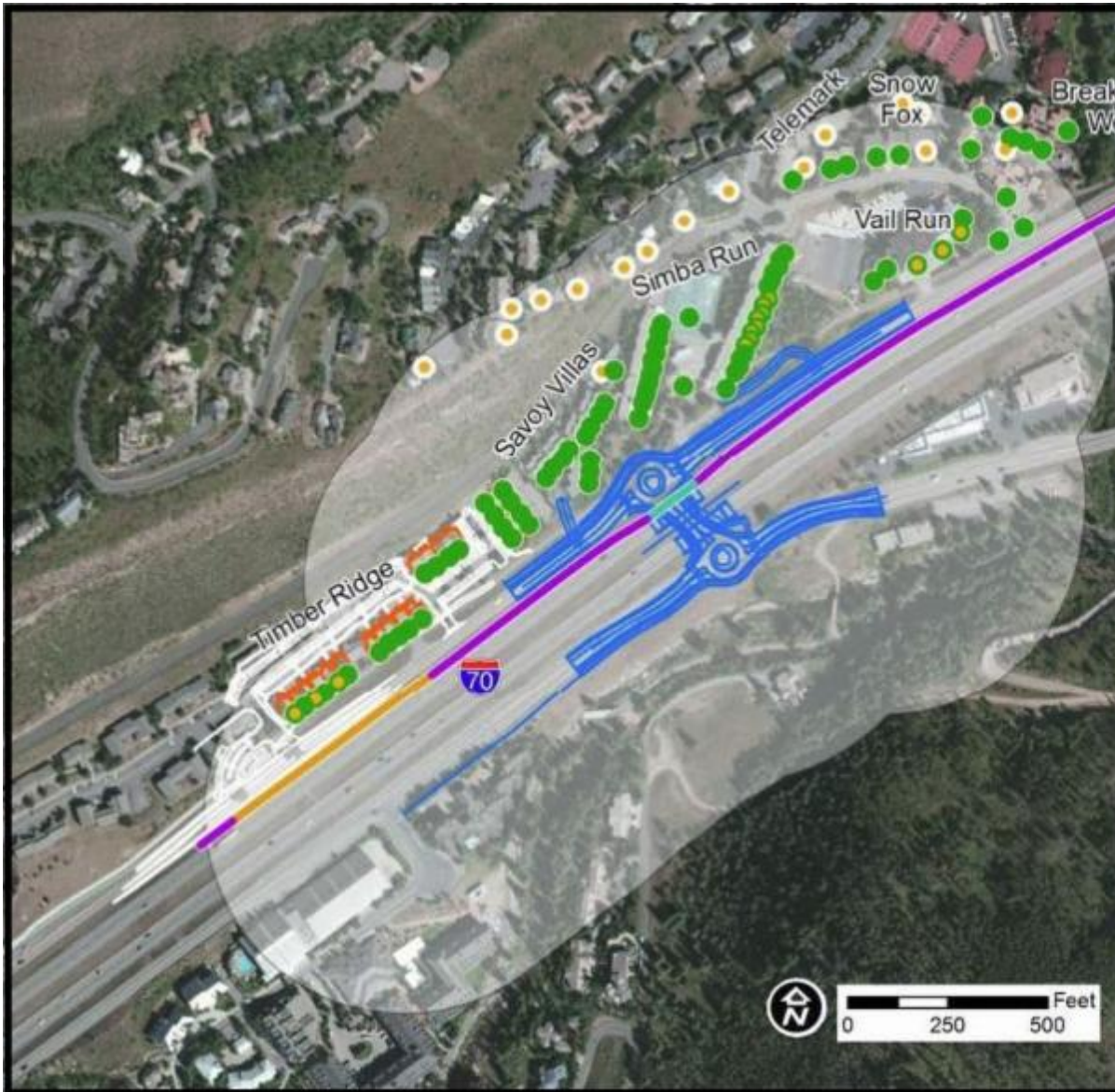


# Vail Homeowners Association



Plan for Simba Run Underpass Proposal, with soundwalls, which was narrowly defeated in the recent soundwall survey election.

## **Simba Run Soundwall Rejected... or Was It?**

02/13/15

In an essentially predetermined survey, soundwalls for the Simba Run Underpass project have been rejected in what many see as a flawed process. And, because of the unique nature of the way the voting occurred, it was a decision that was largely made by the five members of the Town Council. Those voting against the soundwall proposal were Jenn Bruno, Ludwig Kurz, Andy Daly, Margaret Rogers, and Dave Chapin with Greg Moffet and Dale Bugby in favor. However, it may not be the end of consideration of soundwalls to remediate the noise pollution for I-70. Indeed, many observers see the vote as strong support for action by the Town.

As the VHA has previously reported, because of the projected noise pollution from I-70 in the area of the proposed Simba Run Underpass, a survey was required to determine the affected owners' position on the inclusion of soundwalls as part of the project. Each residential unit in the affected area received two votes in the survey. Since there were a total of 202 eligible units, that yielded a maximum of 404 votes to be cast, plus two additional votes that were allocated to the Town for a parcel of open space. In the case of rental properties the votes were split with one going to the owner and the other to the tenant. The new Timber Ridge housing complex is within the affected area but because it is only under construction and does not yet have any tenants, the Town claimed all of the 136 votes for those units. When the Town's two additional votes were added, the Town had 34% of the total votes. The Town Council decided to allocate those votes to the individual Council members so that each had a proportionate amount of the Town's vote to cast.

The Town has reported only total vote numbers but those results - both in total numbers, percentages of votes cast and percentage of voter participation - are skewed by the Town's votes, of which 100% were cast. Analysis by the VHA shows that the votes from private parties in the affected area were basically split. Of the 222 ballots cast by private property owners/tenants, there were 112 votes (50.1%) against and 110 (49.9%) in favor. That means that the votes from the Town Council controlled the outcome.

It will never be known whether the votes cast by the five Council members in opposition reflect how future tenants actually living in those units and facing highway noise pollution would have voted. The opposition votes by the five Council members are also at odds with the most current Town of Vail community survey where locals and non-resident private property owners placed the furthering of the I-70 soundwall protection effort near the top of the Town Council's "to do" list. The Council has even gone so far as to set aside money in the Town's budget to install a demonstration section of soundwall.

The fact that almost half of the private parties favored soundwalls is remarkable in view of an organized opposition campaign in some of the affected areas. Because the survey was conducted behind a wall of secrecy - voter identity and contact information was not made available by the Town until midway thru the balloting period and then only after a public information request by the Vail Homeowners Association. That left insufficient time and means for pro-soundwall advocates to contact voters. There was also a dearth of information from the Town on aesthetic options or any cost evaluations of soundwall options which may have caused voter confusion.

Given this outcome and the results of the community survey, soundwalls may well be an issue that will be revisited in future years. In the final analysis, however, this vote may have been a proxy survey for the entire project. With projected costs increasing, there seems to be growing opposition from the Town to the entire project. That nonetheless leaves open how the Town will deal with growing traffic concerns at the Main Vail and West Vail roundabouts and the cost of remedial measures at those two

roundabouts if the Simba Run underpass is not constructed. Further action by the Town Council will be under consideration thru April or May.

A key issue the Council should consider is whether it is fulfilling the Town's traffic needs. Population densities and traffic continue to increase and future projects will only bring more.

Traffic engineers believe improving the efficiency of the community's internal traffic circulation would relieve the pressure on the Main Vail and West Vail Interstate 70 interchanges. If the Simba Run Underpass is not built, replacement or improvement of the Main Vail and West Vail interchanges could be even more costly.

The Homeowners Association believes serious consideration must be given to the consequences of setting aside the Simba Run Underpass proposal and putting off addressing traffic needs. Community investment in this project would improve the transportation system overall and have the long-term benefit of ensuring the community's future.

See linked news articles:

<http://www.vailhomeowners.com/No%20noise%20wall%20in%20Vail%20012715.pdf>

<http://www.vailhomeowners.com/Neighbors%20kill%20possible%20noise%20wall%20VD%20020915.pdf>

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