

South Carolina Department of Transportation
Engineering Directive

Directive Number: 59 **Effective:** June 11, 2025

Subject: Establishment of a Residential Visual Buffer to Mitigate Daylighting of Residential Property

References: SCDOT Noise Policy

Purpose: Provide Direction for the Installation of Residential Visual Buffers on New Construction and Reconstruction Projects Along Controlled-Access Highways

Primary Department: Project Delivery

The Department recognizes that new construction and reconstruction projects can require the removal of vegetation within the rights-of-way, resulting in adjacent residential structures having increased visibility to the highway. The Department will consider this Directive for all new construction and reconstruction projects on controlled-access facilities.

A residential visual buffer (RVB) is defined as an area that serves as a visual buffer between residential structures and the adjacent controlled-access highway. The RVB may utilize existing vegetation, new plantings, new earthen berms, or a combination thereof to achieve the desired effect.

A RVB is only utilized adjacent to residential structures that are inhabited (homes, apartments, condominiums, and similar structures) and that are located within 500-feet of the edge of the outside travel lane. The RVB is only applied when the Department's Noise Policy does not warrant a noise wall. The RVB will not be applied if environmental impacts are increased due to the addition of the RVB. While new plantings and new earthen berms are eligible as part of the project's cost, consideration will be given to retention of the existing vegetation to serve as the RVB when practical and safe to do so.

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) shall permit and construct, at its expense, RVBs when a new construction or reconstruction project results in the total loss of the vegetative buffer adjacent to the residential structure, resulting in unobstructed visibility from the roadway to the residential structure. This Directive does not apply to routine/preventive maintenance activities. The RVB shall be a low-cost mitigation strategy that is fully contained within the SCDOT rights-of-way and located at the outer edge of the rights-of-way. The Department will coordinate with the property owner to identify the

desired RVB; however, the Department maintains full authority to determine the final RVB to ensure consistency and uniformity for the corridor. Acceptable plantings will be specified by the Department in consultation with the adjacent property owners. Consult the Department's Vegetation Manager within the Director of Maintenance Office to determine acceptable plantings.

Earthen berms used as RVBs shall be constructed at a maximum height of eight (8) feet and seeded to ensure minimal erosion of the berm. The drainage runoff adjacent to the earthen berm shall be considered with the project's drainage design to ensure positive flow and compliance with all SCDOT drainage requirements.

Recommended by: Jeff Terry
Director of Maintenance

Recommended by: John Boylston
Chief Engineer for Project Delivery

Approved by: Rob Perry
Deputy Secretary for Engineering

History: Issued on June 11, 2025