

Hello, my name is Karen Akins and I'm a resident of Stowe. In doing research for my latest documentary, on noise and health, I did a deep dive into Vermont's transportation noise issues.

I would like to invite you to play a little guessing game. When I hear a loud truck going by, I try to guess where that truck is from.

I live in an historic village on a main road and what I have noticed over the years is that **every single commercial truck with excessive exhaust noise in our state** has a Vermont license plate. Not all trucks licensed in Vermont are noisy, but all **noisy** trucks in our state are licensed in Vermont. Why is that?

...because Vermont has among the weakest muffler laws in the country.

Vermont has a one sentence exhaust noise law.

The brevity of our law is a real indication that we don't adequately deal with the issue of exhaust noise, like other states do. **Vermont is the outlier.**

The 40 ton, 18 wheeler trucks carrying goods from out of state, to Hannifords, Price Chopper, Fedex, any national chain that engages in interstate commerce, that travel right next to our homes every day and night... they are quiet. They comply with USDOT regulations, which includes noise. They are not the problem.

I've submitted to the committee a compilation of all the other state's exhaust noise laws so you can see what all the other states do and do better. **See documented submitted to committee**

[Exhaust Noise Laws By State | SEMA ACTION NETWORK](#)

Over the decades of living in Stowe village, I have tried so many things to deal with excessive vehicle noise. What I've found is that there's very little official inspectors or law enforcement can use as the state law is written now. Is that intentional?

To add to that, the Vermont Periodic Inspection Manual is written so that inadequate muffler exhaust does not necessitate a fail at inspection.

As for motorcycles, are they even adhering to the Manual? In practice, the requirement to fail illegally modified exhaust is being ignored by inspectors.

I've tried to work with DMV's commercial vehicle enforcement unit. Together we asked the state attorney for Lamoille County if we could use Vermont's singular statewide noise law, the "noise in the nighttime" law. Even when trucks come **blasting** past our houses at 1,2,3 am, waking us all up by engine braking their unmuffled vehicles, that law is useless.

Vermont's laws enable one individual to disturb hundreds, if not thousands, to operate excessively loud vehicles. There are no decibel noise standards for motor vehicles, unlike for ATVs and snowmobiles. Why is that? Is that intentional?

And even though the state could fail illegally modified exhaust on motorcycles at inspection, because their exhaust doesn't have the federally required sticker, they don't. **In fact, the largest installer of illegal motorcycle exhaust systems in the state is also an official inspection station.** That seems wrong. Some states prohibit the sale and installation of illegal aftermarket motorcycle mufflers. Vermont looks the other way.

And I should add that, if loud pipes really did save lives, which they DON'T, I'd probably encourage my husband, who's a motorcycle rider, to illegally modify HIS muffler, but they don't and there's no need for this, **unless you have a psychological need to call attention to yourself.**

Another thing that seems terribly wrong is that commercial trucking fleets are allowed to "self inspect" Not just for noise, for **everything** (brakes, lights, all safety equipment.). Any company that owns 5 trucks or more is allowed to self inspect. **That's why all these representatives from trucking firms are here testifying today.**

Do you think the average Vermonter knows that a large percentage of the heavy and medium trucks licensed to operate on the state's roads have not been subject to independent inspection?

When I've asked the AOT when their practice of "self inspection" for commercial fleets started, **they couldn't even tell me.**

We would very much like to close all these loopholes, and try to stop transportation noise **at its source**, through objective standards and independent inspection. That seems like a reasonable ask of those using our public roads, especially those who use them for profit.

With better state regulations, we won't really need increased enforcement. Most of the problem vehicles will have already been identified and dealt with at the inspection level. We know the police have other priorities, so stopping the vehicles from using our roadways without proper muffling is the answer, not enforcement.

So...Why is this controversial? It's not. Some of the proposed regulations already exist at the federal level but there's no accompanying state law to

allow enforcement. Back in the 1980's, it was determined that noise should be regulated at the state level...but Vermont dropped the ball.

For those of us who live near Vermont's roadways, in historic villages, and its town centers, we know this problem all too well. It's affecting our hearing, our sleep, our productivity, our health-both physical and mental.

In our little part of Stowe village, noise studies showed 120-160 high noise events per day, in excess of 80 decibels, which is the federal noise limit for trucks and motorcycles.

It's like constant dive bombing. If you can't imagine that, I'd be happy to send the actual recordings you can listen to all day while you try to work.

The average noise levels we are experiencing are not just annoying, at these levels it is downright harmful. If our neighborhood were located near an airport, the FAA would designate our homes as "unsuitable for residential use," requiring buyouts and relocation. Noise pollution has long term consequences for our most densely populated areas of the state...exactly those areas where Vermont leaders say they want more people to live.

Would you move to a town or village center where you couldn't sleep, study, work? Where your infant couldn't nap and your child's development could be affected? And for what? For the freedom for a few to operate unmuffled vehicles through the public streets, perhaps to bother people and draw attention to themselves? Besides those individuals, **the problem is mainly local haulers who just don't maintain their trucks and who are allowed to inspect themselves.**

The way I was raised, freedom comes with responsibility. The right to drive on our public roads comes with the responsibility to limit your exhaust

noise. Living in Vermont should not require residents to abandon their freedom to enjoy their homes or to sacrifice their health.

One last thing...Why would you treat noise, something that is a known pollutant, harmful to our health, any differently than toxic waste, radiation or air pollution? We know it's harmful, we know the healthy limits, we know how to control it. What's the problem here? I'd really like to know.

Thank you for your time.