Transport for NSW

Road Noise Model Validation Guideline

May 2025

NSW GOVERNMENT

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Acknowledgement of Country

Transport for NSW acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal people and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

Many of the transport routes we use today – from rail lines, to roads, to water crossings – follow the traditional Songlines, trade routes and ceremonial paths in Country that our nation's First Peoples followed for tens of thousands of years.

Transport for NSW is committed to honouring Aboriginal peoples' cultural and spiritual connections to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

Document control

Document owner	Senior Specialist Noise
Approved by	Executive Director, Environment and Sustainability
Branch / division	Environment and Sustainability / Safety, Policy, Environment and Regulation
Review date	May 2027
Superseded documents	RMS Noise Model Validation Guideline

Versions

Version	Date	Amendment notes
1.0	Undated	Original Roads & Maritime document
1.1	Aug 2022	Rebranded from a Roads & Maritime document to Transport for NSW
1.2	May 2025	General clarifications and updates plus guidance on noise model source adjustments to align with current practice and provide consistency. Also, guidance on aspects of noise model input to provide consistency and benefit review during handover of noise models at subsequent project stages.

Related policy and supporting information

- Transport Environment and Sustainability Policy
- EMF-NV-PR-0057 Post-construction road noise assessment report procedure
- EMF-NV-GD-0025 Road Noise Criteria Guideline
- EMF-NV-GD-0024 Road Noise Mitigation Guideline

Contacts and further information

Email: environoiseandvibration@transport.nsw.gov.au

Internal Transport users: ESMF Noise and vibration (sharepoint.com)

Environment & Sustainability Management Framework

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1. NSW road noise modelling context

Road traffic noise models used for Transport for NSW (Transport) road infrastructure projects are typically validated using simultaneous classified road traffic counts and monitoring data from noise loggers. This provides greater confidence in the accuracy of the modelling at project level and therefore the recommendations and assessment completed using the modelling.

In NSW and other parts of Australia we are in a unique situation compared to much of Europe and North America in that relatively good correlation are most frequently easily obtained between measured and predicted noise levels. This has allowed refined and robust design approaches to be developed with good understanding of modelling algorithm limitations.

Good correlation is obtained in NSW and much of Australia for a number of reasons. A significant factor is that the climate is relatively moderate compared to much of Europe where one location may experience a larger range in temperatures and ground conditions ranging from summer grass to frozen or snow covered ground.

Australian road surfaces for the most part are also not subjected to freeze thaw cycles or studded snow tyres which quickly cause degradation in road surface performance and acoustic characteristics. For the most part Australian drivers use ‘summer’ tyres all year rather than ‘winter’ and ‘summer’ tyres with different noise emission.

This means that Europe is largely heavily reliant on modelling, most often without project based validation, whereas NSW and much of Australia are able to make use of the benefits of reliably matching modelled and measured noise levels at any time of the year. This is done as part of the noise model validation process and this process provides for greater confidence in the prediction performance of the noise model, at and individual project level.

2. Why do we validate a road noise model?

The purpose of model validation is to demonstrate that the noise model is a reasonably accurate representation of the real world within the limitations of the algorithm. Validation can also show that where the limitations of the algorithm result in systematic error, this can be accounted for by calibration.

From Transport's perspective validation also serves as an overall check that all parameters and geometry have been correctly entered into the model and that the parameter values are appropriate.

In many aspects the validated existing noise model is the most important piece of modelling as after project construction it is the only detailed record of existing noise levels. Existing noise levels are very important in NSW as increases in noise level are one of the two triggers for noise mitigation. After project completion the noise levels from the project can be measured, whereas the existing noise levels before the project cannot.

3. What is error?

Error may be defined as the difference between measured and predicted noise level. An error of zero indicates that the model exactly predicts noise levels. Positive or negative error either indicates over or under prediction depending on the sign convention used.

Typically, this is presented in a report validation table such as below. Table 1 shows the differences between predicted and measured noise levels and the median differences.

Table 1: Example daytime validation table

Reference	Noise logging address	Daytime Noise Level $L_{Aeq(15\ hour)}$ (dBA)		
		Measured existing	Predicted existing	Predicted minus measured
NM1	Some Road	66.1	66.9	0.8
NM2	Some Road	68.0	67.0	-1.0
NM3	Some Road	55.0	56.3	1.3
Median difference				0.8

There are two types of error that Transport processes account for. The first is random scatter or random error, which has been the subject of many studies. Random error is unavoidable in the real world, even in the most controlled settings. There is no bias to this error with equal chance of a variance on either side of the true value. Random error thus describes the distribution of error either side of a median of zero. It has been expressed mathematically as root-mean-square (rms) in the development work leading to the derivation of CoRTN by Delany et al and as standard deviation in the validation of CoRTN for Australian conditions by Samuels et al.

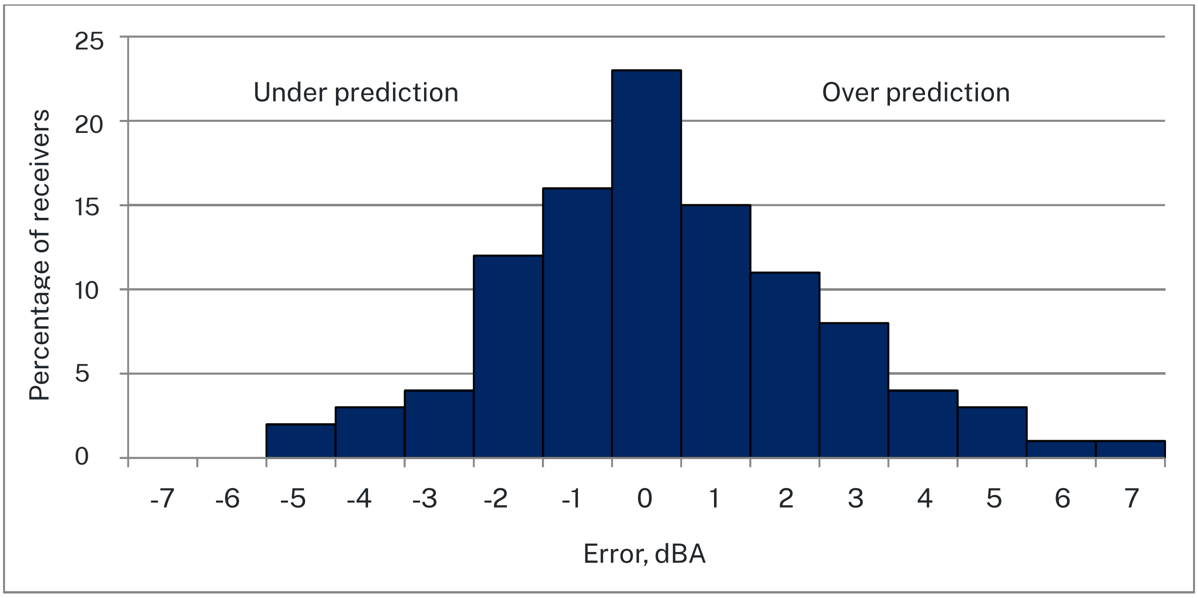
Root-mean-square and standard deviation are both measures of scatter and are similar where the median error is zero. However, an important difference is that, while the actual scatter does not change with median error, this may alter the measure of scatter when using rms. In contrast, when using standard deviation as a measure of scatter, the value of standard deviation does not change with median error.

Delany et al reports rms error of 2.0dBA for free field with good quality data (328 sample sites) and 2.5dBA (2064 sample sites) in more complex situations which may include facades. Samuels et al reports standard deviation of 1.8dBA for free field (55 sample sites) levels and 2.5dBA for façade levels (61 sample sites). Some techniques typically used to minimize random error include larger sample sizes, which of course are constrained by feasible and reasonable limitations and ultimately, use of statistical processes such as use of median and mean values.

The second type of error is median (or systematic) error where the median error does not equal zero. Median error does not affect scatter. There is an introduced bias or skew in the data towards one direction. A technique to adjust for median (or systematic) error is the use of a calibration correction or adjustment which seeks to offset the bias or skew. The work by Samuels et al also identified correction terms to correct for median error under Australian conditions when using CoRTN in the 1980s. Work by Kean also identified potential corrections for CoRTN with higher heavy vehicle percentages at night. Samuels reports -1.7dBA for façade levels and - 0.7dBA for free field levels based on daytime L10(18hr). Kean reported between +0.5dBA to +1.0dBA for night time traffic with high heavy vehicle percentages at freeway speeds and potential temperature effects. Transport through review of numerous projects confirms that night time noise levels often require separate corrections to the daytime.

Figure 1 shows the typical difference between measured and predicted noise levels for a calibrated noise model with median error of 0dBA on a large urban Sydney road project (1796 sample sites). It shows that there is random scatter with standard deviation of around 2dBA. It shows slight skew towards over prediction in the tail, perhaps due to the exclusion of residential fence details.

Figure 1: Typical difference between measured and predicted noise levels



Note that median error can be problematic on a road project since it changes the noise levels at all locations and impacts on the design of mitigation. As mentioned previously, calibration (or use of overall adjustments) can be used to adjust for median error. Statistical approaches applied to data such as use of median and mean values can be used to minimise random (scatter) error. At most locations, over prediction of noise levels due to random scatter does not result in additional noise mitigation as the noise level must also be above the criteria and have increased enough to trigger mitigation.

3.1 How is error managed?

Transport processes applied at the initial concept development of a potential road, at the environmental approval, the detail design and post construction operational compliance coordinate to manage the effects of random and median error as the road project transitions from an early concept to an operational road.

Aspects that need to be managed are the cumulative effects of error and uncertainty around model inputs. These can have a big effect on correctly identifying community impact, cost of mitigation and mitigation triggers.

3.2 Causes of median error

Based on review of road projects it is the Transport specialist noise team's experience that significant median error is mostly likely caused by incorrect model inputs or incorrect noise logger processing than the road in question differing significantly from standard Australian conditions. In Transport's experience it is also less likely that significant median error is due to chance from a small sample size of logging locations than due to incorrect model inputs.

The theoretical number of loggers required to determine the median error with a certain degree of accuracy are detailed in AUSTROADS report AP-T12 2002, An Approach to the Validation of Road Traffic Noise Models. However, in practice, a good degree of certainty can be obtained with fewer loggers through good logger placement and additional data processing.

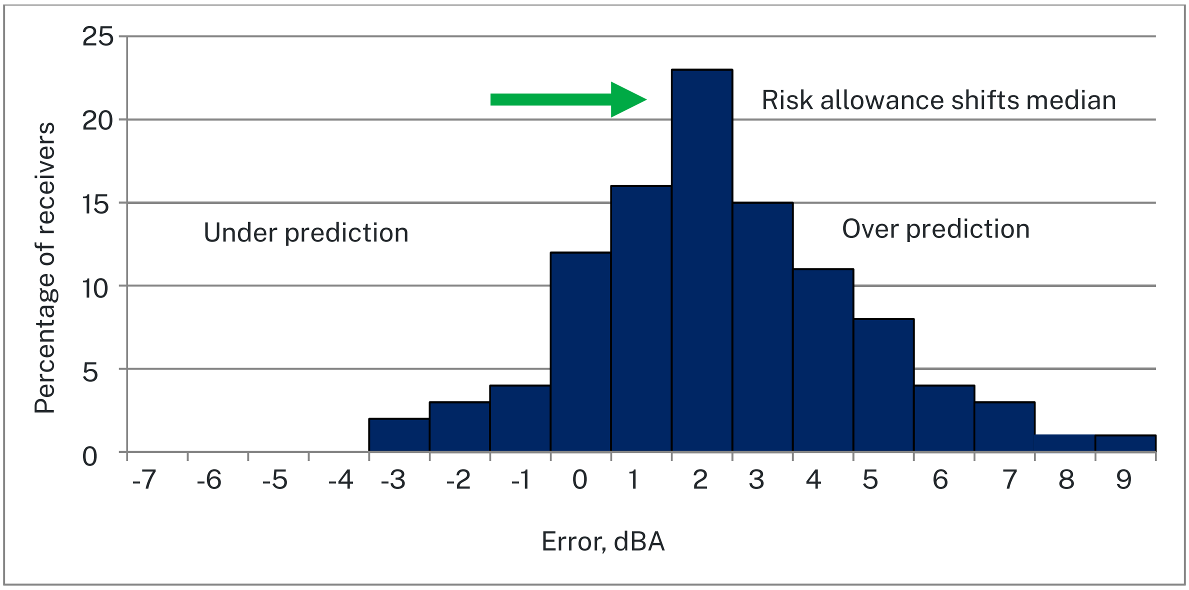
On some occasions there may be enough receivers that are all similarly affected by the same propagation loss error to cause median error in the result table. In this instance separate catchments may be used to evaluate catchment based median error if the issue cannot be addressed by localised refinement of the model. An example of this may be an error in shielding or differences in ground type.

3.3 Use of median error

Median error may be deliberately introduced to manage risk. In engineering this is known as a safety factor, however for noise assessments Transport uses the term risk allowance. The risk allowance shifts the median so that on average the noise model over predicts noise levels. This reduces the chance that, due to random error at compliance, a receiver will be over the noise criteria. It can also be used to manage some uncertainty around noise source levels terms such as future traffic volumes and speeds which affect median noise levels.

The following Figure 2 shows an example with a 2.0dB risk allowance. This reduces the risk that a number of residences exceed criteria on compliance by shifting the distribution so that on average noise levels are over predicted.

Figure 2: Effort of risk allowance



The decision to use a risk allowance is a decision that may be made on individual projects and is typically included where judgement shows that the cost of a small number of additional noise treatments, due to over prediction, is less than the management and reputational cost of providing additional noise mitigation after the road is operational. It is more likely to be used on rural projects where the risk allowance may only add a few extra houses onto the noise mitigation list. On urban projects it is more common for Transport to request a sensitivity analysis to identify the number of receivers that may need to be mitigated if the noise level is under or overestimated as a measure of compliance risk after project completion.

3.4 Causes of scatter error

If noise levels are evaluated over a sufficiently long time period, one of the main causes of scatter is likely due to the limitations of the algorithm and any practical noise model to accurately account for all aspects of propagation loss occurring in the real world. Areas where algorithms and models commonly simplify propagation loss include ground effect, vegetation, reflection, diffraction and atmospheric loss. When assessed over a short period of time, variance in individual vehicle noise emission, atmospheric conditions and low-level extraneous noise may give rise to random error.

In some instances, localised source level error due to inconsistent road surfaces or unusual or inconsistent traffic flow may give error at a receiver location. This may appear as random error where it only affects one receiver. However, this is a source level error and would give rise to median error if logging was completed at multiple receivers in this location. This should be identified when accounting for error at each logging location.

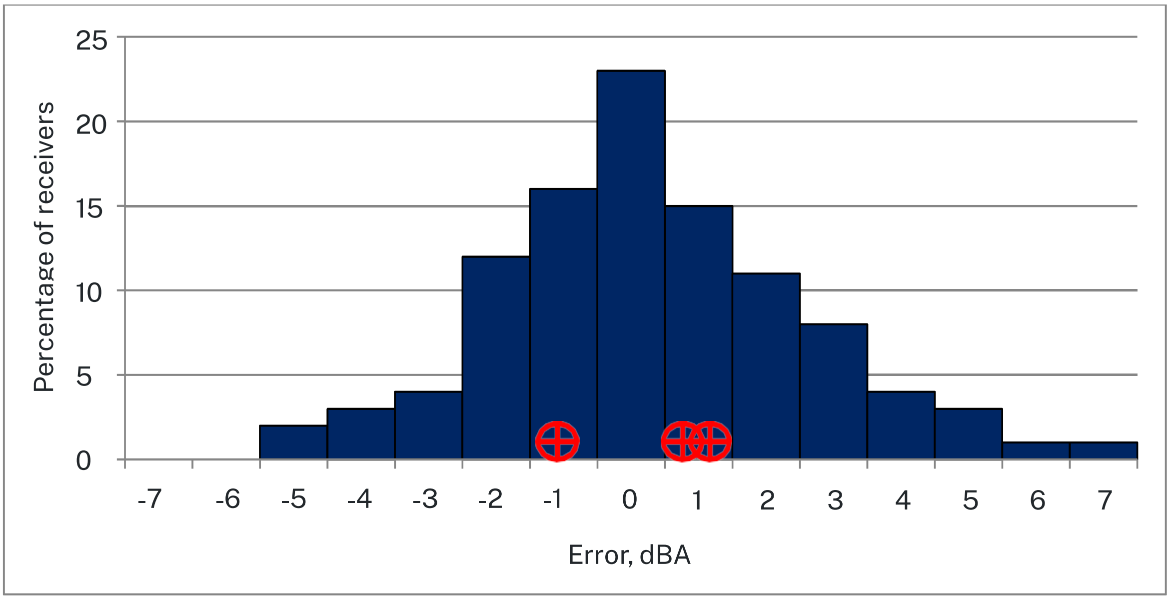
The key component that may be used to calibrate propagation loss, assuming all other inputs are correct, is the proportion of soft ground entered into CoRTN. This corrects situations where noise levels are under predicted at close distances and over predicted at greater distances or vice versa. When calibrated the spread of the scatter may be reduced assuming the receivers are all located at different distances from the road or with different intermediate ground surfaces.

4. Does a model need calibration?

This is the question that is asked each time a validation table is produced. Before calibration is undertaken there needs to be strong justification, supported by a physical explanation, of why the median error of the sample is significantly different from 0dB. The reason for requiring strong justification and a physical explanation is that there needs to be a high degree of certainty that calibration is required or appropriate. While calibration may reduce error at the sample logging locations it may make error worse at other locations on the road project.

For example, if we plot the daytime noise levels from Table 1 onto Figure 1 we get the following in Figure 3. While the daytime median error of the sample was 0.8dB this may have been due to the small sample size. If more loggers were used then the distribution below may have been produced with a median of 0dB.

Figure 3: Possible population distribution for sample logging location values



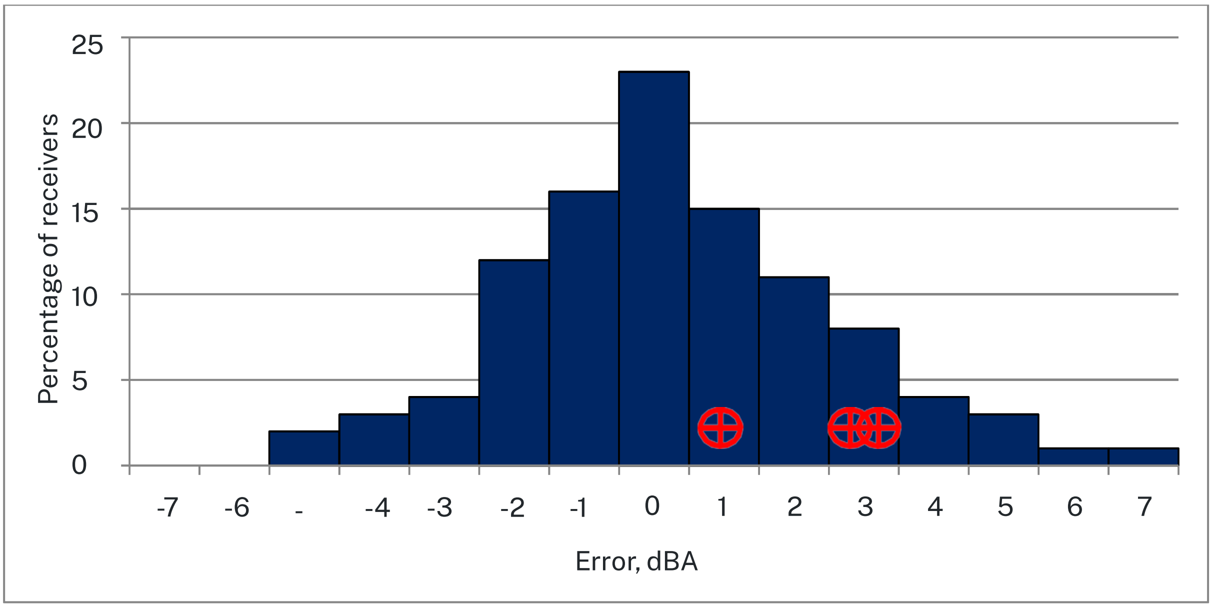
A common situation is that the validation table (see Table 2) shows that the noise model significantly over predicts noise levels at the logging locations.

Table 2: Example validation table with possible over prediction

Reference	Noise logging address	Daytime Noise Level $L_{Aeq(15\ hour)}$ (dBA)		
		Measured existing	Predicted existing	Predicted minus measured
NM1	Some Road	66.1	66.9	0.8
NM2	Some Road	68.0	67.0	-1.0
NM3	Some Road	55.0	56.3	1.3
Median difference				0.8

The question that needs to be answered is whether this potential over prediction is due to chance and the model is actually fine as is indicated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Logger sample not representative



Or is calibration required and the model is actually over predicting at all locations by 2dBA as is shown in Figure 5, and calibration is required to produce the result shown in Figure 6?

Figure 5: Model over predicting noise levels

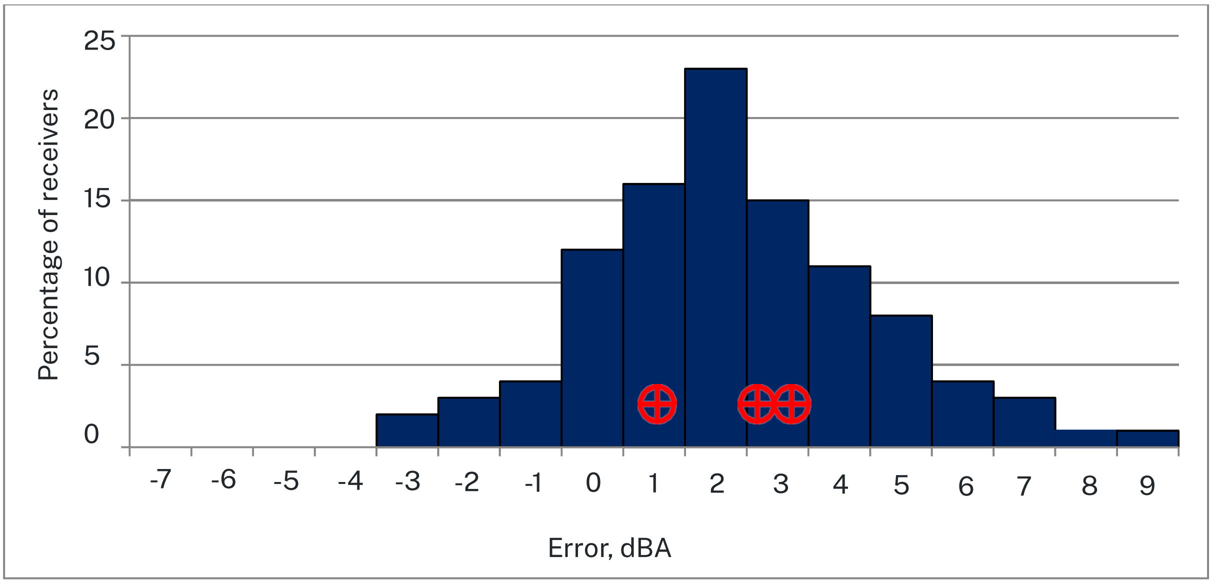
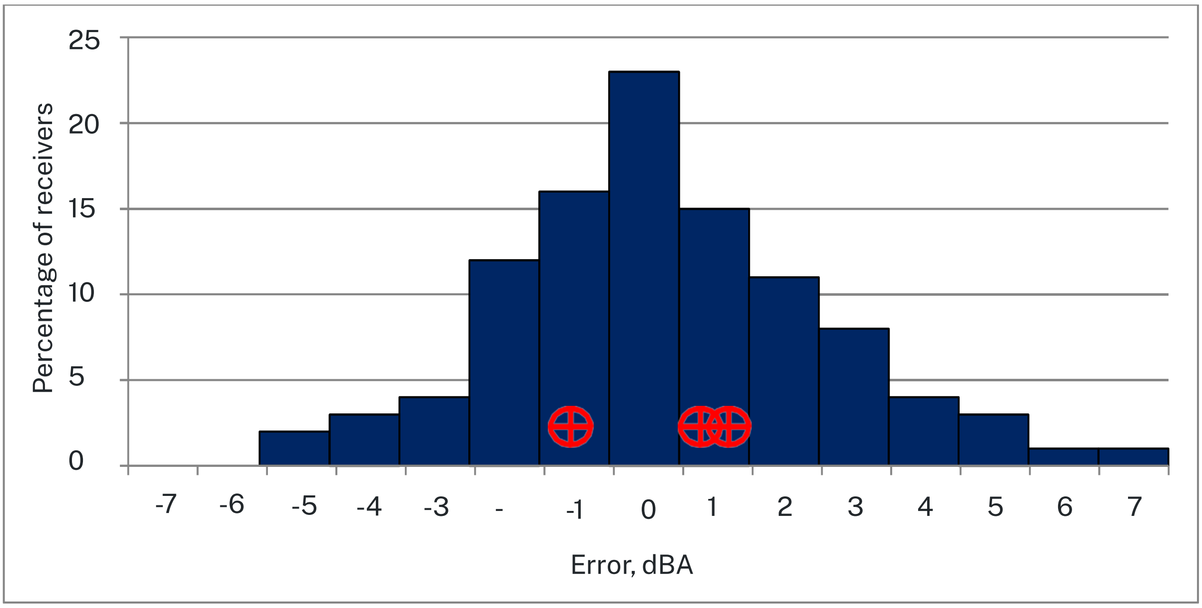


Figure 6: Model calibrated



In practice, Transport's experience, spanning many years, covering numerous projects large and small and ranging in complexity, is that the chance that the situation in Figure 5 (or the opposite and under predicting) occurs is low in situations where:

- Model uses standard factors for NSW approaches to L_{Aeq} modelling.
- Model input parameters and geometry have been audited and verified as being appropriate.
- A three-source height model is used, particularly where heavy vehicle percentages are greater than 10%.
- All lanes of traffic have been individually modelled with three source heights per lane (particularly where heavy vehicle percentage is greater than 10%). Each source being located in the centre of each lane.
- Desktop/spreadsheet calculations have been used to verify the noise model.
- Correct road surface corrections have been used and verified during logging.
- Simultaneous noise logging and classified traffic count data (in accordance with the Austroads vehicle classification) with measured speeds have been correctly processed. The representative speeds used for validation should be based on measurements during the concurrent traffic counting and as a minimum represent light and heavy vehicles groups separately.
- The model has been validated under free-flowing traffic conditions by excluding corresponding periods of unusual traffic flow or temporarily reduced traffic speed from the noise and traffic loggers. This type of traffic flow differs from that used to derive the empirical based equations in most algorithms. Note that a secondary validation step may be required to identify a calibration for non- free flowing conditions.
- At each logging location the difference between measured day and night time noise levels are similar to the differences predicted by the noise model.
- Logging includes free field measurement locations within 30m of the road (no closer than 10m) and having unobstructed line of sight to approximately 150 degrees of road and tyre interface to verify representative road traffic source levels.
- Logging locations provide a representative measurement of receiver noise levels and the impact of the project.

- Noise loggers are placed at a range of distances and locations to evaluate propagation loss throughout the range of project impact. These locations may include representative points on multi-storey residential receivers.
- Some loggers are not influenced by residential fences as they increase modelling uncertainty due to uncertain shielding effects.

Under most circumstances this will result in:

- Median error generally within +-1dBA for the sample locations where noise logging was completed. Note that this may vary a small amount depending on the number of noise loggers in the sample.
- Random scatter generally within +-2.0dBA and values that are of reasonably similar magnitude but opposite sign. Any random discrepancies outside of +-2.0dBA should be accounted for at each logging location. Free field loggers within 30m of the road (no closer than 10m) and with unobstructed view to the road/tyre interface with an angle of view of around 150 degrees are regularly within +-1.5dBA.

However, in some instances calibration may be required where it can be strongly justified based on the median error and a physical explanation of the cause of the error.

Consideration should be given as to whether calibration is relevant to both the ‘no-build’ and ‘build’ scenarios or just the ‘no-build’ scenario. Aspects for consideration are whether the traffic conditions, old and new pavement surfaces and propagation losses are expected to be similar in both the ‘no-build’ and ‘build’ scenarios.

Typical examples of where additional calibration may be required are:

- Worn and degraded pavements with noise emission different from standard factors.
- High heavy vehicle percentages, high proportion of medium trucks (noting some differences between the Australian heavy vehicle fleet relative to that which formed the basis for CoRTN). Also, areas that may be affected by the frequent and heavy use of engine compression brakes, where this is found to be acoustically significant. Note that, depending on site specifics including how prevalent the occurrence of engine compression braking, the dominance of rolling noise at higher highway speeds may render the contribution from engine brakes to be less significant to the total L_{Aeq} noise level, given the relatively short duration of engine compression braking noise per event.
- Where the unusual traffic flows or temporarily reduced speeds are a feature of the road. These effects need to be quantified and included where significant in the context of the time period set by the noise criteria. Examples may include school zones, intersections, smart motorways and congested flow.
- Significant differences in temperature.

5. Management of error and risk along different project stages

5.1 Route options

Validation may not be possible during a route options assessment. This will depend on the level of information available and also whether a desktop analysis or noise model is to be prepared. During a route options assessment it is common that:

- Future or existing traffic volumes are not known.
- Detailed ground topography surveys have not been completed.
- 2-D or 3-D road design information is unavailable.

Where sufficient information is available validation should be completed. Standard modelling parameters should be used where available information does not allow reliable validation.

5.2 Environmental assessment

The environmental assessment may be the first opportunity where validation and potential calibration may be completed.

In some instances, detailed ground topography may not be readily available. This should be sought as much as possible and if not obtainable the assessment should be suitably qualified about the modelling limitations.

Note that some small environmental assessments (e.g. a Review of Environmental Factors) approved internally by Transport may not have a further detail design stage. In this situation the level of accuracy and certainty in modelling and predictions should then be such that it is suitable for construction. The Transport project manager can provide guidance on whether the project will have additional design stages and opportunity for refinement.

An environmental assessment approved by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) and reviewed by the NSW EPA needs to have sufficient detail and certainty to identify minimum mitigation requirements within project constraints. During detail design refinement additional noise mitigation may be identified.

Where there is a degree of uncertainty (e.g., traffic volume, speed, topography) a project specific risk allowance may be applied where approved by the Transport project manager.

In some instances, the existing road surface may be degraded resulting in higher noise levels or have temporary resurfacing with chip seal. This needs to be considered when validating the existing noise model.

However, where this road surface is to be replaced or no longer trafficked following the upgrade then standard design pavement corrections should be used in the ‘no-build’ scenarios for these pavement sections. This ensures that nearby residents are assessed against the noise increase mitigation trigger that would have occurred if the pavement had not significantly degraded or been treated with a temporary chip seal resurface. Surface degradation and temporary resurfacing are cost effective approaches to extend an asset life until the road is upgraded.

5.3 Reference design

In most instances the reference design and associated noise levels and mitigation provided in the Tender Documents comes from the environmental approval.

Where there has been further design refinement the reference design is an update of the environmental assessment and should be prepared using the same approaches.

5.4 Tender design

The design and associated noise levels and mitigation produced by the contractor is used to inform Transport of the benefits, impacts and costs of the tender design during a competitive bid.

Models need to be validated and in some instances calibrated to provide Transport with confidence in the tenderers design and mitigation. It also needs to sufficiently inform the tenderer so that they can manage refinement through detail design and meet compliance upon project opening.

Where the environmental assessment or reference design has been completed prior to the competitive tender process the previously validated modelling parameters may be included in the scope of works to ensure consistency between competing tenderers.

On some projects the competitive tender process may be undertaken before an environmental assessment has been completed. In this situation Transport will request that all contractors complete a noise assessment using standard parameters and then complete their own risk assessment against these standard parameters. This ensures that Transport can compare like for like comparison between competing tenders since the same modelling approach was taken while the risk assessment means the contractor is responsible for identifying if the standard parameters are incorrect and can assess any resulting cost and design impact.

The reference design and scope of works may require that quieter pavements are used in certain locations. Note that this does not form part of the acoustic base design in the 'build' year unless the quieter pavement has been selected for reasons other than noise. Please see Transport's *Road Noise Mitigation Guideline* in relation to the assessment of quieter pavement surfaces.

Note and apply approaches used for environmental assessment for degraded pavement.

5.5 Detailed design

The approaches used for environmental assessment should be used during detail design.

In addition, the detail design presents the opportunity for design refinement to ensure the requirements of Transport's Road Noise Criteria Guideline, Road Noise Mitigation Guideline, requirements of the scope of work and the environmental approval are being addressed.

6. Post-construction operational noise compliance

The standard (and Transport's preferred) approach to post-construction operational compliance is using a post construction operational noise model validated by concurrent on-site noise and traffic volume monitoring.

This method is the only practicable approach in any case where there is a relatively large number of receivers making logging at most receiver locations both before and after the project not unrealistic/impracticable.

A possible alternative approach that should only be reserved for special cases where there is suitable justification, is by measurement only. This is only practicable on small projects with a commensurate small number of affected noise sensitive receivers, where noise logging can be completed at all or most receivers including the worst affected receiver(s) both before and after the project. Guidance should be sought from Transport noise specialists via the project team if this option is being proposed.

Noise monitoring and traffic counts for validation purposes should be sufficient to verify the noise emission performance of the pavement, vehicle traffic and noise levels at an appropriate number of receivers.

The Transport document Post-Construction Road Noise Assessment Report Procedure (EMF-NV-PR-0057) contains further procedural details in relation to post construction operational compliance methodology, in particular, the modelling method.

6.1 Post-construction traffic flows

Simultaneous hourly classified traffic counts (light and heavy vehicle speeds and volumes, the latter in accordance with the Austroad's vehicle classification) and noise logging should be completed. The measured traffic volumes should initially be compared with the predicted traffic volumes as a sanity check, noting that some degree of difference can reasonably be expected as the built design is based on AADT traffic volumes, whereas the traffic counts during the post construction assessment represents a "snapshot" in time, which although perfectly adequate for model validation purposes (given that it is accompanied by concurrent traffic noise monitoring), can be affected by atypical flows, including seasonal variations for example.

Where the traffic volumes (noting the above), traffic mix or speed is significantly different to the predicted traffic volumes based on the detailed design (or most recent REF in cases where there is no further detailed design phase), the traffic flows should be reviewed and re-evaluated and the project noise levels and mitigation reassessed where necessary. The Transport project manager can provide guidance on whether the traffic volumes are significantly different from the predicted flows.

6.2 Post-Construction operational noise compliance approach

The post construction measured noise levels should be supplemented with a post construction compliance noise model of the 'as built' design. This represents the preferred approach.

The detail design model should be updated to produce the post construction compliance noise model. As a first step updates should include any differences between the 'for construction' drawings and the 'as built' road and also the traffic parameters such as volume, speed and heavy vehicle mix encountered during the post construction noise logging.

This updated noise model should then be validated against the post construction noise logging and concurrent traffic volume count results using the same software as the detail design. Where it can be strongly justified the application of noise calibration may be required.

The next step is to review the post construction traffic and confirm that it is not significantly different from that predicted at detail design noting, as discussed above, that some difference is to be expected as the monitored traffic is simply a snapshot and could be atypically affected by factors, such as normal seasonal variations. If the detail design traffic parameters are not significantly different from the opening traffic parameters then the detail design traffic parameters for the design year should be input into the validated post construction compliance noise model.

Where the validated noise model predicts a noise level at a receiver that is more than 2dBA higher than the detail design predicted noise level, feasible and reasonable mitigation should be re-evaluated for that receiver. Note that a 2dBA is the noise modelling tolerance for road traffic modelling. It represents a level barely discernable to the human ear for a constant noise source and even less discernable for one such as road traffic which fluctuates.

Where traffic parameters are significantly different from those used in detail design and result in higher noise levels, then all RNMG noise mitigation triggers and noise mitigation identified in detail design should be re-evaluated.

In the few cases where there is justification for compliance to be based on measurement only, then noise logging should be completed at the same locations as prior to construction. Noise logging prior to construction should have covered most receivers as well as the worst affected receivers.

Where noise levels, including any adjustment, have increased by more than the noise mitigation increase trigger in the *Road Noise Mitigation Guideline* (Section 5.2), then noise mitigation should be reviewed at that receiver.

If the measured traffic volume is similar but lower than the predicted volumes, then the measured noise levels should be increased by adjusting them for the change in traffic volume, mix and speed. This allows them to be compared with the predicted noise levels for the design.

7. Standard parameters and approach

The following lists standard parameters and an overall approach suggested by Transport as a starting point in operational traffic noise assessment. These may be used to form the basis of modelling parameters to be included in a technical scope of work.

The approach requires a review and risk assessment of the standard parameters to be completed as part of the noise assessment as Transport does not warrant or guarantee that the standard parameters will be correct in all situations.

Note contractual scope of works may include additional or alternative parameters based on the findings of an environmental assessment.

a) Complete noise modelling using the following standard parameters:

  - apply single source height of 0.5m for cars and three source heights for trucks corresponding to 0.5m for truck tyres, 1.5m for truck engines and 3.6m for truck exhausts.
  - the noise source should be located in the centre of each lane of traffic.
  - for design purposes use pavement corrections of:
    - +3.0dBA for concrete
    - 0.0dBA for dense graded asphalt or equivalent

    - -2.0dBA for Open Graded Asphalt (defined as a low noise pavement as it provides a noise reduction of well above 2dBA relative to Dense Graded Asphalt when new – refer Section 8, Definitions) or equivalent. Speak to a Transport noise specialist via the project team for any further practice guidance that may be applicable to the project if this pavement is being proposed.
    - 0.0dBA for Stone Mastic Asphalt (type used in NSW i.e. excluding SMA7 for which correction is -1dBA)
    - +4.0dBA for 14mm chip seal or +2.0dBA for 7mm chip seal.
    - 0.0dBA for next generation diamond ground concrete (note other concrete ground surfaces, may have negligible noise reduction compared to standard PCC). Although this is marketed as "low noise", in acoustic terms and with reference to the noise guidelines, it is defined as a "quieter pavement" noting that its reference performance is relative to standard concrete pavement, not dense graded asphalt. This is noted here for clarity. Refer to definitions of low noise and quieter pavements in Section 8.

- For validation of existing scenarios, pavement corrections may vary from those used for design purposes. Table 3 below shows a range of values encountered on Transport roads. The choice of surface corrections used in the model should be justified. Where possible the existing road surface correction applicable at roadside receivers should be verified by measurement.
- adopt a minimum receiver height of 1.5m above ground level and 4.5m above ground level for single and double storey premises respectively. Note where buildings are located on a sloping block, receiver heights may need to be increased
- within CoRTN adopt a ground factor of 50% over residential areas, 75% over open grass areas and 0% over water. Note that factors of 100% may improve correlation in highly vegetated areas. However vegetation may not be permanent and Transport does not currently support its use to assist in reducing noise levels to meet criteria until issues of permanence are resolved. During design areas of vegetation should be set to 75%
- for the generation of noise contours adopt a maximal search radius = 3000m
- for the generation of noise contours adopt a grid space = 20, and height above ground = 1.5m
- ensure a +2.5dBA facade reflection is included to reflect noise levels at 1m from the façade
- CoRTN's low volume correction applicable to L_{A10} noise levels should not be applied. The CoRTN predicted L_{A10} noise levels are simply a means to deriving the L_{Aeq} noise level. The L_{Aeq} metric is energy based and is therefore directly related to traffic volume, regardless of volume. This is unlike the statistical L_{A10} metric, for which a 'volume adjustment' is necessary at low volume to adjust the L_{A10} noise level to account for increased randomness in the traffic vehicle passby noise events and therefore L_{A10} noise level. The L_{A10} statistical descriptor is sensitive to clustering of traffic events that can occur at low volume, whereas the L_{Aeq} energy averaged noise level is not. The L_{Aeq} has a constant, unchanging relationship with traffic volume, all other variables assumed constant. No low volume correction is therefore required
- Use a -3dBA adjustment to the CoRTN predicted L_{A10} noise level to derive the L_{Aeq} noise level. Site specific empirical L_{A10} to L_{Aeq} corrections must not be used
- evaluate the noise model in accordance with this guideline Sections 2 to 6
- with the CoRTN algorithm, consider the use of additional or alternative vehicle source adjustments for different traffic mix (for example, in circumstances where the proportion of trucks is high, or increases significantly), including pavement temperature. Appendix A presents a recommended approach to noise model source emission adjustments applicable where speeds are 60 km/h or greater and the proportion of heavy vehicles is 20% or higher. The adjustments may also be considered where the proportion of heavy vehicles is lower than nominated, at the discretion of the practitioner. The adjustments and conditions of

adjustments are consistent with current practice recommended by Transport at project level and applied on many Transport projects carrying a high proportion of heavy vehicles over recent years.

b) Complete a risk assessment of standard parameters against the evaluation in item (xi) to determine how noise levels and mitigation outcomes may vary if additional ground factor and source level calibration is required during design refinement or post construction.

Table 3: Typical range of road surfaces corrections

Surface name	Relative noise level dBA (freeway speeds)
14 mm chip seal	+4.0
14/7mm chip seal	+4.0
7mm chip seal	+2.0
Portland cement concrete (PCC) (free of tonal characteristics)	+3.0
Next generation diamond ground concrete (note other concrete ground surfaces, may have negligible noise reduction compared to standard PCC)	0.0
Cold overlay	+2.0
Stone mastic asphalt 7 (typically not used in NSW)	-1.0
Open graded asphaltic concrete	-2.5 to -4.5
Worn to degraded open graded asphalt	0.0 to +2.5
Dense graded asphalt (AC10, AC14)	0.0
Stone mastic asphalt (typically used in NSW)	0.0
Stone mastic asphalt 14	+1.0

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8. Definitions

Term	Definition
A–frequency weighting	A frequency-based adjustment made to sound level measurement, by means of an electronic filter, in line with international standards. This approximates the frequency response of the human ear and accounts for reduced sensitivity at low frequency.
Decibel (dB)	A measure of sound level. The decibel is a logarithmic way of describing a ratio. The ratio may be power, sound pressure, voltage, intensity or other parameters. In the case of sound pressure, it is equivalent to 10 times the logarithm (to base 10) of the ratio of a given sound pressure squared to a reference sound pressure squared.
Decibel (A-weighted; dBA)	Unit used to measure 'A-weighted' sound pressure levels. A-weighting is a frequency-based adjustment made to sound-level measurement to approximate the response of the human ear.
'Build' year / 'no-build' year	Build years – assumes the project proceeds No-build years – assumes the project does not proceed
CoRTN	UK Department of Transport's Calculation of Road Traffic Noise (CoRTN) algorithm
EPA	NSW Environment Protection Authority
Frequency	The number of times that a vibration or periodic function occurs or repeats itself in one second, measured in Hertz (Hz).
L_{A10}	The A-weighted sound pressure level measured using fast time weighting that is exceeded for 10% of the time over the relevant time period.
L_{Aeq}	Energy average A-weighted sound level – the steady sound level that, over a specified period of time, would produce the same energy equivalence as the fluctuating sound level actually occurring.
$L_{Aeq(15hour)}$	The L_{Aeq} noise level between the period of 7am–10pm.
Low noise pavement	Low noise pavement (as opposed to 'quieter pavement' – see definition below) is pavement that has an emission level 2dBA or more, lower than a reference pavement of dense graded asphalt
rms	root-mean-square
Classified traffic counting	Raw traffic counting conducted in accordance with the Austroads vehicle classifications
Quieter pavements	A potential alternative pavement which has a noise emission level that is lower than the baseline design pavement proposed by the project.
RNP	NSW EPA's Road Noise Policy

Appendix A1 – CoRTN source emission adjustments

The CoRTN source adjustments in this section are consistent with current practice recommended by Transport at project level and applied on Transport projects over recent years where there is a high proportion of heavy vehicles. They are largely based on source noise emission levels used in other contemporary noise algorithms which include larger classes of heavy vehicles, with correspondingly higher axle numbers, thus potential for higher rolling noise contribution (generated at the tyre pavement interface). It is noted that at higher highway speeds, rolling noise is by far more significant relative to propulsion noise and dominates the total noise emission. The additional categorisation of heavy vehicles also provides for greater granularity in heavy vehicles noise source emissions, relative to vehicle size.

In accordance with Transport's standard practice (this guideline), noise modelling should be validated in any case. Calibration may be applicable to adjust for median or systematic errors (as opposed to random errors), where there is good justification. This provides confidence that the project noise model is reasonably consistent with real world outcomes, at project level. In addition to this source adjustment, further adjustments may be appropriate to account for other specific effects, for example temperature. Where these are considered necessary, this may be discussed with Transport's noise specialists (via the project team) and must be justified and documented in the noise report.

The project noise report should document the traffic volumes in each vehicle group, light and heavy vehicle speeds and the source emission adjustments (in an appendix, or elsewhere in the report as considered appropriate).

The methodology for noise adjustments in this section are derived with reference to the general approach contained within literature[1] and utilise sound emission equations based on ASJ-RTN for light vehicles and the lowest category of heavy vehicles and NORD2005 for larger categories of heavy vehicles with increasing numbers of axles. In addition to the increase in the rolling noise contribution with speed (relative to engine/propulsion noise), the rolling noise component increases as the number of axles (therefore wheels) increases.

The calculation procedure to derive the CoRTN source emission adjustment is outlined below. This may be refined by Transport, on further review, such as with the availability of additional data. For consistency/repeatability, calculations are best undertaken to three decimal places and on determination of the CoRTN adjustment at the final step, then rounded to one decimal place.

Vehicle Type	Vehicle Group	Austroads Vehicle Classification	Equation
Light vehicles	LV	C1, C2	$k = 30 * \log(v) + 46.400 + 10 * \log(n)$
2 axle rigid trucks	HV1	C3	$K1 = 30 * \log(V) + 51.500 + 10 * \log(N1)$
3, 4 axle rigid trucks	HV2	C4, C5	$K2 = 30 * \log(V) + 54.400 + 10 * \log(N2)$
3, 4, 5 axle articulated trucks	HV3	C6, C7, C8	$K3 = -0.0005 * V^2 + 0.246 * V + 95.955 + 10 * \log(N3)$
6 axle articulated trucks	HV4	C9	$K4 = 30.620 * \log(V) + 55.488 + 10 * \log(N4)$

[1] Prediction and Assessment of Road Traffic Noise Impact (Peng. J, 2020)

Vehicle Type	Vehicle Group	Austroads Vehicle Classification	Equation
9 axle B-doubles, heavy truck and trailer	HV5	C10	$K5 = -0.0006 * V^2 + 0.274 * V + 96.801 + 10 * \log(N5 + N6)$
12 axle B-triples, road trains or equivalent	HV6	C11, C12	

Note: Based on reference air temperature of 20°C with Dense Grade Asphalt as the reference pavement.

Where: v = light vehicle speed
V = heavy vehicle speed (all categories)
n = light vehicle volume
N1, N2, etc. = heavy vehicle volumes for each heavy vehicle group

Then calculate the following:

$$K6 = 14.714 + 33 * \log\left(v + 40 + \frac{500}{v}\right) + 10 * \log(v) + 10 * \log(n)$$

$$K7 = 14.714 + 33 * \log\left(V + 40 + \frac{500}{V}\right) + 10 * \log\left(1 + \frac{500}{V}\right) + 10 * \log(V) + 10 * \log(N1 + N2 + N3 + N4 + N5 + N6)$$

$$K8 = 10 * \mathrm{Log}(10^{\frac{K6}{10}} + 10^{\frac{K7}{10}})$$

$$K9 = 10 * \mathrm{Log}(10^{\frac{k}{10}} + 10^{\frac{K1}{10}} + 10^{\frac{K2}{10}} + 10^{\frac{K3}{10}} + 10^{\frac{K4}{10}} + 10^{\frac{K5}{10}})$$

Adjustment, C, to add to CoRTN emission level (rounding to one decimal place at this final stage)

C = K9-K8

Appendix A2 – CoRTN in SoundPLAN application notes

This section provides a recommended approach with the objective of providing better consistency in the application of CoRTN when modelling in SoundPLAN on Transport's projects. This also better facilitates technical reviews and clarity where handover of noise models is required during subsequent project stages.

The following has been based on SoundPLAN Version 9.1, but the general principle and much of the content is still applicable when using other versions of SoundPLAN. Please contact a Transport Noise Specialist via the project team for clarification if required, or if there is justification for an alternative approach.

It is recommended that CoRTN:1988 should be used, with emission settings of CoRTN Australia (NSW) under the standards selection in SoundPLAN. See below green highlight to select road noise standard and emission.

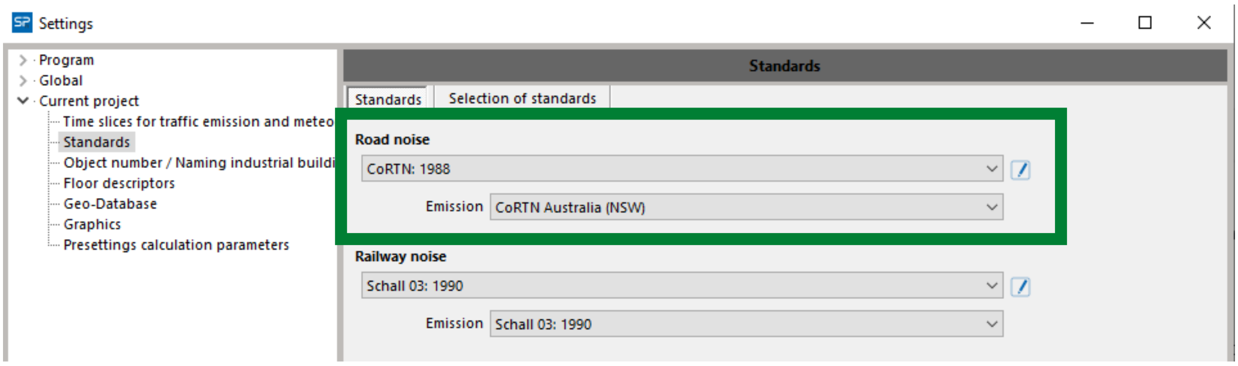

Figure A2-1 – Standard selection screen in SoundPLAN v9.1

Additional settings for CoRTN should be set before modelling begins. These can be selected via the cog option for CoRTN, as shown in Figure A2-1, above. These are the L_{10} to L_{eq} conversion method and the low flow correction. The drop-down selection for L_{10} to L_{eq} conversion should be set to L_{eq}=L_{10}-3 and the low flow correction should be disabled. See below selections in blue in the figure below.

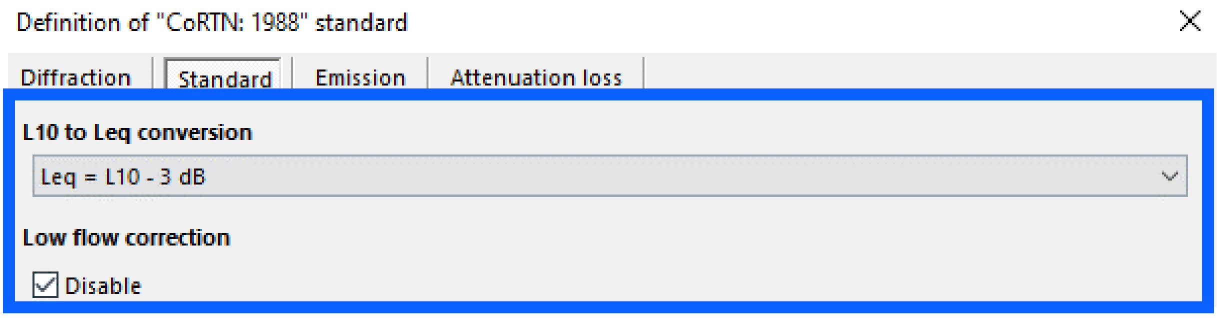

Figure A2-2 – Defined parameters for CoRTN:1988

When inputting traffic volumes into SoundPLAN using CoRTN, it is recommended that day and night time noise levels are calculated independently for the majority of circumstances. This allows separate CoRTN corrections for day and night corrections to be calculated as per Appendix A1. See Figure A2-3.

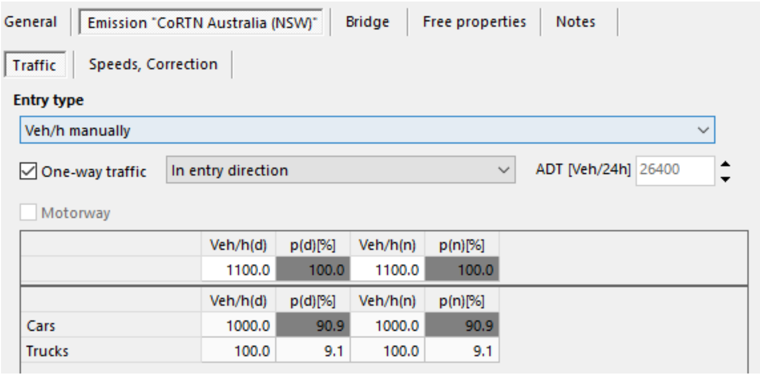

Figure A2-3 – CoRTN road emission traffic tab

Figure A2-4 shows where to enter speed, disable speed correction and enter the road surface correction, as per Table 3. The road surface correction should be entered in the location highlighted in red. CORTN corrections from Appendix A1 above should be entered under "emission heights", column C, shown in blue.

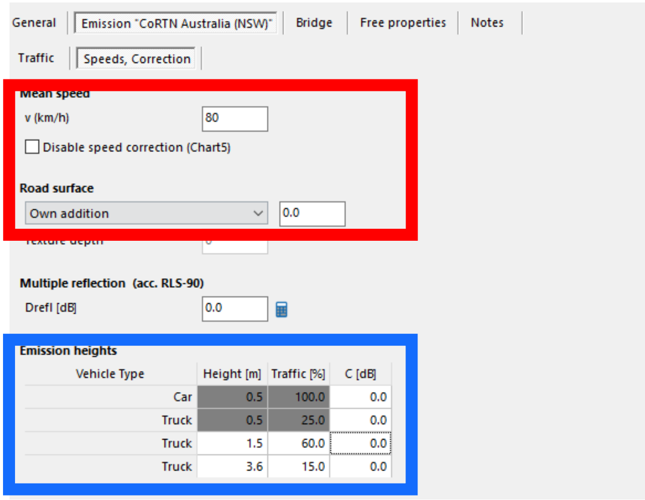

Figure A2-4 – CoRTN road emission Speed and Surface tab

Note that Transport recommends a default conservative approach, adopting a 2:4:1 split for HV tyres, engines and exhaust noise source heights respectively and this is commonly applied as shown as a Traffic [%] in blue. Where noise contributions that differ to the 2:4:1 are proposed with justification, contact a Transport Noise Specialist via the project team to discuss.