

Balancing Alertness Enhancement, Noise Management, and Cost-Effectiveness in Rumble Strip Deployment Across Varied Traffic and Environmental Conditions

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Abstract

The increasing demands on highway infrastructure necessitate innovative approaches that balance safety enhancement, environmental sustainability, and economic viability. This research examines the comprehensive deployment of rumble strips as a sustainable safety measure across diverse traffic conditions and environmental contexts. Through rigorous analysis of material properties, installation methodologies, and long-term performance metrics, we establish a framework for optimizing rumble strip implementation while minimizing ecological disruption and maximizing cost-effectiveness. Our investigation encompasses advanced material selection criteria emphasizing recyclability and durability, comprehensive environmental impact assessments addressing habitat fragmentation and noise propagation, and adaptive deployment strategies responsive to climate variability and extreme weather events. The study integrates predictive modeling techniques to forecast infrastructure performance under evolving traffic patterns influenced by demographic shifts and emerging logistics paradigms. Policy recommendations emerge from comparative analysis of rural versus urban deployment scenarios, addressing equity considerations and resource allocation challenges. The research demonstrates that strategic rumble strip deployment, when guided by sustainability principles and adaptive management frameworks, can achieve significant safety improvements while maintaining environmental integrity and fiscal responsibility. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on resilient transportation infrastructure and provide actionable insights for transportation agencies pursuing sustainable highway safety solutions in an era of climate uncertainty and evolving mobility patterns.

Introduction

Highway safety infrastructure represents a critical intersection of engineering innovation, environmental stewardship, and public policy (1). As transportation networks face unprecedented pressures from increasing traffic volumes, climate change impacts, and evolving mobility patterns, the need for sustainable and effective safety measures has never been more urgent. Highway safety infrastructure stands as a fundamental component in the functioning of modern transportation systems, yet it faces a complex web of challenges that threaten its efficacy and sustainability. At its core, the problem revolves around the growing pressures placed on roadways by rising traffic volumes, the unpredictable effects of climate change, and shifting patterns in how people move from place to place. These pressures strain existing infrastructure and highlight the multifaceted nature of safety concerns, which cannot be addressed simply through traditional methods or isolated interventions.

One major issue lies in the dramatic increase in traffic volumes across many regions, driven by population growth, urban sprawl, and economic development. As more vehicles

crowd the highways, the risk of accidents inherently rises, exacerbated by congestion, driver frustration, and roadway design limitations that were often conceived decades ago. The infrastructure originally built to handle a certain capacity now struggles under the weight of much higher demand, leading to deteriorating road conditions, more frequent bottlenecks, and greater chances for collisions. This growing mismatch between usage and design capacity presents a systemic problem where safety deteriorates as traffic intensifies. (2)

Adding to this complexity is the fact that highway safety is deeply influenced by environmental factors. Climate change introduces a new layer of unpredictability, as weather patterns grow more volatile and extreme events become more common. Heavy rains, flooding, heatwaves, and freezing conditions each pose unique threats to road safety and the durability of infrastructure. For instance, intense rainfall can cause slick surfaces, reduced visibility, and hydroplaning

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Table 1. Key Challenges in Highway Safety Infrastructure

Category	Core Issue	Drivers of Risk	Impact on Safety
Traffic Volume Growth	Overcapacity roadways	Population growth, urban sprawl	Higher accident rates, congestion
Climate Change	Infrastructure stress	Extreme weather, temperature variation	Pavement damage, reduced visibility, flooding hazards
Evolving Mobility Patterns	Mixed transport modes	Autonomous vehicles, micromobility	Increased interaction conflicts, infrastructure mismatch
Aging Infrastructure	Structural degradation	Deferred maintenance, underfunding	Failure risk, reduced safety features
Socioeconomic Disparities	Uneven safety outcomes	Rural/low-income geography	Higher fatality rates, limited emergency access

Table 2. Environmental and Human Factors Affecting Highway Safety

Factor Type	Specific Risk	Examples	Consequence	Mitigation Needs
Human Behavior	Distracted/Impaired driving	Phone use, alcohol	Collision frequency	Enforcement, education
Environmental Degradation	Habitat fragmentation	Road expansion, runoff	Biodiversity loss	Green infrastructure
Extreme Weather	Flooding, heatwaves	Heavy rains, prolonged heat	Roadway damage, hydroplaning	Climate-resilient design
Policy Gaps	Slow adaptation to tech	Outdated codes	Delayed innovation	Updated regulations
Resource Constraints	Budget limitations	Rural maintenance delays	Safety inequity	Targeted funding

Table 3. Sustainability and Technological Considerations for Rumble Strips

Dimension	Requirement	Challenge	Design/Policy Implication
Lifecycle Performance	Long-term durability	Wear from traffic	Use high-resilience materials
Climate Resilience	All-weather effectiveness	Freeze-thaw cycles, heat deformation	Adaptive installation protocols
Traffic Adaptation	Compatibility with diverse vehicles	EVs, autonomous systems	Consistent markings and detectability
Environmental Impact	Minimize ecological disruption	Construction footprint	Incorporate recycled materials
Technological Integration	V2I communication support	Lack of infrastructure readiness	Embed sensors, ensure interoperability

hazards, while prolonged heat can warp pavement and weaken structural components. The increasing frequency of such events puts traditional highway infrastructure at risk of damage, requiring more frequent repairs and raising safety concerns for users. Moreover, the long-term effects of climate change on road materials and structural integrity remain areas of uncertainty, complicating efforts to design roads that can withstand future conditions.

Highway safety also contends with evolving mobility patterns that challenge conventional assumptions about travel behavior. The rise of new transportation modes, including electric vehicles, autonomous cars, ridesharing, micromobility options like scooters and bikes, and shifting public transit usage, changes how people interact with highway systems (3). These trends introduce novel risks

and complicate traffic dynamics. For example, autonomous vehicles rely heavily on well-maintained infrastructure and clear signage, but current highway conditions may not consistently meet these requirements. Meanwhile, the mixing of traditional vehicles with faster or slower forms of transport increases the likelihood of conflicts and accidents. This complexity makes it difficult to apply one-size-fits-all safety solutions, as the infrastructure must accommodate a diverse and changing range of users and vehicle technologies.

Another pressing concern is the aging state of highway infrastructure across many parts of the world. Bridges, road surfaces, guardrails, and signage systems often suffer from years of wear and tear, compounded by underfunding and delayed maintenance. Aging infrastructure is more prone to failure and less capable of providing the safety features

needed to protect travelers effectively. This degradation not only raises accident risks but also increases the difficulty of implementing modern safety improvements, as repairs and upgrades must contend with underlying structural issues. The challenge is amplified in rural and underserved areas, where funding shortages and logistical difficulties leave infrastructure even more vulnerable. (4)

Additionally, there are persistent disparities in highway safety outcomes tied to geographic, socioeconomic, and demographic factors. Certain communities, particularly those in rural or low-income areas, frequently experience higher rates of traffic accidents and fatalities. These disparities often result from a combination of factors including poorer infrastructure quality, limited access to emergency services, and higher exposure to hazardous road conditions. Moreover, vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists face elevated risks, especially where highway design prioritizes vehicle speed over safety for non-motorized travelers. The lack of equitable safety infrastructure contributes to uneven protection across populations, revealing a systemic issue in how highway safety is prioritized and implemented.

Human factors also play a significant role in the persistent problems of highway safety. Despite advances in engineering and technology, driver behavior remains a primary contributor to accidents. Distracted driving, speeding, impaired driving, and fatigue continue to cause a large proportion of crashes (5). The interaction between human error and inadequate infrastructure creates a dangerous environment, where poorly designed roads or insufficient safety features exacerbate the consequences of mistakes. Efforts to change driver behavior often face limitations, and infrastructure that does not compensate for common errors fails to adequately protect users.

Environmental sustainability concerns further complicate highway safety infrastructure challenges. The construction, maintenance, and operation of highways have significant environmental impacts, including habitat fragmentation, pollution, and carbon emissions. There is growing pressure to balance safety improvements with environmental stewardship, yet these goals sometimes conflict. For example, widening roads to reduce congestion and accidents may increase impervious surfaces, contributing to runoff and ecological harm. Incorporating green infrastructure elements requires careful planning to ensure that safety is not compromised. The need to address climate change and environmental preservation alongside safety concerns places additional constraints on design and policy decisions. (6)

The regulatory and policy landscape surrounding highway safety infrastructure also presents challenges. Coordination among multiple agencies and jurisdictions, varying standards and codes, and political and budgetary constraints can hinder effective planning and implementation. Policy decisions may lag behind technological advancements or fail to adequately

address emerging risks. Furthermore, the prioritization of highway funding often leans toward capacity expansion or maintenance rather than innovative safety solutions. This disconnect between policy frameworks and evolving safety needs creates gaps that exacerbate infrastructure vulnerabilities.

Technological integration into highway safety infrastructure, while promising, also introduces its own set of challenges. Advanced traffic management systems, intelligent transportation technologies, and vehicle-to-infrastructure communication rely on robust, reliable, and secure infrastructure networks. However, many existing highway systems lack the foundational elements required to support these technologies effectively. Cybersecurity concerns, data privacy, and interoperability among different systems further complicate deployment (7). These factors add complexity to the already challenging task of upgrading infrastructure to meet modern safety demands.

Rumble strips, traditionally viewed as simple tactile warning devices, emerge as sophisticated components of comprehensive highway safety systems when evaluated through the lens of sustainability and long-term infrastructure resilience. The contemporary understanding of highway safety extends beyond immediate accident prevention to encompass lifecycle considerations, environmental compatibility, and adaptive capacity for future conditions. This expanded perspective necessitates a fundamental reevaluation of how safety infrastructure is conceived, designed, and implemented. Rumble strips, in their various configurations and applications, present unique opportunities to address multiple infrastructure challenges simultaneously while advancing broader sustainability objectives.

The complexity of modern highway systems demands integrated approaches that consider the interconnected nature of safety, environmental impact, and economic sustainability. Traditional infrastructure development often treated these factors as competing priorities, leading to suboptimal outcomes and unintended consequences. Contemporary practice recognizes that truly effective infrastructure solutions must harmonize these considerations from the earliest planning stages through long-term maintenance and eventual replacement or adaptation. (8)

Climate change introduces additional layers of complexity to highway infrastructure planning. Extreme weather events, shifting precipitation patterns, and temperature variations affect both the performance and longevity of safety infrastructure. Rumble strips must function effectively across a broader range of environmental conditions while maintaining structural integrity and safety effectiveness throughout extended service lives. This climate resilience requirement fundamentally alters material selection criteria, installation specifications, and maintenance protocols.

The evolving nature of traffic patterns, driven by demographic changes, economic shifts, and technological

advances, further complicates infrastructure planning. E-commerce growth has transformed freight movement patterns, while remote work trends affect commuter traffic distributions. These changes influence both the type and intensity of demands placed on highway safety infrastructure, requiring adaptive approaches that can accommodate uncertainty and change while maintaining consistent safety performance.

Material Innovation and Lifecycle Sustainability

The foundation of sustainable rumble strip implementation lies deeply rooted in the advances of material science, particularly as it applies to balancing the dual priorities of performance and environmental compatibility. Historically, the materials chosen for highway safety features such as rumble strips were evaluated primarily based on their durability, cost-effectiveness, and ease of installation (9). However, the modern approach to material selection involves a far more comprehensive evaluation framework that integrates sustainability considerations alongside traditional criteria. This expanded perspective has become essential in order to ensure that safety infrastructure not only performs its immediate function of improving road safety but also aligns with broader goals of environmental stewardship and resource conservation.

One of the key shifts in material evaluation is the recognition that materials must be assessed over their entire life cycle rather than just at the point of installation. This life-cycle thinking includes considerations such as embodied energy—the total energy consumed in the extraction, processing, manufacturing, and transportation of materials—and the end-of-life disposal or recyclability of those materials. Embodied energy is a critical metric because materials with high embodied energy contribute significantly to the carbon footprint of construction projects, offsetting potential environmental gains made through safety improvements. Thus, choosing materials that require less energy to produce and transport can substantially reduce the overall environmental impact of rumble strip installations.

Similarly, the recyclability of materials plays a pivotal role in sustainable highway infrastructure design. Traditional materials like concrete and asphalt, while widely used, can pose challenges when it comes to reuse and recycling, particularly if they are contaminated or combined with other substances (10). Poor recyclability can lead to increased landfill waste and the need for new raw materials, perpetuating environmental degradation. Therefore, new materials are being developed with an eye toward their ability to be reclaimed, processed, and reincorporated into future projects, reducing waste and conserving natural resources.

End-of-life disposal characteristics further complicate material selection. Some materials degrade into toxic

substances or microplastics that can pollute soils and waterways. Others may require energy-intensive processes to break down safely or remove from the environment. The sustainability challenge, then, is to identify or engineer materials that minimize these negative externalities, ensuring that once a rumble strip has served its useful life, it leaves behind as little environmental footprint as possible.

Within this context, high-performance recycled polymer composites have emerged as a groundbreaking advancement in rumble strip material technology. These composites represent a fusion of recycled plastic content and engineered reinforcing fibers, designed to meet or exceed the demanding performance requirements of highway safety infrastructure (11). Unlike traditional asphalt or concrete, these polymer composites can be manufactured to offer a blend of durability, weather resistance, and structural integrity, all while reducing dependence on virgin raw materials. This reduction in virgin material use directly corresponds to lower embodied energy and a smaller carbon footprint, marking a significant stride toward environmental compatibility.

The recycled plastics used in these composites typically come from post-consumer waste streams, including bottles, packaging, and industrial scrap. By repurposing this waste into highway safety materials, the composites help divert plastic from landfills and oceans, tackling one of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time. The inclusion of engineered fibers—often made from recycled glass, carbon, or natural fibers—provides additional strength and flexibility, enhancing the ability of the rumble strips to withstand mechanical stress and temperature fluctuations without cracking or degrading.

Manufacturing processes for these recycled polymer composites have been refined to achieve high recycled content—sometimes up to 85 percent—without sacrificing performance. Achieving this balance is critical because early attempts at incorporating recycled plastics into infrastructure materials often faced trade-offs in strength, durability, or tactile effectiveness. Modern processing techniques, including advanced mixing, molding, and curing methods, have overcome many of these limitations, producing composites that meet strict engineering standards for safety applications.

Laboratory testing plays a crucial role in validating the performance of these materials (12). Through rigorous freeze-thaw cycling, researchers simulate the harsh conditions rumble strips endure in cold climates, where repeated freezing and thawing can cause cracking, spalling, and loss of surface texture. The ability of recycled polymer composites to retain their tactile and auditory properties after such exposure is essential because these sensory cues are what alert drivers to road conditions and potential hazards. Similarly, testing under heavy traffic loading replicates the constant mechanical pressure rumble strips face from vehicles passing at high

Table 4. Sustainable Material Innovations for Rumble Strips

Innovation Type	Key Characteristics	Sustainability Benefit	Challenges
Recycled Polymer Composites	High recycled content (up to 85%), reinforced with glass/carbon fibers	Reduces virgin material use, diverts plastic waste	End-of-life microplastic risk, quality consistency
Bio-based Polymer Systems	Derived from renewable feedstocks, compostable or recyclable	Lower carbon footprint, supports circular economy	Scaling feedstock supply, cost competitiveness
Nanomaterial Additives	CNTs, photocatalytic nanoparticles	Increased strength, self-cleaning, conductivity for ITS	Cost, health/safety in production
Shape Memory/Self-healing Polymers	Thermal response, minor damage repair	Extended service life, reduced maintenance	Complex manufacturing, limited field data
Advanced Manufacturing Processes	Closed-loop, precision extrusion, reduced energy input	Lower embodied energy, waste minimization	Industrial capacity, technology adoption

Table 5. Performance Testing and Evaluation Metrics for Sustainable Rumble Strip Materials

Test Type	Objective	Key Parameters	Relevance to Sustainability
Freeze–Thaw Cycling	Assess cold climate durability	Crack resistance, tactile retention	Ensures longevity, reduces replacement frequency
Traffic Load Simulation	Replicate mechanical stress	Deformation, wear, fatigue resistance	Minimizes resource use over lifecycle
UV Exposure Testing	Evaluate photodegradation resistance	Color stability, brittleness prevention	Extends service life, lowers maintenance
Chemical Resistance Testing	Measure degradation from oils, salts, contaminants	Strength retention, surface integrity	Prevents premature failure in harsh environments
Moisture Ingress Testing	Assess water penetration	Material swelling, freeze damage potential	Improves durability, avoids waste from early failure

speeds and weights. The composites' resistance to deformation, wear, and fatigue ensures that their safety function remains consistent over time.

Another aspect of performance evaluation involves assessing the composites' resistance to ultraviolet (UV) radiation, chemical exposure, and moisture ingress. Prolonged exposure to sunlight can degrade many polymers through photodegradation, leading to brittleness and discoloration. The engineered fibers and stabilizers within these composites are designed to mitigate these effects, enhancing longevity and reducing maintenance needs. Chemical resistance is equally important because highway environments expose materials to oils, de-icing salts, and other corrosive substances that can accelerate deterioration (13). Moisture resistance prevents water infiltration that could otherwise weaken the material matrix or cause freeze-thaw damage.

Despite the technical advances, challenges remain in fully understanding the long-term environmental implications of these composites. Questions linger about the fate of polymer

fragments at the end of the rumble strip's life and how best to recycle or dispose of them without generating microplastic pollution. While the use of recycled content addresses the upstream problem of plastic waste, downstream effects require ongoing research and monitoring. Moreover, the sourcing of recycled plastics must be carefully managed to ensure quality and consistency, avoiding contamination that could compromise the composite's performance or environmental benefits.

The integration of recycled polymer composites into highway safety infrastructure also involves considerations related to manufacturing scale, cost, and supply chain logistics. While laboratory results are promising, producing these composites at a scale sufficient to meet the needs of large-scale infrastructure projects requires robust industrial capacity and reliable access to recycled materials. Cost competitiveness with traditional materials remains a critical factor for widespread adoption, especially in regions

where budget constraints limit investment in innovative technologies.

Beyond the physical and environmental properties, the adoption of advanced materials for rumble strips reflects a broader shift in how infrastructure projects are conceptualized (14). There is growing recognition that infrastructure components are part of larger ecological and social systems, and material choices must account for these interactions. For instance, selecting materials with lower environmental footprints supports public policy goals related to climate change mitigation and resource conservation. Additionally, materials that can be recycled at the end of their use contribute to circular economy models, which seek to keep resources in use for as long as possible and minimize waste.

Finally, the focus on sustainability in rumble strip materials exemplifies the increasing complexity of modern highway safety infrastructure. Performance criteria are no longer solely about mechanical strength or visibility but also encompass a range of environmental, economic, and social factors. This multidimensional challenge requires cross-disciplinary collaboration among material scientists, environmental engineers, transportation planners, and policy makers. Each stakeholder brings insights necessary to ensure that safety infrastructure fulfills its protective role while minimizing negative impacts and contributing positively to the communities and ecosystems it serves.

Bio-based polymer systems offer another pathway toward sustainable rumble strip materials (15). These materials, derived from renewable feedstocks such as agricultural residues or specially cultivated biomass, provide performance characteristics comparable to traditional petroleum-based polymers while offering superior end-of-life options. When these materials reach the end of their service life, they can be processed through industrial composting systems or returned to manufacturing feedstreams for reprocessing into new infrastructure components.

The integration of smart materials technology into rumble strip design opens possibilities for adaptive performance and extended service life. Shape memory polymers can be engineered to respond to temperature variations by adjusting their tactile properties, maintaining consistent driver alerting effectiveness across seasonal temperature ranges. These materials can also incorporate self-healing characteristics that enable minor damage repair through thermal cycling, significantly extending service intervals and reducing maintenance requirements.

Nanomaterial additives enhance the performance characteristics of base polymer systems while enabling new functionality. Carbon nanotube reinforcement increases tensile strength and impact resistance, while simultaneously improving electrical conductivity for potential integration with intelligent transportation systems. Photocatalytic nanoparticles can be incorporated to provide self-cleaning surfaces that

maintain visibility and effectiveness with minimal maintenance intervention. (16)

The manufacturing process for sustainable rumble strip materials emphasizes closed-loop systems that minimize waste and energy consumption. Advanced extrusion techniques enable precise control of material properties while incorporating recycled content and reducing energy requirements compared to traditional manufacturing approaches. Quality control systems ensure consistent performance characteristics while monitoring environmental impact metrics throughout the production process.

Environmental Impact Assessment and Mitigation Strategies

Comprehensive environmental impact assessment for rumble strip deployment requires sophisticated analysis of both direct and indirect effects on ecosystem functions and wildlife populations. Noise propagation modeling represents a critical component of environmental impact assessment for rumble strips. The acoustic characteristics of different rumble strip designs vary significantly, with implications for both human communities and wildlife populations. Computational acoustic modeling can predict sound propagation patterns across varied topographic and atmospheric conditions, enabling optimization of rumble strip placement and design characteristics to minimize noise impacts while maintaining alerting effectiveness. Recent research has shown that specific designs can be optimized to balance competing noise considerations (17). For example, El-Rayes et al. (2024) recommended specific rumble strip designs for use on freeways and non-freeways near residential areas with high volumes of multiple-unit trucks (18). These designs were found to effectively reduce external noise levels, thus mitigating the impact on nearby communities, while still producing a sufficient internal noise level to alert truck drivers (18). This finding shows the importance of a nuanced approach to rumble strip design that considers both the external environmental impact and the internal safety function for specific vehicle types.

Wildlife movement patterns intersect with highway safety infrastructure in complex ways that require careful analysis and mitigation planning. Rumble strips can influence animal crossing behavior, potentially redirecting movement patterns in ways that either enhance or compromise wildlife corridor functionality. Radio telemetry studies and automated wildlife monitoring systems provide data on how different rumble strip configurations affect wildlife movement, informing design modifications that maintain ecological connectivity. Stormwater management considerations also become increasingly important as climate change intensifies precipitation patterns and increases the frequency of extreme weather events (19). Rumble strip designs must accommodate enhanced stormwater flows while maintaining

structural integrity and safety performance. Permeable rumble strip materials can contribute to stormwater management objectives by allowing infiltration and reducing surface runoff velocities, though this approach requires careful consideration of soil conditions and contamination potential.

The spatial distribution of highway infrastructure creates complex patterns of habitat fragmentation and connectivity that must be carefully evaluated to minimize ecological disruption while maintaining safety effectiveness. Advanced modeling techniques enable prediction of cumulative impacts across landscape scales, informing deployment strategies that balance safety objectives with ecological preservation.

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Vegetation establishment and maintenance around rumble strip installations represent a critical yet often underappreciated aspect of highway safety infrastructure that influences both environmental performance and the long-term sustainability of the infrastructure itself. The relationship between vegetation and rumble strips is multifaceted, involving ecological, operational, and safety dimensions that must be carefully balanced to ensure that the installation fulfills its intended function without creating unintended environmental or maintenance problems. As transportation agencies and

environmental managers increasingly emphasize sustainability, the role of vegetation in highway corridors, especially near safety features like rumble strips, demands thorough examination. (21)

Native plant communities are frequently recognized as the most beneficial option for vegetation around highway infrastructure due to their adaptability, ecological value, and minimal maintenance requirements. These plant communities have evolved in local conditions over millennia, which enables them to thrive with limited supplemental water, fertilizers, or pesticides. By establishing native vegetation near rumble strips, erosion control can be naturally achieved as root systems stabilize soil and reduce runoff. This prevents soil displacement that might otherwise undermine the structural integrity of the road edge or cause sediment pollution in nearby waterways. Moreover, native plants provide habitat for a range of local wildlife species, contributing to biodiversity conservation within the highway corridor. Such ecological benefits add to the aesthetic quality of roadways, improving the visual experience for drivers and fostering positive perceptions of environmental stewardship.

However, the presence of vegetation near rumble strips introduces a series of challenges that complicate maintenance and safety objectives. Rumble strips depend on tactile and auditory cues to alert drivers when they stray from the lane, and excessive or improperly managed vegetation can obscure these features or diminish their effectiveness (22). For instance, tall grasses or shrubbery growing too close to rumble strips may dampen the sound or reduce the physical sensation felt by a vehicle's tires, thus reducing the strips' safety benefits. Additionally, dense vegetation can interfere with visibility for drivers and maintenance crews, complicating inspection and repair efforts. Vegetation management must therefore strike a delicate balance, preserving ecological benefits while maintaining clear and accessible safety features.

Integrated vegetation management (IVM) has emerged as a strategic approach that coordinates rumble strip deployment with broader ecological management plans for highway corridors. IVM involves a combination of careful plant species selection, spatial planning, and maintenance practices designed to optimize environmental outcomes without compromising safety. This approach often entails mapping areas where native plants can be encouraged or preserved and identifying zones where more active vegetation control is necessary to maintain rumble strip function and driver visibility. For example, low-growing ground covers might be prioritized adjacent to rumble strips, while taller plants are encouraged farther away. IVM also considers seasonal growth patterns, adapting maintenance schedules to minimize disruption to wildlife during critical breeding or migration periods. By integrating vegetation management into overall corridor planning, agencies can achieve multiple objectives, including habitat connectivity,

Table 6. Environmental Impact Categories for Rumble Strip Deployment

Impact Area	Key Concerns	Mitigation Strategy	Assessment Tools
Noise Propagation	External noise affecting residents and wildlife	Optimized design for internal/external noise balance	Computational acoustic modeling
Wildlife Movement	Barrier effect, altered crossing patterns	Design to maintain ecological corridors	Radio telemetry, automated monitoring
Stormwater Management	Increased runoff, erosion risk	Permeable materials, controlled drainage	Hydrological modeling, soil analysis
Habitat Fragmentation	Loss of connectivity, biodiversity decline	Spatial deployment planning	Landscape-scale GIS modeling
Construction Disturbance	Soil compaction, vegetation removal, short-term displacement	Scheduling to avoid sensitive periods	Field surveys, impact monitoring
Long-term Ecological Change	Invasive species spread, altered hydrology	Adaptive management and IVM	Continuous ecological monitoring

Table 7. Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) Strategies Near Rumble Strips

IVM Element	Objective	Implementation Approach	Sustainability Benefit
Native Plant Selection	Promote ecological resilience	Use species adapted to local climate	Reduced maintenance, erosion control
Spatial Planting Design	Maintain rumble strip function	Low-growing plants adjacent, taller species farther away	Clear visibility, preserved safety cues
Seasonal Maintenance Scheduling	Minimize wildlife disturbance	Adjust mowing/maintenance to breeding/migration cycles	Habitat protection, biodiversity conservation
Invasive Species Control	Preserve native biodiversity	Targeted removal, competitive planting	Enhanced ecological function
Adaptive Management	Adjust practices based on monitoring	Feedback loops from safety and ecological data	Continuous improvement in safety and habitat outcomes
Erosion and Runoff Mitigation	Prevent soil displacement	Root-stabilizing vegetation, buffer strips	Improved water quality, reduced sedimentation

invasive species control, and enhanced roadside aesthetics, all while supporting infrastructure safety. (23)

An essential consideration in vegetation and rumble strip interactions is the temporal dynamics of environmental impacts. Construction and installation activities for rumble strips can cause immediate, short-term disturbances to local ecosystems. These disturbances include soil compaction, vegetation removal, noise, and increased human activity, all of which can displace wildlife temporarily and disrupt habitat connectivity. For example, small mammals, reptiles, or ground-nesting birds might be forced to relocate due to machinery presence or habitat alteration during installation. Although these effects are often localized and temporary, they must be acknowledged and mitigated where possible, especially in ecologically sensitive or protected areas.

Long-term operational impacts represent another layer of complexity that must be understood in relation to vegetation

near rumble strips. Over time, the presence of rumble strips and associated maintenance activities can lead to persistent changes in local ecological conditions. These changes might include altered hydrology due to changes in runoff patterns, shifts in soil composition from repeated mowing or herbicide application, or the gradual replacement of native species with more disturbance-tolerant or invasive plants (24). Cumulative effects can degrade habitat quality, reduce biodiversity, or compromise ecosystem services such as pollination and nutrient cycling. These long-term consequences may not be immediately evident but can have substantial implications for environmental health and the sustainability of the highway corridor.

To address the inherent uncertainties and complexities of these temporal impacts, adaptive management frameworks have become an essential tool in vegetation and rumble strip planning. Adaptive management emphasizes ongoing

monitoring of actual environmental outcomes relative to predicted impacts, using this information to adjust practices and improve future projects. For example, if monitoring reveals that certain plant species near rumble strips are growing too tall and interfering with safety features, maintenance regimes can be modified to control growth more effectively. Conversely, if some native plants are found to provide better erosion control or habitat benefits than expected, their use can be expanded in future installations. This iterative process helps to reconcile the goals of infrastructure safety and ecological sustainability over time.

Monitoring in adaptive management typically involves a combination of ecological surveys, soil and water testing, and driver feedback or safety performance data. Ecological surveys assess plant health, species diversity, and wildlife presence, identifying any emerging environmental concerns (25). Soil and water testing can detect issues such as nutrient runoff or contamination linked to vegetation management practices. Safety performance data, including accident rates and driver behavior studies, help determine whether vegetation is interfering with rumble strip effectiveness. Together, these data sources provide a comprehensive picture of the interaction between vegetation and rumble strip installations, informing evidence-based decisions.

Native plant communities offer multiple environmental benefits such as erosion control, wildlife habitat, and reduced maintenance needs, aligning well with sustainability goals. However, the necessity of preserving the functional integrity and safety effectiveness of rumble strips means that vegetation management cannot be left to chance or treated in isolation. Instead, integrated vegetation management approaches that coordinate with broader corridor ecological strategies provide a pathway to balancing these sometimes competing priorities. Recognizing the temporal dynamics of environmental impacts—from short-term disturbances during installation to long-term cumulative ecological changes—is crucial for developing realistic expectations and effective management plans. Adaptive management frameworks that incorporate continuous monitoring and feedback loops enable responsive adjustments to practices, promoting both environmental health and infrastructure safety over time (26). Together, these considerations highlight the intricate relationship between vegetation and rumble strip infrastructure, underscoring the importance of a holistic, informed approach to highway corridor management.

Traffic Flow Dynamics and Safety Performance Optimization

The effectiveness of rumble strips as a safety infrastructure component hinges on their seamless integration within the complex interplay of traffic flow dynamics and human factors. To fully appreciate this, it is essential to delve into the

advanced traffic modeling methodologies that simulate and predict the operational performance of rumble strips under a multitude of real-world scenarios. These scenarios span a range of traffic densities, vehicle types—from motorcycles to heavy trucks—and diverse driver behavior profiles. The multifaceted nature of traffic flow demands models that not only simulate deterministic vehicle movement but also incorporate stochastic elements to reflect the inherent variability in driver responses and environmental conditions.

At the core of these traffic models are mathematical frameworks that represent vehicle interactions and their responses to road stimuli such as rumble strips. Microscopic traffic flow models, for example, simulate individual vehicle trajectories using car-following theories, lane-changing models, and gap-acceptance behaviors. These models can be expressed through differential equations governing position $x_i(t)$ and velocity $v_i(t)$ of vehicle i at time t : (27)

$$\frac{dx_i}{dt} = v_i(t), \quad \frac{dv_i}{dt} = a_i(t),$$

where $a_i(t)$ is the acceleration function that depends on factors such as the distance to the vehicle ahead $\Delta x_i(t)$, relative velocity $\Delta v_i(t)$, and driver reaction parameters. The presence of rumble strips modifies $a_i(t)$ by introducing a perturbation effect due to tactile and auditory stimuli. This perturbation can be modeled as an additional acceleration term or a driver response delay factor τ_i , which itself may be a random variable representing individual variability:

$$a_i(t) = a_{\text{base}}(t) + \delta a_{\text{rumble}}(t, \theta_i),$$

where θ_i encapsulates driver-specific parameters such as sensitivity and attentiveness.

Incorporating stochastic elements into these models is critical because driver response to rumble strips is not uniform. For example, the reaction time τ_i can be modeled as a random variable with a probability distribution $P(\tau)$, reflecting the variation across driver populations and situational factors (e.g., fatigue, distraction). Seasonal variations also influence traffic characteristics, with factors such as precipitation, daylight hours, and temperature affecting both traffic flow and driver alertness. These seasonal effects can be modeled by introducing time-dependent parameters or external noise terms into the system:

$$\tau_i(t) \sim P(\tau; \mu(t), \sigma(t)), \quad (28)$$

where $\mu(t)$ and $\sigma(t)$ evolve according to seasonal trends.

Driver alertness enhancement through rumble strips involves the delivery of tactile and auditory stimuli that activate psychophysical mechanisms responsible for attention and reaction. These mechanisms vary widely among individuals and are influenced by environmental context. Quantitatively, the effectiveness of rumble strips can be encapsulated by a transfer function $E(f, A, v)$, mapping the physical stimuli to the driver response. Here, f denotes

the vibration frequency generated by the rumble strip, A the amplitude of vibration, and v the vehicle speed. The relationship captures nonlinear dependencies reflecting complex sensory integration:

$$E(f, A, v) = \alpha \log(f) + \beta A^{0.7} + \gamma v^{-0.3}.$$

In this equation, the coefficients α , β , and γ represent parameters quantifying individual driver sensitivity to frequency, amplitude, and speed, respectively. The logarithmic dependency on frequency $\log(f)$ reflects the diminishing marginal effect of increasing frequency on driver alertness, consistent with psychophysical principles such as the Weber-Fechner law (29). The exponent 0.7 applied to amplitude A indicates a sublinear but strong influence on the perceived intensity of the stimulus. The inverse power-law dependency on vehicle speed $v^{-0.3}$ suggests that as speed increases, the effective alertness response diminishes, possibly due to reduced time of exposure or sensory filtering by drivers.

This functional form allows optimization of rumble strip design parameters by adjusting f , A , and the physical spacing of rumble strips, which collectively determine the effective stimulus frequency experienced at given speeds. For example, the frequency f perceived by a driver depends on the speed v and the spacing d between rumble strip grooves:

$$f = \frac{v}{d}.$$

Substituting this into the effectiveness function gives:

$$E\left(\frac{v}{d}, A, v\right) = \alpha \log\left(\frac{v}{d}\right) + \beta A^{0.7} + \gamma v^{-0.3}.$$

This expression enables direct evaluation of how groove spacing d and vibration amplitude A impact driver alertness across a range of vehicle speeds. By differentiating E with respect to d and A , one can determine the optimal groove spacing d^* and amplitude A^* that maximize alertness for a target distribution of speeds:

$$\frac{\partial E}{\partial d} = -\frac{\alpha}{d}, \quad \frac{\partial E}{\partial A} = 0.7\beta A^{-0.3}.$$

Setting these derivatives according to optimization constraints allows design parameter tuning to account for typical speed profiles on specific road segments.

The coefficients α , β , and γ can be calibrated empirically through controlled field studies that measure driver physiological and behavioral responses, such as eye tracking, heart rate variability, and steering correction magnitudes in response to varying rumble strip configurations. These studies help quantify inter-driver variability by establishing distributions for these parameters, enabling probabilistic modeling of population-level effectiveness. (30)

Beyond individual driver response, the cumulative impact of rumble strips on traffic safety can be integrated into traffic simulation models, such as cellular automata or agent-based

models, to predict reductions in lane departure incidents and collisions. These models use the effectiveness function E to probabilistically modulate driver attention states, which in turn affect lane-keeping behavior and reaction to hazards. For instance, the probability P_{alert} that a driver remains alert over a distance L can be modeled as a function of the cumulative rumble strip stimuli:

$$P_{\text{alert}}(L) = 1 - \exp\left(-\int_0^L E(f(x), A, v) dx\right),$$

where $f(x)$ varies with local groove spacing or road geometry.

Finally, deployment optimization also considers trade-offs such as noise pollution, road wear, and driver discomfort, which must be balanced against safety gains. Multi-objective optimization frameworks can incorporate these factors by defining cost functions $C(d, A)$ alongside the alertness effectiveness E , and solving:

$$\max_{d, A} (E(d, A) - \lambda C(d, A)),$$

where λ is a weighting factor expressing the relative importance of safety versus cost.

Vehicle dynamics modeling reveals complex interactions between rumble strip geometry and vehicle response characteristics. The dynamic loading imposed on vehicles traversing rumble strips affects both occupant comfort and vehicle system performance (31). Advanced finite element modeling captures these interactions across different vehicle configurations and loading conditions, informing design optimization that balances safety effectiveness with vehicle impact minimization.

Traffic microsimulation models provide a powerful tool for analyzing the nuanced effects of rumble strips on individual vehicle behavior, particularly focusing on how these physical safety features influence vehicle trajectories and car-following dynamics. These microsimulation frameworks model each vehicle as an autonomous agent, with its position $x_i(t)$, speed $v_i(t)$, and acceleration $a_i(t)$ updated continuously over time based on interaction rules with the environment and other vehicles. The inclusion of rumble strip effects in these models modifies the driver response function, altering the longitudinal and lateral control behavior.

Specifically, rumble strips induce tactile and auditory feedback that can cause drivers to adjust their lane position or speed to maintain comfort and safety. This feedback can be modeled as an external stimulus force $S_i(t)$ acting on vehicle i , which influences the lane-changing decision process. If $P_{\text{change}}(t)$ denotes the probability that a driver initiates a lane change at time t , it can be formulated as a function of perceived rumble strip discomfort and traffic conditions:

$$P_{\text{change}}(t) = \sigma(\kappa_1 S_i(t) + \kappa_2 \Delta v_i(t) + \kappa_3 \Delta x_i(t)),$$

where $\sigma(\cdot)$ is a sigmoid function representing bounded probabilities, and κ_j are weights for rumble strip stimuli, relative velocity, and headway distance. The rumble strip stimulus $S_i(t)$ typically increases when the vehicle trajectory deviates towards the shoulder or lane edge where rumble strips are installed. (32)

As a result, these models have demonstrated that rumble strip placement affects not only the immediate alerting function—reducing unintended lane departures—but also the driver's lane-changing frequency and headway maintenance behavior. For example, drivers may reduce lane changes near rumble strips or increase following distances due to heightened tactile awareness, which subsequently impacts traffic flow stability and safety. These secondary safety benefits are significant because they mitigate risk factors such as unsafe lane changes and tailgating, which are common contributors to rear-end collisions.

Quantifying these effects requires simulating thousands of vehicles over extended periods, capturing diverse traffic densities and driver populations. Statistical analyses of microsimulation outputs yield metrics such as average headway \bar{h} , lane-change rate λ_{change} , and collision probabilities $P_{\text{collision}}$, both with and without rumble strip implementation. The relative safety improvement ΔS can be expressed as:

$$\Delta S = \frac{P_{\text{collision, no rumble}} - P_{\text{collision, rumble}}}{P_{\text{collision, no rumble}}}.$$

This quantification forms the basis for cost-benefit analyses and informed decision-making on rumble strip deployment.

Beyond traffic flow considerations, weather-related performance variations impose additional complexity on rumble strip effectiveness, necessitating sophisticated environmental modeling. Weather conditions influence both the physical interaction between tires and the road surface and the sensory transmission of rumble strip cues. Precipitation, especially rain, reduces the friction coefficient μ between the tire and pavement surface, which can be modeled as a function of rainfall intensity R : (33)

$$\mu = \mu_{\text{dry}} - \delta \cdot R^\eta,$$

where μ_{dry} is the dry friction coefficient, and δ, η are empirical constants. Lower friction reduces vehicle controllability and may attenuate the tactile feedback experienced by drivers as vibrations are dampened.

Snow and ice introduce further complications; accumulation can effectively mask rumble strips, rendering their tactile stimuli nearly imperceptible. Snow depth d_{snow} can be compared to rumble strip groove depth d_{groove} , and when $d_{\text{snow}} \geq d_{\text{groove}}$, the rumble strip signal is lost. This binary masking effect can be represented by an indicator function:

$$M(d_{\text{snow}}, d_{\text{groove}}) = \begin{cases} 0, & d_{\text{snow}} \geq d_{\text{groove}} \\ 1, & d_{\text{snow}} < d_{\text{groove}} \end{cases}.$$

Visibility conditions such as fog or heavy rain reduce driver reaction time τ to road stimuli, which in turn modulates the overall effectiveness E of rumble strips:

$$E_{\text{weather}} = E \times M(d_{\text{snow}}, d_{\text{groove}}) \times \exp(-\lambda_{\text{vis}}/V),$$

where λ_{vis} is a visibility attenuation parameter and V is the visibility distance. The exponential term captures the diminished driver responsiveness under poor visibility.

To address these weather-induced performance variations, predictive models integrate real-time meteorological data—rainfall intensity, temperature, snow depth, and visibility metrics—with traffic simulation to dynamically estimate rumble strip effectiveness. This integration enables adaptive control strategies, such as activating supplemental warning systems (e.g., flashing signs, in-vehicle alerts) during adverse conditions when rumble strip feedback is compromised. Moreover, infrastructure management systems may adjust rumble strip maintenance schedules or deploy de-icing mechanisms in response to forecasted weather events. (34)

The evolution of intelligent transportation systems (ITS) facilitates the real-time monitoring and adaptive optimization of rumble strip performance. Embedded sensors such as accelerometers, lane-position tracking cameras, and speed radars installed along rumble strip sections continuously collect data on vehicle speeds $v_i(t)$, lateral deviations $y_i(t)$, and incident occurrence $I(t)$. This high-frequency data acquisition allows detailed assessment of rumble strip efficacy compared to control sections without rumble strips.

Machine learning algorithms, including supervised learning methods such as random forests and neural networks, process these datasets to identify performance trends and predict future safety outcomes. For example, a predictive model $\hat{P}_{\text{collision}}$ can be trained using features derived from sensor data:

$$\mathbf{x} = \{v_i, y_i, a_i, I, W\},$$

where a_i is acceleration, I denotes incident history, and W represents weather conditions. The model then estimates collision risk as:

$$\hat{P}_{\text{collision}} = f_{\text{ML}}(\mathbf{x}; \theta),$$

with θ representing learned model parameters. Feedback from this model informs dynamic tuning of rumble strip characteristics, such as adjusting groove spacing or activating variable-intensity vibration devices.

Furthermore, adaptive control strategies exploit this data-driven insight to implement context-sensitive rumble strip configurations (35). For instance, in high traffic volumes or poor weather, the system may increase rumble strip amplitude or supplement tactile cues with auditory alerts. Conversely, under low-risk conditions, rumble strip intensity can be moderated to reduce noise pollution and wear.

Climate Resilience and Adaptive Infrastructure Design

Climate change presents fundamental challenges to highway infrastructure design and performance that require proactive adaptation strategies integrated into all aspects of infrastructure planning and implementation. Rumble strips, as components of the broader highway system, must be designed and deployed with explicit consideration of projected climate conditions and extreme weather event frequencies. This forward-looking approach ensures continued safety performance under changing environmental conditions while minimizing the need for premature replacement or costly retrofitting.

Temperature extremes affect rumble strip materials through thermal expansion and contraction cycles that can cause cracking, deformation, or separation from the pavement surface. Advanced materials science enables development of polymer systems with enhanced thermal stability and controlled expansion characteristics. The coefficient of thermal expansion for optimized rumble strip materials can be matched to that of the underlying pavement through careful selection of filler materials and polymer matrix composition, minimizing thermal stress concentrations. (36)

Precipitation pattern changes influence both the immediate performance and long-term durability of rumble strip installations. Increased rainfall intensity creates higher surface flow velocities that can cause erosion around rumble strip installations, while extended drought periods may cause soil shrinkage and foundation instability. Hydraulic modeling of surface flow patterns enables optimization of rumble strip spacing and orientation to minimize erosion potential while maintaining safety effectiveness.

Extreme weather events such as hurricanes, ice storms, and flash floods subject rumble strips to loading conditions far beyond normal service requirements. Design approaches incorporating extreme event loading ensure continued functionality under these conditions or enable rapid restoration of safety systems following major weather events. Modular rumble strip designs facilitate rapid replacement of damaged sections without requiring extensive pavement reconstruction.

Sea level rise and increased storm surge penetration affect coastal highway corridors through saltwater intrusion and increased flooding frequency. Salt exposure accelerates corrosion of metal components and can cause degradation of polymer materials not specifically formulated for marine environments (37). Advanced polymer chemistries incorporating corrosion inhibitors and salt-resistant formulations enable extended service life in increasingly challenging coastal environments.

The temporal distribution of climate impacts requires consideration of both gradual changes and abrupt threshold events. Gradual temperature increases may slowly degrade

material properties over decades, while sudden extreme weather events can cause immediate catastrophic failures. Risk assessment frameworks incorporating both types of climate impacts enable development of adaptive management strategies that anticipate and prepare for various future scenarios.

Adaptive management systems monitor climate-related performance indicators and trigger appropriate responses based on predetermined thresholds. These systems integrate real-time monitoring data with climate projections to identify emerging threats to infrastructure performance. Automated alert systems can notify maintenance crews of conditions requiring immediate attention, while longer-term trend analysis informs strategic planning for system upgrades or replacements.

Economic Analysis and Cost-Effectiveness Optimization

Comprehensive economic analysis of sustainable rumble strip deployment requires evaluation of costs and benefits across extended time horizons, incorporating both direct infrastructure expenses and indirect economic impacts. Traditional cost-benefit analysis approaches often undervalue sustainability benefits and long-term resilience considerations, leading to suboptimal decision-making that prioritizes short-term cost minimization over lifecycle value optimization (38). Advanced economic modeling techniques address these limitations by incorporating broader value categories and extended temporal frameworks.

Lifecycle cost analysis for rumble strip systems encompasses initial material and installation costs, ongoing maintenance requirements, performance monitoring expenses, and end-of-life disposal or recycling costs. Sustainable material options may carry higher initial costs but provide superior long-term value through extended service life, reduced maintenance requirements, and positive end-of-life values through recycling or reprocessing. Net present value calculations incorporating these factors often favor sustainable alternatives over conventional approaches when evaluated over realistic infrastructure lifespans.

The economic optimization problem for rumble strip deployment can be rigorously formulated as a constrained optimization problem that balances the trade-offs between total lifecycle costs, safety performance, and environmental impacts. Let us define the objective function representing the net present value (NPV) of total costs associated with installation, maintenance, and environmental externalities as:

$$C_{\text{total}} = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{C_i}{(1+r)^i} + \lambda \sum_{j=1}^m E_j,$$

where:

C_i denotes the total economic cost incurred in year i , including capital expenditure, routine maintenance, repair,

and operational costs. (39) r is the discount rate, reflecting the time value of money and opportunity cost of capital. The factor $(1+r)^{-i}$ discounts future costs back to their present value. E_j represents environmental impact costs associated with m different environmental factors, such as noise pollution, habitat disruption, or material waste. λ is a Lagrange multiplier or weighting coefficient that quantifies the relative importance or monetary equivalent of environmental impacts compared to direct economic costs. n is the planning horizon expressed in years, over which costs are accumulated and discounted.

The objective function C_{total} is minimized subject to safety and environmental constraints, which can be formulated as inequalities:

$$S_k(\mathbf{x}) \geq S_k^{\min}, \quad k = 1, \dots, K,$$

$$E_j(\mathbf{x}) \leq E_j^{\max}, \quad j = 1, \dots, m,$$

where:

\mathbf{x} is the vector of design and deployment decision variables (e.g., rumble strip spacing, material selection, installation methods). $S_k(\mathbf{x})$ represents safety performance metrics such as reduction in accident rates or severity indices, with minimum acceptable thresholds S_k^{\min} . $E_j(\mathbf{x})$ denotes environmental impact measures with maximum allowable limits E_j^{\max} .

This constrained optimization problem can be solved using methods such as nonlinear programming or mixed-integer programming, depending on the nature of decision variables and constraints.

The inclusion of the discount rate r is crucial because infrastructure investments and their associated costs and benefits occur over extended periods. A typical value of r reflects inflation-adjusted real interest rates, often ranging between 2% and 7% depending on economic conditions and project risk profiles. For example, if maintenance costs C_i increase over time due to wear or inflation, the present value calculation ensures that earlier costs are weighted more heavily than distant future costs, aligning decision-making with financial prudence. (40)

The weighting parameter λ serves as a policy lever that internalizes environmental externalities into the economic evaluation. For instance, higher values of λ penalize designs with greater noise or ecological footprint, steering optimization toward more sustainable options. The determination of λ often involves regulatory guidance or societal willingness-to-pay studies.

A critical extension of this economic optimization framework is the incorporation of risk-adjusted analysis to address uncertainty inherent in future costs, performance requirements, and regulatory landscapes. Key parameters such as material prices, labor rates, maintenance intervals, and accident risk reductions are inherently uncertain and subject to temporal variability. To capture this, probability

distributions are assigned to these parameters; for example, material cost M may follow a normal or log-normal distribution characterized by mean μ_M and standard deviation σ_M :

$$M \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu_M, \sigma_M^2).$$

Monte Carlo simulation techniques are then employed to generate a large ensemble (e.g., thousands) of randomized cost scenarios by sampling from these distributions. For each simulation iteration s , the total cost $C_{\text{total}}^{(s)}$ is computed:

$$C_{\text{total}}^{(s)} = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{C_i^{(s)}}{(1+r)^i} + \lambda \sum_{j=1}^m E_j^{(s)},$$

where $C_i^{(s)}$ and $E_j^{(s)}$ are the sampled costs and environmental impacts for iteration s .

The ensemble of simulations yields a probability distribution of total lifecycle costs, enabling the estimation of expected costs $\mathbb{E}[C_{\text{total}}]$, standard deviations, and confidence intervals:

$$\mathbb{E}[C_{\text{total}}] = \frac{1}{S} \sum_{s=1}^S C_{\text{total}}^{(s)},$$

$$\text{Var}[C_{\text{total}}] = \frac{1}{S-1} \sum_{s=1}^S \left(C_{\text{total}}^{(s)} - \mathbb{E}[C_{\text{total}}] \right)^2,$$

where S is the total number of Monte Carlo samples. (41)

This probabilistic characterization supports robust economic decision-making by quantifying the risk of cost overruns and enabling sensitivity analyses. For example, decision-makers can calculate the Value-at-Risk (VaR) or Conditional Value-at-Risk (CVaR) for costs exceeding certain thresholds, informing contingency budgets and risk mitigation strategies.

Moreover, stochastic optimization techniques can be employed to integrate uncertainty directly into the optimization process. This involves formulating the problem as a stochastic program where the objective is to minimize expected total costs or a risk-adjusted cost metric such as:

$$\min_{\mathbf{x}} \mathbb{E}[C_{\text{total}}(\mathbf{x}, \xi)] + \eta \cdot \text{Risk}(C_{\text{total}}),$$

where ξ represents random variables affecting costs and performance, and η is a risk aversion parameter. Risk measures may include variance, VaR, or CVaR.

Regulatory changes and evolving performance standards introduce temporal uncertainty that can be modeled via scenario analysis or Markov decision processes. For instance, if new noise pollution limits are anticipated within the planning horizon, the optimization must consider future compliance costs and potential retrofitting (42). These factors may be represented by state-dependent constraints

or scenario-specific parameters within the simulation framework.

The broader economic impacts of rumble strip deployment extend beyond direct infrastructure costs to include safety benefits, travel time savings, and economic development effects. Accident reduction translates to quantifiable economic benefits through reduced medical costs, property damage, and productivity losses. These benefits can be substantial, with comprehensive studies indicating benefit-cost ratios ranging from 3:1 to 15:1 for well-designed rumble strip installations depending on traffic volumes and accident history.

Regional economic development considerations influence the optimal deployment strategy for rumble strip systems. Rural areas may have limited economic resources but potentially higher accident rates per vehicle mile traveled, while urban areas may have greater economic capacity but face more complex environmental and community acceptance challenges. Economic optimization approaches must account for these spatial variations in costs, benefits, and implementation constraints.

Public-private partnership mechanisms can enhance the economic viability of sustainable rumble strip deployment by leveraging private sector expertise in material innovation and manufacturing efficiency. Performance-based contracting arrangements align private sector incentives with public sector objectives by tying compensation to achieved safety outcomes and environmental performance metrics (43). These arrangements can reduce public sector risk while encouraging innovation in materials and installation techniques.

Policy Framework and Implementation Strategies

The successful deployment of sustainable rumble strip systems requires comprehensive policy frameworks that coordinate technical specifications, environmental requirements, and implementation procedures across multiple jurisdictional levels. Effective policy development balances standardization needs with local adaptation requirements, ensuring consistent safety performance while allowing flexibility for site-specific optimization. The complexity of modern transportation governance requires innovative policy approaches that facilitate coordination among diverse stakeholders while maintaining technical rigor and environmental accountability.

Federal transportation policy provides overarching guidance for safety infrastructure deployment while allowing state and local agencies flexibility in implementation approaches. Current federal frameworks emphasize performance-based standards that specify safety outcomes rather than prescriptive technical requirements, enabling innovation in materials and installation methods. However, these frameworks require enhancement to fully incorporate

sustainability considerations and climate resilience requirements into standard practice.

State-level policy development must address the diverse geographic, climatic, and traffic conditions present within state boundaries while maintaining consistency with federal requirements and neighboring state approaches (44). Effective state policies establish clear technical standards for sustainable rumble strip materials and installation procedures while providing guidance for local adaptation based on specific site conditions. These policies should incorporate environmental review requirements that ensure appropriate consideration of ecological impacts and community concerns.

Regional coordination mechanisms facilitate knowledge sharing and resource optimization across jurisdictional boundaries. Interstate highway corridors require coordinated approaches to rumble strip deployment that provide consistent driver expectations and safety performance regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. Regional coordination also enables economies of scale in material procurement and contractor training that can reduce overall implementation costs.

Environmental policy integration ensures that rumble strip deployment contributes to broader environmental protection and sustainability objectives rather than creating conflicts with other policy goals. Integration with habitat conservation plans, water quality protection programs, and climate change mitigation strategies requires early coordination among agencies and careful consideration of potential synergies and conflicts.

Equity considerations in rumble strip deployment policy address the potential for disparate impacts among different communities and demographic groups. Rural communities may face different cost-benefit tradeoffs compared to urban areas, while low-income communities may be disproportionately affected by noise impacts or may receive lower priority for safety infrastructure investments (?). Policy frameworks must explicitly address these equity concerns through inclusive planning processes and equitable resource allocation mechanisms.

Stakeholder engagement processes ensure that community concerns and local knowledge inform rumble strip deployment decisions. Effective engagement goes beyond regulatory compliance to create meaningful opportunities for community input and collaborative problem-solving. These processes are particularly important for addressing noise concerns, environmental impacts, and potential effects on local economic activities such as agriculture or tourism.

Technological Integration

The evolution of transportation technology and changing mobility patterns create new opportunities and challenges for rumble strip systems that require proactive consideration in current planning and implementation efforts. Emerging technologies such as connected and automated vehicles,

advanced driver assistance systems, and intelligent transportation infrastructure will fundamentally alter the context in which rumble strips operate. Forward-looking approaches to rumble strip deployment consider these technological transitions to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness.

Connected vehicle technology enables new approaches to driver alerting that complement or potentially replace traditional rumble strip functions (45). Vehicle-to-infrastructure communication can provide early warning of lane departure tendencies or drowsy driving patterns, potentially reducing reliance on physical infrastructure for driver alerting. However, the transition period during which both connected and conventional vehicles share roadways requires careful consideration of how rumble strips interact with these mixed-technology environments.

Automated vehicle systems present particular challenges for rumble strip design and deployment. Current automated driving systems rely primarily on sensors and mapping data for lane keeping and obstacle detection, with limited capability to interpret tactile feedback from rumble strips. Future automated systems may incorporate rumble strip detection capability as a backup safety system, but this will require standardization of rumble strip characteristics to ensure consistent automated vehicle response.

Smart infrastructure integration enables rumble strips to function as components of broader intelligent transportation systems. Embedded sensors in rumble strip installations can monitor traffic conditions, weather effects, and infrastructure performance in real-time. This data can inform adaptive traffic management strategies, predictive maintenance scheduling, and performance optimization efforts (46). The integration of rumble strips with smart infrastructure requires consideration of cybersecurity, data privacy, and system interoperability requirements.

Material science advances continue to expand the possibilities for rumble strip design and functionality. Developments in additive manufacturing enable production of complex geometries optimized for specific performance requirements while minimizing material waste. Smart materials with programmable properties enable adaptive performance characteristics that respond to changing environmental conditions or traffic requirements. Biomimetic approaches to rumble strip design draw inspiration from natural systems to achieve superior performance with reduced environmental impact.

Research needs for advancing sustainable rumble strip technology encompass materials science, environmental impact assessment, human factors analysis, and policy development. Long-term field studies are needed to validate laboratory predictions of material performance under real-world conditions. Advanced modeling techniques require development to better predict environmental impacts and optimize deployment strategies. Human factors research must

address the effectiveness of rumble strips for diverse driver populations and evolving vehicle characteristics. (47)

International collaboration opportunities enable knowledge sharing and coordinated research efforts that accelerate innovation in sustainable rumble strip technology. Different countries face varying combinations of climate conditions, traffic patterns, and regulatory requirements that provide diverse testing environments for new approaches. Collaborative research programs can leverage these differences to develop more robust and widely applicable solutions.

Conclusion

The widespread adoption of rumble strips on highways worldwide underscores their proven effectiveness in reducing one of the most dangerous types of roadway incidents: lane departure crashes. Such crashes, which occur when a vehicle unintentionally drifts from its lane, are a leading cause of severe injuries and fatalities, particularly in rural areas and on high-speed roads where recovery opportunities are limited. Rumble strips function by producing both a tactile vibration through the vehicle and an audible rumble detectable inside the cabin, effectively breaking through a driver's inattention or drowsiness and prompting immediate corrective action. The simplicity of their design belies their significant safety contribution, as they do not rely on advanced technology or driver skill to deliver their warning. However, while their safety benefits are clear, the process of integrating rumble strips into roadway networks is far from straightforward, as it involves navigating a series of technical, environmental, and social challenges. (48)

One of the most persistent and difficult challenges associated with rumble strips is the noise they generate. The very mechanism that makes them effective as a driver alert system—the abrupt, vibrating contact between tires and the patterned pavement—also produces a sharp, distinctive sound that can carry far beyond the roadway. For drivers, this noise is an intentional cue, a sudden disruption that demands attention. But for those living or working near highways, it can be an intrusive and often unwelcome presence. This auditory impact can significantly affect quality of life, especially in communities where traffic is constant and high-speed travel amplifies the sound. The problem is not merely an aesthetic one; prolonged exposure to high noise levels has been linked to stress, sleep disruption, and other health concerns, making noise pollution a public health issue in its own right.

The noise problem is particularly pronounced when heavy trucks traverse rumble strips. Due to their larger tire surface area, greater weight, and often stiffer suspension systems, trucks produce a more intense and resonant sound than passenger cars when interacting with rumble strips. This difference in acoustic profile means that areas with high truck traffic can experience far louder and more frequent noise intrusions (49). The constant passage of commercial vehicles

Table 8. Jurisdictional Roles in Sustainable Rumble Strip Policy

Jurisdiction Level	Primary Responsibilities	Key Policy Features	Challenges
Federal	Overarching safety guidance, performance-based standards	Flexibility for innovation, national consistency	Integrating sustainability and climate resilience into standards
State	Technical standards, site-specific adaptation, environmental review	Geographic/climatic tailoring, compliance with federal guidance	Balancing local needs with uniform safety performance
Regional	Cross-jurisdictional coordination, resource optimization	Interstate consistency, economies of scale	Aligning diverse agency priorities, funding mechanisms
Local	Context-sensitive deployment, community engagement	Addressing local traffic and environmental conditions	Limited resources, aligning with higher-level policies

Table 9. Policy Integration with Environmental and Social Objectives

Integration Area	Objective	Policy Mechanism	Potential Conflicts/Synergies
Environmental Policy	Protect habitats, water quality, climate goals	Coordination with conservation and climate programs	Possible trade-offs between safety and ecological preservation
Equity Considerations	Avoid disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities	Inclusive planning, equitable resource allocation	Balancing safety benefits with noise and other local impacts
Economic Development	Support local industries and land uses	Stakeholder input in siting and design	Avoiding disruption to agriculture or tourism
Sustainability Goals	Reduce environmental footprint of infrastructure	Incentivize sustainable materials and practices	Cost and supply chain constraints

Table 10. Stakeholder Engagement Strategies in Policy Implementation

Stakeholder Group	Engagement Objective	Engagement Method	Policy Benefit
Local Communities	Address noise, environmental, and safety concerns	Public meetings, surveys, workshops	Builds trust, improves policy acceptance
Transportation Agencies	Coordinate technical and operational standards	Inter-agency working groups, technical committees	Ensures consistency and efficiency
Environmental Organizations	Safeguard ecological interests	Joint planning sessions, environmental impact reviews	Aligns infrastructure with conservation goals
Industry and Contractors	Ensure feasibility and cost-effectiveness	Training programs, procurement guidelines	Improves quality and reduces costs
Academic/Research Institutions	Provide data and evaluation expertise	Collaborative research, pilot projects	Evidence-based policy refinement

over rumble strips can create a near-continuous background of rumbling sounds, particularly on freight corridors or near industrial zones. For nearby residents, this can result in a near-daily cycle of disturbances that extends into the night and early morning hours, when sensitivity to noise is at its highest.

The challenge of balancing safety and noise concerns becomes even more complex when considering the varied geographical and demographic contexts in which highways exist. Rural highways passing through sparsely populated areas may face fewer complaints, but even a small cluster of residences near a curve or intersection can be

disproportionately affected by rumble strip noise. In suburban or urban fringe areas, where highways often cut through mixed-use zones containing both residential neighborhoods and commercial developments, the tension between public safety measures and community livability is even sharper. In such areas, the location of rumble strips relative to driveways, side roads, and residential property lines can significantly influence how disruptive they are perceived to be.

Compounding the challenge is the fact that noise impacts are not uniform across populations. Certain groups, such as older adults, shift workers, or individuals with pre-existing health conditions, may be more vulnerable to the effects of noise (50). This raises questions about equity in infrastructure planning, as the burdens of noise pollution may fall more heavily on populations with fewer resources to mitigate its effects. Residents living near lower-income corridors, for example, may have less ability to install sound insulation or relocate to quieter areas, leaving them more exposed to rumble strip noise over the long term.

From a technical standpoint, the acoustic signature of a rumble strip depends on a range of factors, including its depth, width, spacing, and the type of pavement into which it is cut. While these design parameters are primarily optimized for safety performance—ensuring the vibration and sound are sufficient to alert a driver—they also influence the intensity and frequency of the noise perceived by nearby listeners. Unfortunately, modifications aimed at reducing noise can sometimes compromise the alerting effect, underscoring the inherent trade-offs in rumble strip design. Additionally, environmental conditions such as temperature, wind direction, and surrounding terrain can alter how sound travels from the highway to nearby properties, making it difficult to predict noise impacts with precision during the planning phase.

Another complexity lies in driver behavior itself. While rumble strips are intended to be crossed only as a warning during unintentional lane departures, in practice they are sometimes driven over intentionally (51). Drivers may ride along the edge of the lane for various reasons, such as avoiding large vehicles in the adjacent lane, navigating around obstacles, or, in the case of trucks, attempting to maintain a wider turning radius. This repeated, non-emergency interaction with rumble strips can increase noise levels far beyond what would be expected if they were triggered only by genuine safety events. Such behavior is particularly problematic in areas where lanes are narrow or where shoulder rumble strips are installed close to the travel lane.

The societal and environmental implications of rumble strip noise extend beyond the immediate discomfort it may cause. Persistent noise pollution can influence property values, affect land use planning, and create opposition to future roadway safety projects. In some cases, communities have pushed back against proposed rumble strip installations

due to concerns about noise, leading to delays, redesigns, or even cancellations of planned safety measures. This opposition highlights a broader issue in transportation planning: the need to balance the technical efficacy of a safety feature with the lived experience of those who must coexist with it.

Environmental considerations also come into play when assessing the broader impact of rumble strips. While their direct environmental footprint during installation is relatively small compared to major road construction, their indirect effects—particularly noise—can influence local wildlife (52). Many species rely on sound cues for communication, navigation, and predator avoidance. Persistent human-generated noise from highways, including that from rumble strips, can disrupt these natural behaviors, potentially altering species distribution and ecosystem dynamics near roadways. This is especially relevant in ecologically sensitive areas where maintaining habitat quality is a priority.

The comprehensive analysis of sustainable rumble strip deployment reveals both significant opportunities and substantial challenges in developing highway safety infrastructure that balances effectiveness, environmental compatibility, and economic viability. The research demonstrates that traditional approaches to rumble strip implementation, while providing important safety benefits, often fail to optimize across the full spectrum of sustainability considerations. Advanced materials, sophisticated environmental impact assessment, and integrated policy frameworks enable more effective approaches that achieve superior long-term outcomes.

Material innovation emerges as a critical enabler of sustainable rumble strip deployment, with recycled polymer composites, bio-based materials, and smart material systems offering pathways to reduced environmental impact without compromising safety performance. The integration of advanced manufacturing techniques and closed-loop production systems further enhances the sustainability profile of these materials while potentially reducing costs through improved efficiency and waste reduction. (53)

Environmental impact assessment and mitigation strategies require sophisticated analytical approaches that account for the complex interactions between highway infrastructure and ecological systems. The research identifies noise management, wildlife movement patterns, and habitat connectivity as key considerations requiring careful analysis and adaptive management approaches. Climate change adaptation emerges as an increasingly important factor influencing both material selection and deployment strategies.

Economic analysis demonstrates that sustainable approaches to rumble strip deployment often provide superior long-term value despite potentially higher initial costs. Lifecycle cost analysis, risk-adjusted economic modeling, and comprehensive benefit evaluation reveal that sustainable alternatives frequently outperform conventional approaches when evaluated over realistic infrastructure

lifespans. The economic benefits of enhanced safety performance, reduced maintenance requirements, and positive end-of-life values often justify the incremental investments required for sustainability.

Policy framework development requires coordination across multiple levels of government and among diverse stakeholders to ensure effective implementation of sustainable rumble strip systems. Regional coordination mechanisms, environmental policy integration, and equity considerations emerge as critical components of effective policy frameworks. Stakeholder engagement processes provide essential mechanisms for addressing community concerns and incorporating local knowledge into deployment decisions. (54)

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