

Airport Noise & Part 150 Study FAQs

Since the third runway opened, have operations on the runway been more frequent than anticipated?

The third runway (16R/34L) opened officially on November 20, 2008. From March 30, 2009 to September 30, 2009, Sea-Tac's longest runway (16L/34R) was closed for a comprehensive reconstruction that increased operations on the center runway (16C/34C) and third runway.

When all three runways are operating as they were from November 20 to March 29 and from October 1 to the present, overall use of the third runway is actually less than the level predicted in the 1997 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Sea-Tac's Master Plan. The Supplemental EIS projected the number of operations on all of the airport's runways, including the third runway, in the year 2010. The latest runway use percentages, which are updated every two weeks, are available on the Port's Runway Statistics Web page – <http://www.portseattle.org/community/environment/runwaystatistics.shtml>

Under what set of circumstances are aircraft expected to use the third runway?

During lower visibility conditions, arriving aircraft are directed onto the third runway and the longest, easternmost runway, allowing Sea-Tac to accept two streams of traffic with adequate separation. Prior to opening the third runway, Sea-Tac could use only one of its two runways for arrivals during lower visibility conditions. Directing all arriving aircraft onto one runway slowed things down and caused significant delays.

The third runway also is used during peak traffic periods when multiple aircraft are scheduled to arrive in the same time period. During these peaks, the third runway is used along with the easternmost runway for arrivals in order to help reduce delays regardless of the weather.

It is important to note that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has the responsibility for managing air traffic at Sea-Tac, and, at any time they have the authority to change the way they use the runways to efficiently manage air traffic and ensure safety.

Can Sea-Tac Airport restrict operations on its runways?

No. The FAA is the only entity that can manage aircraft runway operations or aircraft in flight at Sea-Tac Airport. Furthermore, as a recipient of grant funds from the FAA, the Port of Seattle, operator of Sea-Tac Airport, must abide by specific FAA-imposed obligations and conditions. One of these is that Sea-Tac will not restrict or limit airfield access based on noise. This means, for example, that a Port-imposed nighttime curfew preventing aircraft from landing on or departing from the third runway would violate FAA requirements.

Some airports, like John Wayne Airport in Orange County, still have airfield access limitations, such as curfews on commercial aircraft at night that were instituted prior to the 1990 federal Airport Noise & Capacity Act (ANCA). Except for those that were implemented prior to November 1990, ANCA prohibits regulations or amendments to existing restrictions that limit airfield access. ANCA also provides for the complete phase out of all noisy Stage 1 and Stage 2 aircraft over 75,000 pounds at all airports, including commercial airports like Sea-Tac, by 2000. Sea-Tac phased out Stage 1 and Stage 2 aircraft over 75,000 pounds before the federal deadline.

Where does the Port of Seattle receive funding for noise mitigation projects?

When noise mitigation programs are approved by the FAA through a formal Part 150 Study, those programs then become eligible to receive FAA Grant funding of up to 80%. The remainder of the funding comes from revenues generated at the airport (parking fees, landing fees, etc.).



What type of noise mitigation projects can the Port of Seattle spend funds on?

Any noise reduction related project approved by the Port Commission and the FAA through a Part 150 Noise Study that demonstrates how it will have a measureable impact on noise can qualify for FAA funding and for Port of Seattle funding. For example, insulation projects inside the 65 Day Night Level (DNL) Contour, the FAA-established noise boundary that determines insulation eligibility, would qualify. (DNL is a 24-hour average noise level with a 10-decibel penalty for nighttime noise events.) Conversely, proposed insulation projects far outside the 65 DNL would not qualify. FAA funding sources come with a number of stipulations and conditions that the Port agrees to when accepting funds. Additionally, the same FAA conditions would prevent the Port from using the revenues it generates at the airport (parking fees, landing fees, etc.) for projects that are unable to demonstrate a measureable community impact on noise.

Qualifying for FAA grants is the first step. Other steps include actually obtaining the grants from the FAA and receiving Port Commission approval authorizing the use of airport funds. The Port has long been successful at securing FAA grants and implementing noise mitigation projects in the surrounding communities.

Can the Port of Seattle use tax levy funds for noise mitigation projects?

Other than funds allocated to the Highline School District for Aviation High School (\$15 million) and for the insulation and associated repair of schools (a total Port of Seattle/FAA pledge of \$100 million), the Port Commission has not authorized using the Port tax levy money for projects at the airport, because the airport is exclusively supported by user fees.

What noise mitigation efforts has the Port already undertaken?

Since 1976, the Port of Seattle has acquired approximately 1,466 single-family homes and five mobile home parks, containing nearly 260 units. The Port also provided relocation benefits to all the residents, enabling them to relocate to quieter neighborhoods. In addition, the Port insulated more than 9,300 homes and five condominium complexes with a combined total of 236 units. Twelve of 22 planned Highline Community College buildings were insulated and, in partnership with the FAA, the Port has so far contributed \$50 million (from a total Port of Seattle/FAA pledge of \$100 million) for sound insulation and related improvements at schools within the Highline School District.

Sea-Tac Airport also implemented a number of noise abatement procedures to reduce the noise produced by aircraft while on the ground, during takeoffs and landings, and during flights over populated areas. These include Sea-Tac's noise abatement flight procedures, engine maintenance run-up guidelines and the Fly Quiet Incentive Program that recognizes the quietest airlines operating at Sea-Tac each year. Because of its comprehensive noise abatement efforts and extensive sound insulation programs, Sea-Tac is recognized today as having one of the most complete and robust noise reduction programs in the nation.

What set of circumstances complicates efforts to reduce noise for residents around Sea-Tac Airport?

Three things make noise reduction efforts a challenge. First, Sea-Tac Airport is situated in a highly populated area that has steadily grown around the airport. Second, the north-south configuration of Sea-Tac's three runways means that flights over the neighborhoods north and south of the Airport are unavoidable. The orientation of runways is based predominantly on wind direction because aircraft take off and land into the wind. And third, Sea-Tac Airport is the main international airport in the region and the state and is a vital part of the national transportation system. Rules and restrictions to reduce noise must be considered in the context of federal laws, air traffic procedures and with the involvement of all parties including the Port, the FAA, the community and the airlines.



Is Sea-Tac Airport getting quieter due to improved aircraft technology?

One major contributing factor to reduced noise contours at Sea-Tac is that airlines continue to retire older, noisier aircraft from their fleets. For example, in 2008 Alaska Airlines retired its noisier MD-80 fleet and replaced them with newer, quieter Boeing 737-800 aircraft. The transition by the airlines to a more modern, fuel-efficient fleet continues to decrease Sea-Tac's noise footprint.

What results can the communities around Sea-Tac Airport expect from the new Part 150 process once it is complete?

The Part 150 Study is a planning effort designed to address and mitigate the effects of aircraft noise within the Airport communities. In the last Part 150 Noise Study, which was completed in 2002, the Port projected what the noise impacts would be once the third runway opened and then implemented a comprehensive noise mitigation program including extensive insulation and acquisition projects in preparation for the runway's opening.

The current Part 150 Study, Sea-Tac's fourth, began in November 2009. As part of their work, the consultants will first develop new noise maps showing how the airport's overall noise affects the community now and in five years. Then, they will conduct a wide-ranging review of all of the airport's noise reduction efforts and an evaluation of new ways to improve upon the efforts. The public will help identify and shape the noise reduction recommendations that ultimately will be included in the Part 150 Study. If the study identifies areas of 65 DNL that were not captured in the previous projections, then more noise mitigation for those affected will be considered. The Port is committed to a thorough and accessible public process throughout the Part 150 Study that will ensure there are multiple avenues for involvement and public comment.

What are some of the positive impacts a major international airport like Sea-Tac has on the Puget Sound region?

Sea-Tac Airport's activities and facilities are directly responsible for more than 89,000 jobs in the Puget Sound region. Roughly 15,000 of those jobs are directly at Sea-Tac Airport with many of those jobs held by residents living in the communities around the airport. The 89,000 jobs equal \$2.2 billion in direct earnings. The airport generates over \$13 billion in revenue for businesses who provide services to the airport, including airport tenants, and produces \$412.4 million each year in state and local tax dollars.

In 2009, more than 31 million passengers traveled through Sea-Tac which equates to over 80,000 daily travelers. Roughly 72% of those travelers were beginning or ending their trip in Seattle, meaning they simply weren't transferring from one flight or another. They are business travelers coming to Seattle for meetings. They are local residents bound for vacations across the globe. They are parents and grandparents from across the country coming to visit their children and grandchildren. And, each of these travelers shares a common appreciation for Sea-Tac Airport and how the airport connects them with the world.

How can I get involved with the Part 150 Study as it progresses and where can I find information?

A series of public workshops will be held at key milestones during the Part 150 Study. Open to all, each workshop will include smaller breakout sessions, where members of the public can provide input, ask questions and offer recommendations in a more personal setting. To keep up-to-date throughout the Part 150 process and learn when the next workshop will be held, sign up to receive email updates – www.portseattle.org/community/environment/noise.shtml

A dedicated, Part 150 Study website has been established as the single location for all documentation connected to the study – <http://www.airportsites.net/sea-part150>

