

Changes in airport operations, airspace procedures, aviation infrastructure, and technology can have impacts on communities. Part 150 studies and community roundtables are two methods by which airports and the FAA can help communities understand and participate in recommending changes to aviation services in their community.¹ There are benefits to each approach, and many airports could be well-served by employing both strategies in a complementary manner. For example, an airport that is preparing to update its Part 150 program may be well-supported if there is already an effective roundtable in place, leading to more effective community participation in the Part 150 process. Similarly, a community roundtable may benefit from the periodic benchmarking and documentation of conclusions in a formal, approved Part 150 Noise Compatibility Program.

Since 1983, more than 275 airports nationwide have taken advantage of the voluntary Part 150 Noise Compatibility Program, which provides a structured process for airports to engage with communities, airlines and other user groups as well as the FAA, with the goal of reducing incompatible land uses. A Part 150 study is a discrete undertaking intended to involve all stakeholders in evaluating current and future noise impacts, and identifying measures to mitigate them. It can result in recommendations for strategies to improve noise compatibility of existing and future development around airports such as changes in flight procedures and local zoning, land acquisition, sound insulation, and others. Federal funding for some solutions, such as sound insulation, require a Part 150 study. The Part 150 noise compatibility planning program is documented in 14 CFR Part 150 and in a supporting FAA Advisory Circular, which is available online at:

https://www.faa.gov/airports/resources/advisory_circulars/index.cfm/go/document.current/documentNumber/150_5020-1

Roundtables offer another way for communities to engage with airports to discuss aircraft noise and other airport issues affecting the communities. The term “roundtable” in this context generally refers to a voluntarily-established organization representing multiple communities and stakeholders over a sustained period of time. A community can establish a community roundtable to serve as a clearinghouse and forum for discussing a broad range of issues even beyond noise. Roundtables can also yield a wide range of community recommendations to the airport, airlines, FAA (ideally in coordination with the airport), zoning authorities, or other stakeholders for noise mitigation and noise abatement strategies. There are a number of different structures and models for roundtables, which have evolved over a period of over 30 years. In some cases, they may be sponsored and supported by the airport operator. In other cases, they are organized by local governments or the communities themselves. A roundtable enables communities and airports to have continuing dialogue on airport noise and other airport issues.

The table on the following page highlights major aspects of each approach:

¹ There are other ways in which airports and the FAA can collaborate, coordinate and communicate with the communities in the vicinity of airports, including project-specific community outreach committees, open houses, and regular public meetings.

Comparison of Part 150 and Community Noise Roundtables

	Part 150	Community Roundtable
Primary Goal	Provides an approach for airport operators, airlines, pilots, communities, and the FAA to work together to reduce the number of people living in significantly noise-impacted areas.	An ongoing forum for dealing with airport issues such as noise and fostering effective relationships among neighboring communities, airlines, the FAA and other stakeholders.
Community Outreach	Community involvement is guided by the regulation—Part 150 requires that members of the public have an opportunity for active and direct participation in the process through public meetings and hearings.	The extent of any given community's involvement (e.g. membership and representation) is typically guided by the roundtable's internally developed bylaws.
FAA Involvement	FAA's involvement is determined by the regulatory process. FAA also reviews airport sponsor/local government's proposed measures.	FAA representatives can participate in roundtable meetings to provide technical information and advice, but are not members and do not vote on roundtable recommendations.
Geographic Scope	Part 150 only applies to areas in the immediate vicinity of an airport that are within the 65 DNL noise contour.	The geographic extent of any given roundtable is guided by the roundtable's internally developed bylaws.
Federal Financial Support	FAA can provide financial and technical support for the process (including expert consulting support) through the Airport Improvement Program.	No existing FAA funding mechanism.
Expected outcomes	Results in a documented, publicly accessible Noise Compatibility Plan (NCP) to enhance noise compatibility. The resulting NCP is not an FAA document; however, the FAA issues an approval of the NCP.	Seeks to engage the community in dialogue about many different airport concerns, which may result in recommendations to an airport or FAA.
Managing Expectations	Typically managed by a qualified consultant experienced in Part 150 studies. Requires careful communication to manage expectations about a Noise Compatibility Plan (NCP) and its implementation.	Requires careful management of expectations about how community opinion will be considered and acted on.
Process and Airport Participation	The decision about whether to conduct a Part 150 process is voluntary on the part of the airport sponsor, and the resulting NCP is not an FAA document; however, the FAA issues an approval of the recommended program measures.	Does not necessarily provide a structured process for airport operators, airlines, pilots, neighboring communities, and the FAA to work together. Participation is voluntary.
Duration	The airport sponsor may or may not continue to maintain the technical or general committees after the NCP is approved by the FAA and the study is therefore concluded.	Typically, an ongoing forum without a defined end-point and unrelated to a particular project.
Contact	Local Airports District Office	Regional Administrator



There are many different community engagement mechanisms that can be used to address aircraft noise or other concerns, depending on the circumstances. This information sheet provides information on one of those mechanisms, Community Roundtables.

What is a “Roundtable”?

- “Roundtable,” in the aviation context, is generally a term for an organization designed to address community concerns over a sustained period of time regarding aircraft operations often associated with a nearby airport.
- Most roundtables are voluntarily formed by an airport, local government, or through an agreement among multiple jurisdictions. The most productive roundtables are typically made up of representatives from multiple communities around an airport, who are or may be affected by aircraft operations, and the airline industry and other stakeholders – often in an advisory role or on technical committees and working groups, who can offer additional perspectives and expertise.
- Roundtables typically have group-approved charters or bylaws that provide an agreed upon structure for membership, running meetings, the scope of the issues being addressed by the roundtable, and making decisions.

How can a Roundtable help?

- A roundtable brings together airport, community, and airline industry representatives to collaboratively identify and discuss issues of concern and possible resolutions at the same time.
- A roundtable may elect to make recommendations, including possible changes in operations, which could address community noise or other concerns. Ideally, applicable recommendations are first coordinated through the airport who will then, as appropriate, forward them to the applicable entity (e.g., the FAA, airlines, or zoning authority).
- A roundtable can assist and advise the FAA on community outreach or information needs, and help the FAA understand community priorities.

What is FAA’s Role?

- FAA representatives can participate in roundtable meetings to provide technical information and advice, but should not be members and do not vote on roundtable recommendations. The most productive roundtables invite FAA representatives either as regular attendees or on an as-needed basis, providing a clear agenda topic with sufficient advance notice to enable FAA to identify appropriate representation and prepare information.
- The FAA can support roundtables in several ways. For example, the FAA Air Traffic Organization can provide technical expertise on operational issues and airspace procedural design when requested by the roundtable. Similarly, the FAA Office of Airports can provide information about airport operations, airport design, and grant assurances, as well as important information regarding an airport’s role in the *voluntary [Part 150 noise compatibility planning program](#)*, and the regional and national system of airports.
- The FAA looks to the roundtable to make recommendations, ideally in coordination with the airport, that have some recognition of the impacts (e.g., to the airspace and all potentially affected communities) and reflect thorough discussion/vetting before raising them to the applicable entity (e.g., potential airspace operational changes to the FAA, flight schedule concerns to the airlines) for consideration.
- After the FAA determines a thoroughly discussed/vetted recommendation for an airspace operational change to be initially feasible and flyable, from a safety and efficiency perspective, the FAA has to conduct mandated environmental and safety reviews. If the FAA determines it can proceed with the recommendation, these reviews can have many steps, are dependent on available resources and may take a period of months or years to begin or accomplish. The FAA can provide the roundtable with more detailed information about the processes, timetables, and milestones where the roundtable can expect to be updated by the FAA on the environmental and safety reviews.
- In the FAA’s experience, the most effective roundtable recommendations reflect consensus among its membership – which includes considering issues and inputs from all potentially affected communities. Consensus recommendations tend to result in long-term, satisfactory solutions and often reflect the need to balance competing interests.