



AGENDA  
DES MOINES AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Via [Zoom](#)  
Wednesday, May 20, 2026 - 3:00 PM

**CALL TO ORDER**

**ROLL CALL**

**AGENDA ITEMS**

Item 1. **Complaints/Communications**

**ADJOURNMENT**



To: Des Moines Airport Advisory Committee; City Manager Caffrey  
Re: Draft Working Document for Reorganization of StART (Draft 3 – 4/13/26)  
Date: May 10, 2026

Sea-Tac Noise.Info has reviewed the working document included in the May 11 packet. The frustration behind it is real. We have shared your frustration for ten years.

The working document represents a substantial change from the workplan adopted in January. It was published only a few days before the meeting at which it will be discussed. That is not enough time for the Committee, the public, or the Council to absorb a proposal of this scope. Though the official Council ask seems modest, the nine goals, the real agenda, are not. We offer the following observations on that understanding.

Several of those goals – committee-selected leadership, agenda responsiveness, ending Port control of minutes, in-person meetings – are completely reasonable. We support those and would add making all meeting video public – that would solve the ‘minutes’ problem once and for all, and give both the public and decision makers access to what has been going on for years.

The first goal, expanding StART membership to include state legislators, King County Council, and Congress, is a mistake. It is also the one most likely to consume the Committee and Council’s attention and distract from useful work at exactly the wrong time.

Our regular readers know the term the Casino. Every airport community goes through the same cycles – a game designed to be played, not won. After so much frustration, a direct, dramatic move sounds appealing. We have watched many cycles of this. Each one felt like progress but ultimately delivered nothing. Or worse.

Such a change would require buy-in from the other StART member cities. Whether that buy-in exists has not been established. The Committee does not need to take our word for this. As only the most recent example, in 2019, community representatives from Des Moines, Burien, and Federal Way resigned from StART in protest over substantially the same concerns. StART continued without you. The other member cities’ interests did not align with Des Moines then, and they do not now. SeaTac is compensated by the Port and is constrained by their ILA. Normandy Park dropped the SAMP ILA. Federal Way, which then had the strongest community advocacy, has not been heard from in years. Adding more chairs to the table does not change the misalignment. It often enlarges it.

Washington has three of the highest ranking federal electeds on aviation policy: Rick Larsen, Maria Cantwell, Patty Murray. We’ve spoken with all of them. They know about Sea-Tac. Beyond sound insulation for schools, they have never introduced legislation that would benefit Des Moines. Adam Smith sits in the Quiet Skies Coalition along with Pramila Jayapal, who represents the Duwamish, Beacon Hill, and Georgetown. The Committee should look at how many items from the Coalition’s legislative agenda have ever moved out of committee.

The King County Council already governs another international airport, with its own FAA roundtable and its own set of interests. (They are having an open house this Thursday.) It is a peer airport authority, not a constituent of the Port. The Seattle City Council has produced nothing for impacted constituents. That is why their own neighborhoods look elsewhere.

As airport professionals say, “seen one airport, seen one airport.” Across such a large territory, the only issue dozens of people in a room will tend to agree on is flight paths. The field’s lone success story consists of very lengthy and expensive efforts over Reagan National, to clear one segment over the Potomac. Different geometry, different airspace, different state. Des Moines is under the runway.

The Situation Analysis on page 6 accepts the Port’s growth projections as the starting point for the Committee’s strategy. That is one source, not the situation. Operations are likely to increase. That does not mean every impact moves with operations, and it does not mean the Committee’s posture should be derived from the Port’s view.

Compensation is a realistic frame. So are several wins available within StART’s existing scope. Goal 1 contradicts both: it spends the Committee’s year on structural reform rather than on the substantive work the Situation Analysis itself implies.

For example, the Fly Quiet program runs midnight to 5 a.m. The DNL65 penalty period — the Part 150 night window — is 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. Sleep disturbance is the best-documented health impact of aviation noise. Closing that four-hour gap is achievable. It is also measurable, and inside StART’s actual reach. It requires patience and ongoing effort. No version of StART has sustained either. A larger version would be less likely to, not more.

The City of Des Moines has had no sound insulation requirement for over a decade. Restoring one is essential to furthering the health of your residents. It would also help protect the city’s precious middle housing stock and enrich its tax base. Not doing so puts every federal request for retrofits at risk.

Support for state legislation to provide a large fund for the RCW53 boundary also has curb appeal. But only if the source has been approved by the FAA, only if it does not take money from existing water quality funding your city may need, only if it provides guaranteed benefits for Des Moines, and only if it does not provide more opportunities for photo-ops and even more years of delay. That is a long list of conditions. The Committee should be able to speak to each of them before recommending the approach.

To obtain compensation, the City must first agree on what the word means. That is the most useful work available to a five-person citizen advisory body for the rest of 2026.

Over the decades, the Port has funded parks, roads, water infrastructure, tree replacement, public safety, and downtown redevelopment throughout King County. Most Des Moines residents and electeds only know of the tax levy as another bill to pay. There is no reason the Port would advertise this. The Port is a steward of public funds, accountable to its own commissioners and to the cities that engage with it consistently.

The relationship between Des Moines and the Port has been framed either in terms of grievance or sell-out, but never smart, sustained effort. Cities that take that approach get funded. Cities that complain, without putting in the effort to play in that arena, get listened to politely and offered more community engagement.

The Port engages at the City, State, and Federal levels. Des Moines’s engagement has weighted heavily toward the State legislature. A direct liaison with the Port sounds good. Until then, the someone can start small--begin watching Commission meetings for opportunities that will not appear at StART. Sea-Tac Noise Info covers every Port Commission meeting and flags items of specific interest to Des Moines.

Through spring and summer, the Committee can use its monthly meetings to develop a structured framework for what airport-impact compensation should mean for Des Moines: what the Port has historically funded elsewhere, what is legally possible, and what Des Moines would need to do to begin connecting the dots. This is research and discussion, conducted in open session, with each meeting producing a piece of the framework. The underlying data is available to all, at no cost.

By fall, the Committee can shape that work into a recommendation to Council. Not firm numbers — a clear scope of what Des Moines should be asking for, and why.

By the end of 2026, the Committee can recommend that the City's 2027 legislative agenda again provide funding for the formal compensation study. That low-cost, high-reward study was on the City's 2026 legislative agenda but was not funded. The Committee's year of public work would have done two things at once: built the public mandate the study had been missing, and produced the framework that the formal study would refine and make actionable.

The community survey contemplated in the workplan amendment is more useful at the end of this process than at the beginning. After a year of public structured discussion, residents will have a vocabulary to think about more than just noise. Without it, residents will not know any more of what to ask for than they do now at Port town halls.

What delivers results is knowing what to ask for, then direct engagement with the bodies that can get it done most efficiently. The Committee has seen this for itself with the new Air Quality Monitor. It will be part of every discussion of community impacts going forward. The compensation framework is the same kind of work, on the same scale, by the same body. It could have been implemented years ago.

One way or another, all roads converge on the Port of Seattle. In terms of grant equity, Des Moines has historically received a very small share. Work outward from there, and via the three-city ILA, and then to state and federal partners. The Committee's best use is to provide the framework that makes those engagements defensible, and grounded in a Des Moines-specific account of what compensation means.

The Committee's desire to obtain compensation is well-placed. We agree that StART is not what airport communities want or expect. To some extent or another, they are all the Casino. Seven years ago, STNI advised an earlier version of this Committee not to join. Today we ask you to consider that experience, and not to spend the year on a different version of the same effort. Our observations are based on visits to thirteen national groups. A single visit is not a sufficient basis for the recommendations in this draft. Time is short. For 2026, the Committee can achieve is far more likely to achieve its primary goal by doing this work than by trying to change the game.

We urge the Committee not to bring this draft to Council on June 11 until the contradiction between page 5 and page 6 is resolved, and Goal 1 is reconsidered against empirical evidence. The Committee has the standing to deliver a workplan to Council that helps the City do what was always possible: build a healthier, more sustainable, more prosperous city.

Paula Rodriguez  
...on behalf of STNI