

December 18, 2025

City of Des Moines  
21630 11th Avenue S  
Suite A  
Des Moines, WA 98198

Dear Mayor Traci Buxton:

Thank you for your letter from you and the City Council regarding the Port of Seattle's Sound Insulation Repair and Replacement Pilot Program (Pilot Program). We value the opportunity for continued dialogue about how best to support communities affected by aircraft noise, and to ensure our efforts remain informed by local input.

The Port shares your concern for homeowners with aging sound insulation packages and remains committed to addressing these issues in a responsible and data-driven manner. As the name indicates, the Sound Insulation Repair and Replacement Pilot Program is a Pilot Program – an initial, exploratory effort, which from the onset, was designed to help us understand the scope and condition of the previously installed sound insulation packages, evaluate their acoustic performance, and identify effective approaches for potential future efforts.

The Pilot Program is funded with \$5 million in Port of Seattle tax levy money, a finite resource that must be used responsibly to ensure meaningful results. The Port has implemented its Pilot Program with a view towards leveraging limited tax levy funds as supplemented by available FAA grant funding to the maximum extent possible as further described below.

The Port is proud of its historic Sound Insulation Program, which has provided insulation to more than 9,400 single-family homes near SEA and remains one of the most comprehensive airport programs in the nation. The current Pilot Program continues that legacy of leadership by approaching this work – and addressing community concerns – in a thoughtful and intentional manner.

The initial field assessment of 30 single-family homes was limited in scope, but highly informative. The site visits, acoustic testing, and homeowner survey responses provided valuable insights into the condition and acoustic performance of the previously installed sound insulation products. These findings validated trends observed in the broader survey and helped refine our approach for the Pilot Program's implementation phase.

We are now moving to the implementation stage of the Pilot Program. The Pilot Program is using the same requirements as the FAA's Sound Insulation Pre-1993 Program. To be eligible, homes must be located inside the current FAA approved Noise Remedy Boundary, received sound insulation prior to January 1, 1993, and acoustically test at, or above, 45 dB DNL interior noise levels. An interior noise level of 45 dB DNL or greater generally indicates that exterior noise is noticeable within the home.

The focus on Pre-1993 homes is deliberate and strategic. Concentrating efforts on these structures allows the Port to:

- Target areas most affected by current aircraft noise (the highest DNL noise contours),
- Prioritize homes with the oldest sound insulation,
- Take advantage of existing FAA policy that allows for use of federal matching grant funds to repair and replace sound insulation packages,
- Adhere to Washington State law that authorizes the Port to implement a sound insulation program to address acoustic issues, and
- Follow Port Commission direction to focus within the current Noise Remedy Boundary and focus on the acoustic performance of the sound insulation packages rather than other aesthetic or structural issues.

As mentioned above, the Port has received approval from the FAA to seek Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funds for the design and construction phases for acoustically eligible homes that received federally-funded sound insulation before 1993. Grant funding could cover up to 80% of the expenses being paid for design and construction. While, timing for a grant request is not yet determined, the availability of these dollars makes it possible for the pilot program to stretch tax levy dollars further and assist more homeowners.

The initial phase of the Pilot Program acoustically tested homes with the oldest sound insulation packages which were sound-insulated prior to January 1, 1993. Outreach and acoustic testing of insulated homes targeted the three highest DNLs (66 to 69). There were 262 homes in these DNLs. A total of 135 homeowners applied, and 117 homes received acoustic testing. The discrepancy includes owners that declined to take part in the testing or had to cancel. Five homes tested eligible, and we are in the process of scheduling briefings with these five homeowners to see if they would like to participate in the Pilot Program.

We understand that five homes testing eligible so far might seem like a lower result than many expected. However, it also indicates that the sound insulation packages installed prior to 1993 continue to hold up acoustically. We acknowledge that homeowners have noticed or experienced other issues with their insulated windows. However, the focus of the Pilot Program and the Port's long-established Sound Insulation Program is noise reduction.

Based on the response rate of the initial outreach, and homes that tested eligible, we are in the process of expanding outreach to the remaining 209 homes in the existing Noise Remedy Boundary with additional acoustic testing planned for early 2026.

Please note that the Port is currently conducting a Part 150 Noise and Land Use Compatibility Study which means the Noise Remedy Boundary will eventually change and some homes with older packages outside the existing Boundary may become eligible for the sound insulation pilot project.

Through this Pilot Program, the Port is responsibly using finite resources to address the most acoustically impacted residents while laying the groundwork for future solutions. The lessons learned will guide any expansion or evolution of the program moving forward.

We share the City's commitment to improving the quality of life for residents near SEA. As the Pilot Program progresses, we will continue to communicate findings and provide updates on what we learn. We appreciate your continued engagement and look forward to ongoing collaboration as this important work advances.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Toshiko Hasegawa". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Commissioner Toshiko Hasegawa  
Commission President  
Port of Seattle