

Runway Safety Challenged

Pilots and aviation experts raised eyebrows at the public hearings commenting on difficult safety problems caused by almost-vertical walls along the west side and by the need to cross two active runways to reach the terminal. See Page 4.

A Highline student speaks:

Hi, I'm Maria W.

I represent KIK, the kids at the Highline School District. When I go to my school and can't hear my teacher, when I walk outside my door and smell jet fuel, I think, we need to move away from this stupid airport. But I love my school. I can't move.

When I swing by Miller Creek and see the dying salmon, when I watch the big dump trucks filling in the headwaters of my creek, I think, we need to move away from this stupid airport. But I love my friends. I can't move.

When I know cancer rates are much higher and I visit my Grandpa in Burien dying of cancer I think, we need to move away from this stupid airport. But I love my family here. I can't move.

Then my Mom says the Port guys are going to build another runway. They're going to build another runway. They're going to build another runway.

Continued on page 6

Port Out Of Money?? Audit Ordered

On 25 May 1999, the Department of Ecology issued an agreed order under the Model Toxics Control Act, requiring the Port of Seattle to complete a "Phase I" groundwater study and to issue a report on results by 22 December 1999. According to Greg Wingard, Director of Waste Action Project (and consultant to RCAA), the Port has not only failed to complete the study but has stopped all work on it because they claim there is no more money in the budget (a large part of which was a grant from Ecology). An audit is underway to determine if the Port mis-spent the funds for the study.

Observers wonder if this is the way the Port plans to keep mitigation promises made to DOE and the Corps of Engineers in order to get wetlands permits.

Truth in Aviation

The Newsletter of the Regional Commission on Airport Affairs

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Spring 2001

Third Wetlands Hearings Highlight Runway Problems

Not once, not twice, but three times, the Port of Seattle, owner-operator of Sea-Tac Airport, has sought official permission to destroy wetlands with its third-runway construction project west of the existing airport. And three times the community has turned out in great strength to tell the regulating agencies that this is a bad idea—bad for the environment, bad for people—and wasteful. Each of the first two applications had to be withdrawn, re-written, and resubmitted, because of fatal flaws.

On 26 and 27 January, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Ecology held hearings on the latest proposal submitted by the Port. Hundreds of residents in attendance heard

nearly one hundred speakers tell the agencies about their concerns with the proposal. Most of the 117 speakers were in opposition, citing numerous issues—airport safety, damage to local streams, concerns with the environmental mitigation plans, lack of community mitigation, and, over and over again, the problems posed by the four vertical embankment walls.

—Against—

In their five-minute comments, a stream of residents and local elected officials carried a few basic messages to the two regulatory agencies.

* The environmental planning is questionable and incomplete in many details, especially as to

Continued on page 2

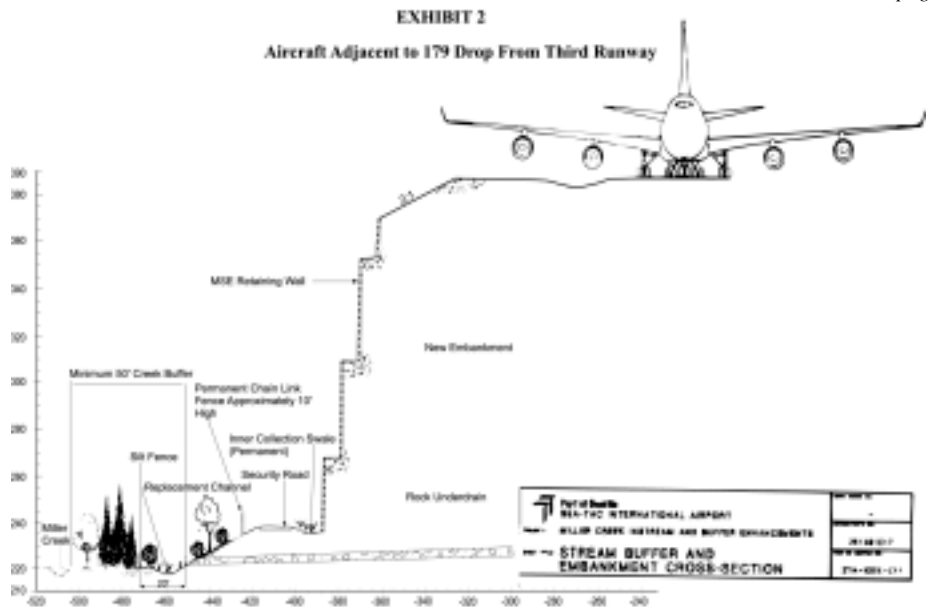


Illustration prepared from from written testimony of Dr. Stephen Hockaday for Airport Communities Coalition showing a large body jet at the edge of the third runway runway safety area, 100 ft. from the 153 ft. high "mechanically stabilized wall" over Miller Creek.

Earthquake Raises Airport Seismic Safety Issues

Planners at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport have a grand vision: nearly 30 million tons of third-runway fill placed on 18 acres of wetlands, and held in place by gravity, compaction, wire mesh, and an array of concrete blocks.

People downstream from Sea-Tac Airport have another vision: nearly 30 million tons of fill—and a great amount of runway concrete—cascading toward Puget Sound when the next big near-surface earthquake strikes the Puget Sound Region. The Seattle Fault is runs just North of the Airport.

Western Washington's most recent earthquake, on 28 February, showed dramatically that airport planning and construction techniques are not adequate to withstand the known seismic hazards in the Puget Sound. Boeing Field's main runway (built on fill) broke up in places, so that the airport had to be closed. Sea-Tac Airport's control tower was knocked out of operation by damage. Yet, the quake was the least damaging of the three types of quakes: surface, tectonic-plate movements, and deep "slab" quakes.

Continued on page 3

Wetlands Experts Blast Plan

Amanda Azous, an ACC consultant on wetlands impacts, told the Engineers and Ecology that the Port's plan lacked vital information about wetlands that would be affected by the runway project. "Without this information, it is simply not possible to determine effectiveness of [proposed] mitigation." She added, "Although these requirements were clearly pointed out...in my September 1, 2000, letter, essential data and analysis remain missing. The keystone of the mitigation proposal, the analysis of wetland function being eliminated, is unaccountably absent, and the wetland assessments unsupported as a result."

Dyanne Sheldon, first wetland planner for King County, reviewed the wetland documents for ACC, and concluded that they "do not provide adequate, substantiated documentation that the impacts...[are permissible under]...the requirements of Section 401...or Section 404 of the Clean Water Act."

How the Process Works

Ecology and the Army Engineers are conducting two different reviews of the Port's plans. Ecology has a full year (starting from 27 December) to decide whether to issue a certificate under sec. 401 of the federal Clean Water Act. The question is whether the Port proposal provides "reasonable assurance" that State water-quality rules will not be violated. Meanwhile, the Corps of Engineers is considering whether to issue a permit under sec. 404 of the Act to allow filling of wetlands. The Engineers must decide whether the project will do unacceptable damage to wetlands and surface waters, and their decision must balance benefit that may accrue from the project against harms, all in light of "the public interest".

If Ecology grants the water-quality certificate (sec. 401), the Corps then has six months to act on the sec. 404 permit request. The Corps would also independently review the question of consistency with State water-quality rules. But if Ecology denies the certificate, the Engineers have said that they will *not* re-examine Ecology's decision—they will simply deny the sec. 404 permit.

Each agency is considering oral comments from the 26/27 January hearings of this year, and from the hearings in 1998 and 1999. Each agency is also considering all of the written comments filed by the general public and interested groups and agencies going back to 1998.

WETLANDS HEARINGS

Continued from page 1

the four earthen retaining walls for the huge runway embankment

- * The environmental damage would be unacceptable

- * Building artificial wetlands at Auburn to replace wetlands destroyed near the Airport does nothing for the local streams and their wildlife—especially for the salmon of Miller Creek

- * On the basis of past performance, any promises by the Port to mitigate harm are untrustworthy. (The sorry record of the Port as to the Highline schools was mentioned by many speakers.)

- * Possible benefits from the project are far outweighed by the enormous costs

- * The State's needs for air travel can and should be met with much less expense by using existing and new airports in more appropriate locations

- * People and wildlife are more important than Sea-Tac expansion

—For—

Port supporters (almost all of them living far from the Airport) stuck to a few simple arguments of their own:

- * Business will suffer (catastrophically, according to some) without a third runway

- * The region needs added air-travel capacity, which the runway would provide

- * All other possible sites were thoroughly reviewed by the Puget Sound Regional Council; no better site exists than Sea-Tac

- * The Port's plans reflect the "highest environmental standards"—a phrase heard over and over

- * The costs and environmental harm at all possible alternate sites were thoroughly evaluated and found to be less than those for Sea-Tac expansion

- * Building a new regional airport would violate the Growth Management Act

With a very few exceptions, these arguments were received in dead silence by the crowd.

Fortunately, the two-day format for these "third-strike" hearings allowed enough time for project opponents to present convincing rebuttals to the less frivolous pro-runway arguments.

Local Electeds Stand Strong

As expected, in calling speakers to the lecterns, priority was given to elected officials. Over the two days, 22 elected officials attacked the application in detail, and in addition, the letter of opposition signed by the Mayor and entire council of Tukwila was read into the record.

Long-time runway opponent U.S Rep. Adam Smith (D-7) led off on Friday evening. Other 'electeds' speaking against the proposal on Friday included Des Moines' mayor pro tem., Bob Sheckler; Tom Slattery, president of the Highline School Board; Rose Clark, deputy mayor of Burien; Scott Thomasson, mayor of Des Moines; Sen. Julia Patterson (D-33); Jennifer Holms, assistant to King County Councilmember Chris Vance (R-13); Rep. Karen Keiser (D-33); Normandy Park Councilmember (and former mayor) Stu Creighton; Georgette Valle, Burien City Council; Rep. Erik Poulsen (D-34); Des Moines Councilmember Dave Kaplan; Linda Kochmar, Fed-

eral Way Councilmember; Normandy Park's mayor, John Wiltse.

On Saturday, more elected officials spoke against the Port plan, including Wing Woo, Burien Councilmember; a statement by Kevin James of the Burien Council (read into the record by Rose Clark); a statement by the entire Tukwila Council, read for them by Sally Nelson, Burien Mayor, who then provided her own criticism; Rep. Shay Schual-Berke (D-33); Rep. Constantine Dow (D-34); Carl Miehle, President of the Board of Water District 54; and, in the closing minutes on Saturday afternoon, Rep. Joe McDermott (D-34).

Electeds in Other Cities Say, "Let Highline Have It"

Three public officials in areas removed from the Airport spoke in favor of concentrating air traffic at Sea-Tac, in classic NIMBY fashion. On Friday evening, Maud Smith Daudon (former Chief Financial Officer, Port of Seattle) speaking as chief of staff to, and representing, Seattle Mayor Paul Schell (a former Port Commissioner), gave strong support to the runway project. The other "NIMBY" electeds were Bob Drewell, Snohomish County Executive, and Chuck Mosher, Bellevue mayor.

Written comments on the Port's plan were accepted through 16 February. Citizen groups (including RCAA) and the Airport Communities Coalition filed extensive criticisms, as did more than a few interested citizens. The ACC comments came from a dozen expert consultants, and are available from ACC or RCAA in a one-volume edition, for \$25 per copy.

Stormwater Plan: County to Port, Keep Trying

Human activity can have disastrous effects on streams, ponds, and wetlands, by moving stream channels, by dumping silt and other pollution into water, by diverting rain ("stormwater") from natural channels. In King County, such actions are regulated by the County through its Surface Water Design Manual. The Engineers and Ecology require applicants under the federal Clean Water Act to comply with the Manual's requirements. The Port of Seattle has had three tries to present a plan that the County can approve.

County experts have now reported that the latest plan is on track conceptually, but needs a few improvements—30 pages worth! Here is a sampling of their comments:

"Compliance with the ... Design Manual does not mitigate all potential impacts ..."

"Review comments are limited to compliance with *minimum* [emphasis added] technical standards of the ... Manual ... Compliance with King County's technical standards

Continued on page 5

EARTHQUAKE HAZARDS REVEALED

Continued from page 1

What would happen to the third Sea-Tac runway in a more damaging quake? The FAA, the Port of Seattle, and Port consultants are guessing that the huge mound of fill, vertical on its western edge, will be securely held in place by a construction technique (“mechanically stabilized earth wall”) that has never been tried for an embankment so tall, so long, and so deep, in such earthquake-prone country, on such unsuitable soils. Experts hired to review the plans by the Airport

Communities Coalition, warn that the plan is full of unanalyzed risks. GeoSyntec Consultants, commenting on behalf of ACC, said, “The methodology used in performing pseudo-static (seismic) stability analysis is incorrect & may seriously overestimate the ability of the wall to withstand seismic loads. (See also companion article in col. 3.)

In their rush to build the project, the Port and FAA are willing to gamble that in the next big quake the embankment will not collapse, that the third runway will not deform & crack, that the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars (no one knows the true cost) will not be lost.

Boeing Field Suffers from Fill Failure

Boeing Field (King County International Airport), the region’s major air-cargo airport, also suffered earthquake damage. KClA is largely built on fill, and both of its runways, and also some taxiways, suffered serious cracks, resulting in severe restrictions on operations, with heavy planes forbidden to land.

For several days, the Boeing Co. could not fly new planes out of KClA. As of 10 March, the airport was expecting that runway repairs would be completed by the 13th.

Various Boeing Company facilities built on fill at KClA suffered some damage, as did some

company buildings at Renton (built on fill at the mouth of the Cedar River). In general, Western Washington came through the earthquake with flying colors, thanks to modern structural design based on prior experience in earthquake-prone areas.

Local airports did a remarkable job of responding to the emergency, for which

staff & management alike deserve high praise. FAA controllers at Sea-Tac calmly talked planes down while the control tower was shaking and its windows were shattering. FAA was ready with a standby emergency portable control facility.

Aside from a broken water line in one terminal, the old unretrofitted tower took the most damage, causing the shutdown of the airport.

Other major damage in the Seattle area was restricted to structures built on fill, such as the old Sears, Roebuck store (now the Starbucks headquarters) in the SoDo area, several buildings in Pioneer Square, and Pier 52 on the central waterfront.

Outlying Airports Unaffected

While the region’s two busiest airports were staggering from earthquake damage, with severe delays for air travellers and air cargo, the two largest outlying, under-used airports – Paine Field and McChord Air Force Base – suffered no damage. RCAA President Larry Corvari commented, “How wise is it to put all our air-travel eggs in one fragile basket? Shouldn’t a major metropolitan area like ours have a multiple-airport system, in case of disaster – such as an earthquake?”

RCAA Board member Phil Emerson told the 27 January hearing that the footings of the “Great Wall” would be on soils subject to serious risks of liquefaction in case of earthquake. He noted that the epicenter of the 1965 quake was only a mile away from the airport.

On the same day, Jim Carpenter commented that the public and the agencies needed a complete design of all walls and a thorough geotechnical review. Karyn Pauler sounded a similar caution, remarking that there were still four stages of planning before the wall designs would be complete; approving the design now would be premature. Joe Barreca, Sr., commented, ironically, that perhaps the Engineers could explain the footings under the vertical walls, and also pointed out that “we have land here that will liquefy” in case of an earthquake.

“We don’t have to build a Hoover Dam. We’re not holding back water. We’re holding back earth. Um, and if you think about it, um, the earth is strong enough to support the earth. Otherwise, it would cave in on itself.”—

Bob Parker, Port of Seattle Spokesman
to KOMO-TV
27 January 2001

Experts Question Safety of the Walls

To the ordinary citizens, one of the most astonishing features of the third-runway project (aside from its cost) is the way that 19.84 million cubic yards of fill are supposed to be held in place. In four critical locations, there are to be four vertical walls of—earth, with a facing of non-structural concrete blocks. The fill is to be “mechanically stabilized”. That means putting some sort of additional materials—plastic mesh, steel gridwork, or the like—in horizontal layers in the fill, like layers of frosting in a cake. Will this be stable?

GeoSyntec Consultants, world-renowned experts on seismic stability, in a report prepared for Airport Communities Coalition analyzing this plan, writes:

“The documents...do not provide a sufficient basis for the conclusion that the project as conceived can withstand the static and seismic loads it will be subject to over its lifetime.

The largest of these four walls (the West MSE Wall) is designed at an “unprecedented scale”. GeoSyntec writes of this 153-foot high, 1500-foot-long structure, “[t]o our knowledge, a MSE wall of this height has never previously been built.” Similar walls of 125 and 131 feet “have never been subjected to strong seismicity.”

Seismic Analysis Suspect

GeoSyntec wrote, “The earthquake magnitudes assigned by Hart Crowser [Port consultant] to the various probability levels are inconsistent with results from the United States Geologic Survey (USGS) National Seismic Hazard Mapping Project and with results from analyses GeoSyntec and others have conducted for projects in the same vicinity. The progressively higher peak horizontal ground acceleration (PHGA) values associated with the progressively smaller probability levels are attributed by Hart Crowser to progressively larger magnitude ‘subduction zone’ (offshore) earthquakes, while our work and the USGS information indicates that these higher accelerations should be associated with local ‘crustal faults’ (e.g., the Seattle fault). This inconsistency casts suspicion on the entire analysis...”

No Foundation

Jerald Vassar, an expert in the Department of Ecology’s Dam Safety Office, has written, “Clearly, the considerable height of the wall dictates that it be founded on a dense, unyielding foundation or a structural fill that spans between such a stratum and the base of the wall.” But the published plans for the four walls make no provision for such foundations.

Highlights of citizen comments on walls

Henry A. Shomber of Normandy Park, wrote, “the only logical conclusion is that this is an unacceptably risky construction technique for this application, since they can cite neither a wall of comparable height or slope.” Mr Shomber noted a high risk of failure in case of earthquake: “Their [the Port’s] analysis cites a 50% probability of liquefaction in the presence of a seismic event of about 6.5 strength. This is not even a 100 year event. Clearly this is not adequate for this site.”

Debi Wagner’s written comments noted that there had been no EIS analysis of wall construction dynamics. (No walls were mentioned in the Port-FAA environmental reviews.)

Pilots Question Runway Safety

Two experienced professional pilots testified at the January hearings. Both were opposed to the project, and both cited safety reasons.

Ground Collision Danger Increased

William C. Brant, a Normandy Park resident and captain for Delta Airlines, warned of the dangers of collisions on the ground—"runway incursions"—especially in poor-visibility weather (just when the third runway is supposed to be in use). The new runway would result in three closely-spaced parallel runways, so that aircraft on the third runway, furthest from the terminal, must cross active runways to reach the terminal. Capt. Brant told the hearing that at Sea-Tac just the week before, two airplanes "missed each other with hundreds and hundreds of people on each airplane just a few feet in the fog."

Runway = Aircraft Carrier?

He also warned of problems with wind shear along the 150-foot-plus vertical wall. "I don't know what the winds are going to be like, blowing off the end of that thing." He compared the proposed runway to an aircraft carrier: "I know that when I landed on aircraft carriers in the Navy, I was paid extra money for the danger."

Skidding Over the Great Wall

The last speaker at the 27 January hearing was Harvey Rowe, a long-time commercial pilot. He handed in a 12-page critique of the runway proposal. He wrote "Three parallel Dependent runways to me is an accident waiting to happen." Mr Rowe worried about safety risks from cross winds and up and down drafts "of who knows what velocity". He was especially concerned about aircraft skidding off the new runway and over the "Great Wall of SeaTac". (See graphic on p.1.) His conclusion: "as a commercial pilot, I think it's dangerous, unsafe, and I'm dead set against it".

Bird-Strike Hazard?

Several commenters at the 26/27 January hearings pointed out new risks of bird-aircraft collision.

"The huge embankment creates an ideal sloping environment for the birds to soar in rising currents... This sloping embankment becomes a detriment to aircraft safety," said Wallace Meyers.

"I can foresee every raptor in the neighborhood taking advantage of the strong updraft to effortlessly float, soar, whatever, and wait for prey. Can you say plane crash?"

That was the warning of Phil Emerson.

Who Needs a Third Runway at Sea-Tac?

One factor to be weighed by the Army Corps of Engineers in deciding whether to issue a wetlands permit is whether the "proposal" is "the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative". Airport Communities Coalition asked Dr Stephen Hockaday, of Pacific Aviation Consulting, Inc., to comment on that aspect of the wetlands permit.

Dr Hockaday wrote that the third runway "is not the best solution to the Puget Sound region's airport capacity needs, and in fact is harmful to the development of a good long-term solution." He noted that [s]everal existing regional airports have excess capacity available to accommodate aircraft operations". In addition, several technically feasible sites for *new* supplemental airports would "provide more than adequate space for a new ... supplemental airport with significantly less cost and less wetland impact" than the third runway.

Better On-Site Runway Options

Even at Sea-Tac itself, there are less-damaging alternatives. The northern part of the proposed runway has the most wetlands impacts, so if the northern 1000 to 2500 feet were eliminated, environmental damage would be much reduced. If the new runway were used only for arrivals, as promised, a 6700-foot runway would be useable by 99-100 percent of the commercial aircraft likely to fly into Sea-Tac in the year 2010. For take-offs, even the 8500-foot runway would be too short for some

of the fleet in 2010 (and, it is believed, this situation will only get worse in the years after 2010).

Technological No-Build Alternative

Dr Hockaday discussed in detail a "variety of technological solutions [that] are available ... [to] avert the need for construction of a third runway", including Localizer Directional Aid (LDA) approaches in conjunction with instrument-landing systems (ILS); Global Positional System (GPS); Precision Radar Monitoring (PRM); Traffic Alert & Collision Avoidance System (TCAS); & Flight Management System (FMS). The FAA itself has estimated that these systems will be in use by the year 2005 at parallel-runway airports (like Sea-Tac).

Smart-business Alternative

He also suggested that as air traffic increases, airlines and travellers will naturally make simple, common-sense decisions. Travellers and airlines will reschedule trips outside of congested, peak-travel periods. Airlines will decide to use higher-capacity aircraft and to switch to less-congested regional airports. A reduction in peak traffic by 3 percent would save approximately 23 percent of delays to aircraft. "The naturally occurring phenomenon will ensure that congestion never reaches the high levels predicted by the Port and therefore assure that no third runway and its associated wetland taking is required."

The Third Runway and Prosperity

Runway supporters argue that the local economy would decline without a third runway. Burien resident Pierre Matthews responded to those claims in his remarks on 27 January: "There were several comments about jobs and flying, the jobs would be in jeopardy, other catastrophes that would happen if a third runway wasn't built. That's nonsense. We're not advocating that Sea-Tac wither and die ... Sea-Tac would continue as a regional hub, feeding a new state-of-the-art airport... ." Sandra Shea, of Normandy Park, commented that if a new regional airport were built, instead of a third runway, "We heard the argument from various chambers of commerce about the need for jobs.

This new regional airport will also bring many new businesses and related jobs."

Dr Theodore Lane, an economist with Thomas/Lane Associates, pointed out that the Port had explicitly stated in the final environmental impact statement for the runway project that there is no need to expand airport capacity to accommodate the airport's forecasted growth of operations and enplanements. Dr Lane asked "if there will be no change in airport enplanements and operations whether or not the third runway is built, why build it?" And, we would add, what jobs would be lost?

Does Reduction of Arrival Delay Justify Wetlands Damage?

The sole official justification for the third-runway project is to reduce delay for arriving aircraft during poor (low-visibility) weather. How much delay? What is the cost to the travelling public, or to airlines, from delay? Will another runway actually eliminate delay? Does delay reduction justify the harm to the environment?

Some delay is caused by airlines competing with each other, so that too many flights are scheduled for the landing 'slots' available. The third runway will not fix this problem.

Some bad-weather delay *closes* the airport; it is not likely that fog or snow that closes the two

existing runways will not also close another one only 2500 feet away.

Seattle Community Council Federation observed in its written comments, "there is no commonly accepted or justified definition of 'delay ... no defensible study has ever been conducted to pick out Sea-Tac delay from other delay. ... it is not possible to conduct a statistically valid analysis of the possible benefits from reduction of arrival delay". The neighborhood group concluded, "The burden of proof ... rests on those who would do environmental damage, and that burden has not been met."

Truth in Aviation is published by the Regional Commission on Airport Affairs (RCAA), a coalition of citizens' groups concerned with airport expansion and air transportation issues. Closing date this issue: March 3, 2001.

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Stormwater Plan

Continued from page 2

may not be sufficient for project approval under other codes and regulations, and does not mitigate all potential impacts of development."

"...this review is limited to those development activities identified by the Port...as being Master Plan Update" projects

Factual Errors Found

"The SMP demonstrates a sound conceptual strategy for complying with the...Manual..."

"Reviewers [for the County] did find a number of factual errors, modeling discrepancies, and inconsistencies throughout the report...several of them have potential to affect facility design and plan effectiveness beyond a trivial amount."

"Enclosure 2 provides specific review comments"—30 pages' worth.

"...we recommend that needed revisions to the December 2000 plan be completed through replacement pages..."

"We recommend that DOE consider creating a full-time compliance/implementation monitoring effort to assist the Port of Seattle in successfully implementing the features of this plan."

Standards Being Revised

"Stormwater standards are evolving faster now than ever before. Both Ecology and King County have major updates to their respective standards scheduled in 2001... It may be warranted to review the final designs for consistency with the performance goals of current standards..."

"If processed under King County regulations, this project would have exceeded the threshold for Large Site Drainage Review and would have been subject to procedural requirements whereby performance standards are tailored specifically to the proposed development."

RCAA Needs You! Your contributions & participation are vital.

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Please send me "No Third Runway" bumper strips. (free!)

I want to contribute \$ _____.

Please send my newsletter by e-mail (in Adobe Acrobat format)

Please call me about volunteering.

Please add my name to the e-mail update list.

Sea-Tac Noise Study Ends Quietly

Begun in high hopes that jet-plane noise might actually be reduced, Sea-Tac Airport's most recent noise study has ended quietly, with no noise reduction in sight. The work of the Citizens' Advisory Committee to seek dispersion of flight corridors was rejected out of hand by the Port Commission in early Summer. In mid-December, the proposal for increased use of the Duwamish - Elliott Bay noise-abatement corridor for take-offs to the north was rejected by the FAA. Two big-ticket items remain alive: more purchase of near-by properties; a modestly-expanded insulation program.

One group of buy-outs, estimated to cost \$45 million, would cover over three hundred units of single-family housing, apartments, and mobile-home parks in areas needed by the Port for the northern Approach Transition Zone for the proposed third runway. These purchases are

More Safety Concerns...

Geoffrey D. Gosling, aviation-system consultant, sent in comments on behalf of ACC to Ecology and the Corps of Engineers, comparing technology alternatives to third-runway construction, & analyzing safety issues in a three-runway Sea-Tac configuration.

Dr Gosling recommended a more thorough analysis of technology-based alternatives. The environmental impact statements "failed to address recent developments in advanced air traffic management technologies", which could actually increase Sea-Tac capacity.

Problems with Three Runways

Adding a runway "will increase the risk of runway incursions over present conditions, and may well limit the operational benefits...from a third runway". Dr Gosling analyzed flight operations with three runways in poor weather, and found it likely that two runways would be used for arrivals and one for departures. That would maximize the airport's ability to handle incoming planes, but would require some arriving aircraft on the new runway to cross two active runways. The analysis of air-traffic safety presented in the third-runway EIS "is based on...simplistic, and erroneous, assumptions."

not noise-abatement driven but are required for safety reasons.

Seven mobile-home parks would be acquired in lieu of insulation, at a similar cost. (Because of their unique construction, mobile homes cannot be retrofitted with efficient noise insulation.) A new item, approved by the Port Commission, would be expending \$7 to 10 million for insulation in about 300 units of condominiums and town houses, which the Port would fund directly. Port officials say that the FAA will not fund insulation for multi-family structures; the Port proposes to insulate only for owner-occupied units, apparently believing that renters do not deserve any relief.

Port assistance to Highline School District is still not forthcoming. The Commission rejected recommendations for a hush house (not enough room on the site!) and for a noise barrier on the west perimeter.

Seattle Group Holds 2001 Elections

Mike R. Ranta, a resident of Seattle's Leschi neighborhood, was elected President of Seattle Council on Airport Affairs by the SCAA's incoming Board of Directors on 3 March. Mr Ranta had previously served as Vice President and newsletter editor.

Frank Bosl (Leschi) was elected Vice President and representative to the Regional Commission on Airport Affairs. Debra Adler (Montlake) is the new Secretary. J. William Keithan (Magnolia) was re-elected Treasurer. Outgoing President Mike G. Rees (Magnolia) will serve as Nominating Committee chair and interim newsletter editor.

Other directors are: Paul Shannon (Lakewood/ Seward Park), who continues as webmaster; Chas Talbot (Columbia City), membership secretary and press secretary; and Marvin G. McCoy (Georgetown).

Leaving the Board are Jamie Alls, of Beacon Hill, who had served as Vice President, and Rena Behar (Capitol Hill).

For up-to-date SCAA news and contact information, visit their website, www.airportnoise.org.

Truth in Aviation

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Inside:

Wetlands hearings, runway problems, p. 1
The “wall” & seismic safety, p. 3
Pilots question runway safety, p. 4
Need for runway challenged, p. 4

ECOLOGY PONDERES “CREAMPUFF” POLLUTION PERMIT FOR SEA-TAC

On 13 February, an overflow crowd gave the Department of Ecology a bad time about its proposal to grant Sea-Tac Airport wide-open rights to pollute streams in the Highline area. Ecology is considering a ‘major modification’ of the principal permit that is supposed to control water pollution from the Airport. As drafted, the revised permit would allow Sea-Tac to discharge a wide range of regulated pollutants with no monitoring of any sort.

Not one speaker at the mandatory hearing, held at the Burien Library, had a good word to say about the draft permit. Ecology staff in the pre-hearing workshop could offer no explanation for proposing a permit that would actually allow much more pollution than the existing permit.

The Airport needs a major change in its permit, because it wants to dump more polluted stormwater and run-off into the headwaters of Walker Creek (west of the airport), as part of its plan to build a temporary interchange on SR 509 at about So. 174th, in SeaTac, to accommodate trucks bringing fill to the proposed construction site. In addition, the existing permit does not cover numerous pending expansion projects, and the Airport wants a free hand to build without having to account for stream pollution. Ecology seems poised

to grant the Airport whatever it wants, but it is certain that any action of Ecology will be appealed.

Other Resources For Wetlands Information

RCAA’s webmistress is in the process of posting all 15 of the expert comments submitted by ACC to the Army Corps of Engineers and Ecology, as well as RCAA’s own comments, comments of Seattle Council on Airport Affairs, Seattle Community Council Federation, Brett Fish, Henry Shomber, Harvey Rowe, Jonathan Williams, Greg Wingard, & others. The RCAA home page URL is www.rcaanews.org. Look on the Library Page under “Wetlands”. For information on the latest news, check the “action alert” section of the website. Call the office (206.824.3120), send an e-mail to rcaa@accessone.com, or send in the form on page 5 to receive this newsletter by e-mail.

RCAA’s website contains ‘links’ to websites of George Hadley and Brett Fish (both focused on Miller Creek), Arlene Brown (containing her detailed criticisms of the third-runway project), and the University of Washington Geophysics Dept.

RCAA’s office has a full set of documents filed by the Port with the Engineers and Ecology, & a comparable set of comments (in hard copy) in response. We also have a complete set of videotapes of the two days of hearings, with index. All these materials are available for readers’ use.

Student Testifies

Continued from page 1

ing to fill in our wetlands and create more pollution for us. I think, we need to move away from this stupid airport. But I love my home here. I can’t move.

I feel like a guinea pig and the Port Directors and Commissioners are the mad scientists continuing their destructive plan knowing about the mental and physical risks to all the children who live near me. We kids have endured enough.

Surely, intelligent adults can’t move a wetland. Even a kid can figure that one out! I’m a member of KIK, Kids Informing Kids about the airport.

I’d like to present you with 200 signatures of my friends who feel the same way I do. Please do not grant the Port of Seattle the building permits to fill in our wetlands. Everything can’t be about money. Then I start thinking, someone has to understand how important the water is that we drink, the air that we breathe, the noise we hear, the education we receive. I hope that someone is you. The kids will be waiting for your decision because it will affect us a lot longer than it will affect you. KIK is here to stay.

Thank you.

—Wetlands hearing, 27 January, afternoon

(Long, loud applause and standing ovation followed her presentation.)

