



# City of Des Moines

THE "Waterland" CITY  
DES MOINES, WASHINGTON, 98188



Wednesday, December 16, 1981

Mr. Cliff Muller  
Port of Seattle  
Director of Planning and Research  
P. O. Box 1209  
Seattle WA 98111

Dear Mr. Muller:

On Tuesday, December 8th the following members of the Technical Advisory Committee for the Sea-Tac International Airport Noise Exposure Update met to discuss certain concerns regarding the final draft of the Noise Exposure Update.

Bill Holstine, Riverton Heights Community  
Bob Nelson, City of Des Moines  
Virginia Dana, Zone III Committee  
Jim Chalupnik, Environmental Protection Agency, Noise Program  
Marian McKenzie, Citizen  
Peter Breysee, Department of Environmental Health, U of W  
Marsha Huebner, City of Des Moines

The product of that meeting was an acknowledgement of concerns pertinent to the Noise Exposure Update which we maintain warrant attention.

Firstly, the document does not define the problem which the study was designed to address, that is, the effects of aircraft noise on the Sea-Tac Communities. The study was undertaken in order to provide a statistical foundation for the development of an overall strategy for alleviating conflicts between the airport and its neighbors, conflicts which bear upon property values and individual reactions to aircraft noise. The purpose stated in the report is to update noise exposure data for the Sea-Tac Communities Plan. However, the update is an element of the solution, not a statement of the problem. We find a statement of the problem illiciting the study critical to fostering a layman's understanding of the noise exposure update and in providing a starting point from which to evaluate its efficacy.

As the Port of Seattle will be reappraising noise remedy programs in light of this report, we find the results distressing. The suggestion that noise exposures will lessen is predicated on an assumption that retrofitting of existing aircraft or replacement of aircraft with quieter

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models will occur according to schedule. Given the precarious economic climate and energy uncertainties, it appears reasonable that airlines will be focusing their attention on matters other than mitigating noise exposure problems.

Paradoxically, although the findings indicate a reduction in average noise levels, flight operations are forecast to increase, a condition translating into potential increase in the number of interruptions experienced which is not identified in the noise contours presented or accompanying text. We question whether noise impacts on people can be adequately measured using an average noise level methodology. If it is the intention of the Port of Seattle to mitigate noise impacts on the Sea-Tac Communities, than the communities' perception of that noise should be factored into the evaluative process. The model employed in the Noise Exposure Update although providing a standard approach to noise impacts and a basis for comparison between airport environments across the country nevertheless is unable to measure noise as perceived by persons residing near the airport. At some point in the planning process the less quantifiable values should be addressed. As noise contours shrink so does the possibility that remedies will be made available to those incurring a financial loss due to aircraft noise. Before the contours presented are embraced, we admonish the Port to consider other aspects of the situation as well.

Finally, while the Technical Advisory Committee was enlisted to provide direct citizen input and technical advise in the development and preparation of the Noise Exposure Update, we feel our real contribution to the study was in meeting public participation requirements. Our technical advise was listened to but not utilized. Challenges were not responded to. For some of us the briefings on study process were enlightening and informative and with limited backgrounds in noise measurement and analysis we were without substantive evidence that the study methodology did not address the concerns of area residents. Others of us offered insightful questions into the noise model. Acknowledgement of the Committee's efforts are noted in the report but suggests that the Committee agrees with the methodology and findings. As this letter attests, such is not the case.

We appreciate the efforts of the Port of Seattle in bringing the Sea-Tac Communities Plan up-to-date and trust that every attempt will be made to develop proposals truly sensitive to the needs of airport neighbors.

Sincerely,