

Election Coverage:

*Port of Seattle: Runway
Foes Chosen To Challenge
Incumbents*

The third runway is emerging as an issue in Port Commission elections.

In the primary election on 18 September, two announced opponents of third-runway construction at Sea-Tac Airport were selected by voters to oppose incumbent Port Commissioners in the general election.

For Position 3, Richard Pope received 42,317 votes, and will face incumbent Paige Miller (with 87,662 votes). Two other challengers received a total of 30,716 votes. Mr Pope attributed a good part of Ms Miller's support to endorsements by Democratic Party groups.

In the Position 4 race, incumbent Pat Davis received fewer votes than the combined opposition. Christopher R. Cain will oppose her in the 6 November election. Ms Davis received 67,844 votes, Mr Cain, 39,488, Jake Jacobovitch, 29,187, and Al Yuen, 20,055. The *Post-Intelligencer's* election coverage erroneously reported that Mr Cain was not an active candidate, and did not even mention that he would be on the November ballot. Ms Davis' share of the vote (less than 44 percent) shows that the long-time incumbent is in serious difficulty.

Only two candidates filed for the seat now held by Jack Block—Mr Block and Lawrence Malloy. Their names will appear on the general-election ballot. Mr Malloy is a very keen supporter of the third runway. Mr Block has been known to express an occasional doubt.

Highline Area Races

In the Highline area, all candidates for City Council posts in Normandy Park and Burien are opposed to the Sea-Tac third-runway project, & the runway is not an issue at this time in the city of SeaTac.

In Des Moines, there are clear differences between the finalists on this issue. At present, all members of the Des Moines Council oppose the runway project & are supporters of the

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Highline School Bonds

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Truth in Aviation

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WHAT NOW?

Two weeks after the attacks on the World Trade Center & the Pentagon, Congress was forced to bail out the airlines to the tune of \$15 billion. Some industry-watchers claim business will rebound quickly once people relax a little. Others, however, point out that the airlines were in big financial trouble *before* the Trade Center disaster because of a persistent drop in business travellers. This part of the problem, they argue, is likely to persist for a very long time, even if the public regains its confidence. The airlines themselves and Boeing seem to fall in to the latter camp, laying off tens of thousands.

Additional security needs will have a huge impact on airports. Some may never re-open. All of this affects airport expansion projects planned across the country, which are dependant on industry profits and customer demand. Sea-Tac's expansion is one of the most expensive in the country and will likely take some major cuts.

At many airports across the U.S., expansion projects are in serious jeopardy, as the money streams dry up. The immediate impacts are two-

fold: first, fewer travellers means less money collected from passenger facility charges (PFCs), & second, insolvent airlines cannot meet their lease payments to airports. Third, revenues from the federal tax on aviation fuel & other taxes on air travel will start to fall. FAA's grants for airport construction come from these taxes.

Here's what is happening at some representative airports.

Twin Cities (Minneapolis - St. Paul, Minnesota). The St. Paul *Pioneer Press* reported on 22 September that the balance of a \$2.7 billion expansion project at the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport was at risk. To balance its budget the airport is likely to cut capital costs. Of the \$2.7 billion expansion project, between \$1.75 billion and \$2 billion already has been spent or committed.

San Francisco. According to the *San Mateo Daily Journal* (20 September), the terrorist attacks may impact the decision whether or not to proceed with expansion at San Francisco. (The airport wants to fill in a big piece of the San Francisco Bay to make new land for the runway.)

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ACC Blasts DOE Process, Appeals to State Pollution Board

On August 10 the state Department of Ecology (DOE) issued a Section 401 water quality certification for the third runway project. This is the third attempt by the Port to get its 401 approval. This process has been watched with concern by people in the airport communities ever since DOE reassigned the lead analyst, Tom Luster, to "more pressing projects", hired Port consultants as "independent" technical reviewers, and "negotiated" the certificate in meetings chaired by a mediator paid for by the Port. (See *TIA* Summer 2001, p.5.) The Airport Communities Coalition (ACC) has appealed the decision and asked for a stay. The hearing on the stay is scheduled for mid-October 2001, but no schedule for the main appeal has been set.

The 401 decision is a one-time opportunity for the State to determine whether the third runway meets applicable state aquatic resource regulations. These regulations cover areas such as fill, stormwater discharges, decreased streamflow, groundwater, water quality in the streams, and wetland health. By law, the Port must demonstrate that there is "reasonable assurance" that construc-

tion and the third runway itself will not violate State water quality standards.

Affidavits from experts in support of ACC's appeal point out that the Port did not even provide the information necessary to decide if applicable water quality standards *could* be met, much less reasonable assurance that they *would* be met. For example, instead of requiring a plan showing that the Port can prevent transport of contaminated groundwater through old utility corridors under the airport, DOE will allow the Port to submit the plan 60 days *after* the issuance of the certification. This, despite the fact that the Port has had years to come up with a plan, but has failed. ACC's lawyers point out that this gerrymandering of the requirements also destroys the public's legal right to comment on the plan.

In some instances, the Port provided conflicting information. For example, different Port reports claim that water behind the 150-foot high retaining wall, the "Great Wall of Sea-Tac", will transport through the wall, be diverted under the wall, or be collected behind the wall for later dis-

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Will Airlines Pay for Third Runway?

Expensive airport construction projects depend, in part, on the proceeds of leases between the airport and its airline tenants. Usually, airline lease payments provide about a third of the total cost of big projects. At Sea-Tac, according to the *Daily Journal of Commerce*, the figure is 41 percent. At most airports, including Sea-Tac, there is a single agreement, to which all airlines subscribe, a master lease, or "Basic Airlines Lease Agreement".

The master lease at Sea-Tac expires at the end of December 2001. The Port of Seattle wants a new agreement with higher rents (to help pay for the third runway & other expansion projects). The Port also wants the airlines to give up their existing right to say just how the profits from the leases may be used by the Port.

In late Summer, Port staff told the Commissioners that negotiations for a new master lease agreement with the major airlines tenants were going well, & that the final agreement would achieve Port goals.

On 10 September, the Port published a notice withdrawing a previous request for consultants to advise it on airport expansion projects: "new information" from airlines was one of the reasons cited. Airline revenues fell sharply in the first half of 2001. So, is "new information" code language, meaning "We can't pay" or "we won't pay"? The Port staff and Port Commission owe it to the public to provide a complete & accurate report on these negotiations. Sea-Tac spokesman Bob Parker said the Port's decision to delay the consultant contract potentially affects only the development of a proposed North terminal. For more news about that terminal, see the article, "Light Rail Line Plan Stops One Mile Short", p.3.

Environmental Stewardship—Port of Seattle Style

Industrial wastewater from Sea-Tac Airport (including runway run-off) is collected by the Airport's industrial wastewater system (IWS) as legally required to prevent run-off into local streams & other bodies of water.

Once collected, the effluent is piped to Renton, where it is supposed to go to the Renton Treatment Plant. Instead, it is discharged straight into Lake Washington. The Department of Ecology has said that in the year 2002 it will (at last) require the effluent to be treated. The Port has sought, & Ecology has granted, every extension allowed by federal law—ten years' worth.

Highline Elections

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Airport Communities Coalition. However, H. Michael Foote, Jr., a candidate for the open no. 7 position, is a runway supporter, while his opponent, Susan White, opposes the runway. Incumbent Terry Brazil (position 5) is challenged by Maggie Steenrod, who is pro-runway. For additional information contact the candidates as follows:

Terry Brazil (pos. 5): 206.824.4238

Maggie Steenrod (pos.5): 206.991.3487, msteenrod@pmiloans.com

H. Michael Foote, Jr (pos. 7): 206.949.2628, hmfootejr@hotmail.com

Susan White (pos. 7): 253.941.4112, FAX 253.839.9555, susanrdo@home.com

A candidates' questionnaire from the *Highline Times* to council candidates did not address third-runway issues but did reveal that most Des Moines candidates, including Ms White, favor extension of SR 509. Mr Foote declined to be interviewed.

... and in Seattle

Transportation issues are shaping up as a major point of difference between Seattle mayoral finalists Mark Sidran & Greg Nickels. Sidran vehemently opposes, & Nickels strongly supports, the light-rail project. All incumbent Seattle City Council members have supported the third runway in the past, but support is weakening. Check the website of Seattle Council on Airport Affairs (www.airportnoise.org) for the latest SCAA questionnaire to Seattle candidates.

Highline Bonds Failing: No Resubmission in November

As *Truth in Aviation* went to press, the final vote on the Highline school-bond proposition had not been tallied. As of 24 September, the bonds appeared to be failing by a few dozen votes. A 60 percent approval vote is required. The early tally was Yes, 10,661 (59.35 percent), No, 7,302 (40.65 percent). In addition, the total vote on the proposition was roughly 200 under the legal minimum for bond approvals.

While late-mailed absentee ballots might affect the numbers, it appears that the proposal will lose by just a few votes.

Board Split; Deadline Missed

The measure will not re-submitted for the November general election, according to bond-campaign spokesman Stuart Jenner. At a meeting on Thursday, 20 September, the Highline School Board was deadlocked (2-2) on resubmission in November, with a deadline of 21 September to submit the proposition for the general election. The Board could still vote for resubmission to the voters at a February or March election.

Passage by 31 March 2002 of a bond measure containing \$50 million for sound-remediation work is a condition of the recent agreement between the Port, the School District, the State, and the FAA. That agreement would provide for additional funding for noise work, up to \$150 million, from the Port, the FAA, and the State.

Boeing Field Land Swap Increases Capacity

As part of a complex three-party deal, the Museum of Flight and King County International Airport (Boeing Field) will exchange two one-acre parcels of land, permitting the Museum to expand and the Airport to increase its capacity. The Airport will gain 31 new tie-down spaces.

The deal begins with a donation of two parcels of land from the Boeing Co. to the Museum. One of those parcels will then be swapped with the County. The other donated parcel will be used for the museum's expansion on the west side of East Marginal Way South. The Museum of Flight is located in Tukwila, at the south-west corner of the Airport. The Museum plans to build several new structures for such uses as classrooms, library, & additional display space. The new facility is scheduled to open in late 2003.

The Airport is years behind in preparation of an update of its Master Plan, but proceeds with various incremental expansion activities nonetheless, always with the blessing of the County Council.

ACC SAYS PORT'S WATER PLAN SUBSTANDARD

Construction of the proposed third runway would result in many changes to the ecology of the watersheds to the West and North of the existing Airport. Under the Section 401 process, anyone wanting to make changes that might damage existing watersheds, streams, aquifers, & standing bodies of water must have good plans to overcome any newly created problems.

Airport Communities Coalition points to numerous serious defects in the Port's remedial plans, too many to discuss in detail. Let's summarize some major problems involving too little water and too much water.

In Winter, removal of a large part of the wetlands & building new impermeable surfaces (runway pavement) will prevent gradual absorption of rain, & increase the risk of flooding, scouring of the streambeds, & excessive deposits of silt. ACC experts say that the Port does not have good plans to remove sediment & pollution.

In late Summer, stream flows are already dangerously low. All concerned—Port, Ecology, Army Engineers, ACC, & all consultants—agree that the Port must find a way to provide extra water in the dry weeks.

The plan accepted by Ecology is to store winter rainwater in great vaults, & then release it in time of need. However, the Port has not applied for a new water right, which it is legally required to have in order to withhold this water from the streams. This stored water will accumulate all sorts of pollutants, & will lose much of its oxygen. When released, it would be "an anoxic slug of sediment laden water carrying a six-month pollutant load," warned Dr Peter Willing, water-quality expert, & consultant to ACC. There are no present plans to deal with this problem.

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What Now

"It's all under review. We're going to have a meeting this weekend to look at what can be done," SFO spokesperson Mike McCarron told the *Journal*. The runway expansion project does not have a price tag so far but it is expected to run into the billions.

The airport's two main runways are only 750 feet apart. An additional runway is planned "to cut down on delays".

United Airlines, largest carrier at the airport and largest employer in San Mateo County, announced on 19 September that 20,000 jobs would be cut. The *San Mateo Daily Journal* concluded, "Although airports pay for any major project, it does so through the profits from the airline industry. Increased security and skittish consumer confidence may mean airlines will be operating in the red for at least the short-term."

Better Security Has High Costs

Logan (Boston). Logan Airport (Boston), operated by the Massachusetts Port Authority, is noted for its terrible security lapses. The *Boston Globe* quotes Mark Robinson, the chairman of MassPort, as calling Logan's role in the 11 September attacks "a sickening daily burden".

The Port Authority will try to force airlines to buy high-tech security devices. Robinson said the move would probably trigger legal action from airlines because the technology would carry a significant price tag. He also said some airlines could even pull out of Logan if they faced such a mandate.

Orlando (Florida). A \$1-billion expansion program is not in jeopardy, according to airport officials interviewed by the *Orlando Sentinel*. Projects including a fourth runway & an additional taxiway are underway, with secure financing in place to cover estimated costs of \$232 million. But officials may delay other construction work to concentrate on better security.

Reagan National (D.C.). Reagan National Airport in Washington, D.C. remains closed, forcing at least one major carrier to the brink of bankruptcy, and several other airlines operating there have announced massive layoffs and schedule reductions. There is a broad consensus that Reagan may never re-open.

Hartsfield (Atlanta, Georgia). This airport is part-way through a 10-year expansion plan, to cost \$5.4 billion. Airport Manager Ben DeCosta told the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* that he was confident that work would continue as planned, saying, "We have the financial position to weather this storm." However, Delta Airlines (largest airline at Hartsfield) suggested that a new terminal & other smaller projects might be delayed.

Chicago - O'Hare. Chicago's Mayor Richard M. Daley insists that major expansion of O'Hare (owned by the City of Chicago) must go forward. Illinois' Governor George Ryan insists that development of the proposed new regional airport at Peotone must go forward. (Peotone would be controlled by the State of Illinois). The Daley expansion program will cost \$11.8 billion, according to an article in the Chicago-area publication, *Daily*

Southtown, on 6 July. Peotone's cost is estimated at \$5 billion.

Observers continue to wonder why so many flights must stop at Chicago. Could the simple step of scheduling more direct flights & fewer stop-overs at Chicago relieve the congestion?

Miami (Florida) The airport plans to go forward with a fourth runway, but the other aspects of its \$4.5 billion expansion program will come under review (including a \$1.3 billion concourse for American Airlines).

Lambert (Missouri). Controversial expansion at this facility owned by the City of St Louis will continue, according to St Louis Mayor Francis Shay, quoted in the *St Louis Post Dispatch*. A third runway is the keystone of the work. "Unless the problems with the airlines persist for a very long time, we should be OK", Slay said. The principal tenant at Lambert is TWA (now part of the American Airlines group). Financing plans at Lambert will still work, even if TWA fails again, according to a Lambert Field public-relations staffer.

Houston, Texas. Richard Vicar, director of aviation for the Houston Aviation System, says that \$2.2 billion expansion program at George Bush Intercontinental Airport will proceed, financed in part with \$700 million in bonds issued by Continental Airlines & local car-rental firms. Vicar discounted possible problems resulting from Continental's loss-making performance, which has led to the recent lay-off of 12,000 workers. "Pure & simple, it's just a cash-flow problem," according to Vicar.

Detroit Metropolitan (Michigan). As of 25 September, the owner-operator of this airport (Wayne County) was re-thinking expansion plans that would require borrowing \$900 million, according to the *Detroit News*. Instead of increases in passenger traffic, as predicted in 1998, volume declined by three percent in the first half of this year, with huge declines since 11 September.

Summary. The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* has identified 20 major U.S. airports with expansion programs likely to be in trouble. Estimated total cost of all these projects was \$72.2 billion. However, the figures for just two (Chicago, Sea-Tac) were understated by half. The total for all these projects may be more like \$120 to \$150 billion.

The general pattern is that airports want to proceed with new runways while deferring new terminals, parking garages, & other ancillary projects. The problem is that new runways to handle new traffic require new "gates", or else delay in the air is simply replaced with delay on the ground. Perhaps the idea is that if runways are built, pressure will be overwhelming, some time in the future, for the rest of the package. But where will the money come from?

Airlines in trouble

The world-wide economic downturn has been very hard on business air travel, and business travel is the backbone of the airline business. The slowdown was taking a harsh toll in the airline industry well before the terrorist attacks.

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Light Rail Line Plan Stops One Mile Short

With Federal funding blocked by skeptical members of Congress, the top management of the Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) is scrambling for a plan, any plan, for a light-rail line that can be built with money on hand. A line running North from downtown Seattle is too expensive, because of a basic decision that construction in that direction should be largely underground. A line to the South would be cheaper, because that would be built above-ground (except for a short stretch under Beacon Hill). The North line would be half the length of the South one, but cost \$240 million more.

Now the planners are recommending a 14-mile line from Convention Place in downtown to So. 154th Street & SR 518 in the city of SeaTac, ending a mile away from Sea-Tac Airport. Travellers would have to leave the train & board a shuttle bus to complete the trip to the Airport. This line would cost (so they say now) \$2.1 billion.

Dave Earling, Edmonds City Council member, who chairs the RTA Board, said that construction on this line could begin in June or July 2002.

North Terminal Re-Think?

In late June, Port staff discussed preliminary plans for a new \$3 billion North Terminal at the Airport with the Port Commission featuring a terminus for the light-rail line. (See article, "Port Announces ..." in our Summer 2001 issue, p. 1.) No word yet from staff or Commission on how the new Sound Transit plan will affect the Terminal plan.

Should the Port build-in a terminus, just in case Sound Transit is able at some time in the future to stretch their line another mile? That would risk a big expense for possibly no gain.

Or should the Port forget the whole thing—& risk an expensive retrofit later on, if Sound Transit can find the money for that last mile? And there is the increasing likelihood that the entire light-rail project will be abandoned.

Isn't the Puget Sound Regional Council supposed to ensure that the transportation plans of all the public agencies dovetail with one another?

Two Join RCAA Board

The Regional Commission on Airport Affairs (RCAA) has added two additional Board members. They are Rob Frissholz, of Normandy Park & Stan M. Scarvie of Des Moines.



One in A Hundred

FAA Study Debunks

Sea-Tac's "Delay" Claims

Multiple "delay" problems have led to multiple studies & a rash of proposals for action. The key report, as far as understanding Sea-Tac issues, is *Airport Capacity Benchmark Report 2001*, released in May by FAA's national headquarters. This study shows that—even using Port of Seattle figures—the Airport is well capable of handling projected future traffic without undue delays for the next two decades.

The Benchmark Report is FAA's most recent study of "delay" problems at the 31 busiest airports in the U.S., including Sea-Tac. The study shows that Sea-Tac does not have a significant delay problem. To the FAA, the delay rate is significant if three percent or more of the flights experience delay in excess of 15 minutes, & Sea-Tac's delay rate was only 1.04 percent in 2000.

Need Evaluated

The purpose of the study was to examine need for airport runway capacity. It considers only delay caused by runway "constraints" at the particular airport being studied. It excludes other factors, such as congestion at other airports, bad weather en route, insufficient ground facilities at the airport, & the like. Thus, its "benchmarks" provide an outside, expert check on claims that an airport does or does not need more runways.

To exclude non-local factors, the report's authors count an aircraft as arriving late if it lands more than 15 minutes after the time stated in the flight plan filed when departing from its last stop. In that way, all earlier delay is removed from the calculation.

Numbers Don't Support New Runway

The study gives three estimates of each airport's capacity: at present; with planned improvements *not* including new runways; with planned improvements & new runways combined. Several non-runway improvements are planned for Sea-Tac that are *not* considered in the Port's environmental impact statements. These are expected to improve Sea-Tac's "benchmarks" by five percent over the next decade. In the same period, Sea-Tac traffic is expected to grow from last year's 446,066 operations to 460,000, which is only a three percent increase. In other words, without a third runway, but with scheduled changes in technology & procedures, delay should actually be reduced over the next ten years, leaving time to locate and build a new regional airport that can handle traffic for the next century.

DELAY AT SEA-TAC AIRPORT

Is It Serious Enough To Justify a Billion-Dollar Third Runway ?

Who's Number One?

Late in the Summer, a big controversy was stirred up by an Associated Press (AP) article that claimed that Seattle-Tacoma International Airport had the worst arrival delays of any major airport in the U.S.A. Local papers give the story front-page coverage, without bothering to check the facts, & the Port of Seattle & its supporters were quick to jump on the bandwagon, claiming that the article was proof positive that the proposed third runway was really needed.

What Are the Facts?

The AP article covered statistics for the months of January through May 2001. There were very serious delays, both in arrivals and departures, at Sea-Tac Airport in March 2001 & beyond because of the Nisqually earthquake, which wrecked the control tower and also did damage to runways. The AP article made no mention of the problems caused by the earthquake. Sea-Tac data for comparable months in earlier years do not show huge delays.

Non-Local Delays

The AP article was based on deviation from arrival times as published in airline schedules. However, most delays of flights coming into Sea-Tac are caused by circumstances at other airports earlier in the flight. Obviously, if a plane is delayed in leaving seriously congested airports in the East, such as O'Hare (Chicago), Logan (Boston), or LaGuardia (New York City), that delay has nothing to do with conditions at Sea-Tac. Problems with tiny, over-crowded LaGuardia account for about one quarter of all arrival delays in the U.S.A. (LaGuardia is on a campus even smaller than Sea-Tac's, and it has NO room to grow.)

In fact, significant arrival delays at Sea-Tac caused by local conditions (bad weather) normally affect only one flight in a hundred, as reported in May 2001 by a major FAA study. See companion article, "One in A Hundred" in adjoining column.

How Did the AP Get It So Wrong?

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), an obscure office in the U.S. Department of Transportation, collects reports each month from the scheduled airlines, in which they document how well or poorly they did in meeting their published schedules. Among other work, the BTS routinely prepares a tabulation from those reports, showing

arrival delays each month, airport by airport. For some unknown reason, an Associated Press reporter asked the BTS for the numbers for January through May. The BTS took the tables for each month, added up the numbers, and gave the reporter the result, a one-page tabulation. The AP did not ask for any explanation, nor did the BTS offer any. When our reporter inquired about the AP article, the BTS representative immediately volunteered that of course the Seattle delays were very high because of the Nisqually earthquake. The BTS knew, but the AP did not ask. Nor did the AP, or any local paper, check with RCAA, the Airport Communities Coalition, or any other reliable source, before distributing this grossly misleading article.

And, by the way, even with the earthquake, Sea-Tac was only number 2 for delays, not number 1, according to the BTS. The January and February reports from a big carrier at LaGuardia came in too late for inclusion in the five-month table that AP asked for. When those figures were included, LaGuardia remained, as usual, no. 1 for delay.

Why Is Delay an Issue?

Delayed arriving flights during bad weather have always been cited by the Port in the official planning documents as the only real justification for the runway project. Some time in the future, the Port says, such delays will become very great, very expensive for airlines. So, a runway should be built now, to be ready when those delays occur in a decade or so.

Clearly, there are some delays now in arriving at Sea-Tac. What causes them?

There are three main causes.

* The first is non-local delay—delay earlier in the flight, usually because of congestion in one of the eight really crowded airports elsewhere in the U.S. Other causes of delay en route are bad weather, or a passenger having to be removed from the plane, or equipment failure.

Blame the Airlines

* Second is intentional delay—the result of over-scheduling by air carriers. FAA's May 2001 Benchmark Study calls particular attention to this problem, which occurs at most busy U.S. airports. Too many planes are scheduled to arrive at about the same time during peak periods, in good weather and bad. Congestion is the inevi-

table result. The solution? Spread out the flights a bit. However, the carriers say that if they spend too much time talking with one another about co-ordinating their schedules, they face serious anti-trust problems. That may be, but they could just take a look at the other fellow's schedule & make changes accordingly. (See article, "Other Ways To Fix Delays" in adjoining column.)

*Third is bad weather here. No doubt, weather, especially fog, can be a problem. The Port claims that bad weather causes arrival delays here 44 percent of the time. Dr Stephen Hockaday of Pacific Aviation Consulting has examined the weather data for the Airport Communities Coalition. In a paper submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on 25 July, he writes, "The Port incorrectly asserts that poor weather occurs at Sea-Tac approximately 44% of the year, and by implication, that capacity problems occur for the same 44% of the year. . . . Weather data compiled by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) show that poor weather occurs 2.8% of the time during peak arrival demand periods. As a result, the benefits of the proposed runway are significantly overstated."

Is Building a Third Runway Necessary To Meet Future Delays?

There are two competing theories. The Port and the local FAA have argued that in the next few years there will be absolutely no significant improvements in flight control equipment. At the same time, they say, the number of flights will grow and grow, & the rigid FAA rules for instrument flights (bad weather) will simply not allow flight controllers to crowd in the aircraft fast enough. The Port assumes that airlines will continue to bunch their arrivals too close together, & that nothing can or should be done about that.

The other theory is that airlines will change their behavior, scheduling arrivals more sensibly, & that new flight-control equipment now in development will be in place in just a few years. With that new equipment, the FAA will allow more planes to arrive in the course of the day. This is the view of the FAA officials who prepared the Benchmark Study. As to Sea-Tac, they wrote, "The benchmarks describe an achievable level of performance for the given conditions . . ." (See 'One in A Hundred' for details.) Alaska Airlines already has hardware on its aircraft to use the Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) navigation system, which allows faster arrivals. The counterpart ground equipment is in place in some airports in Alaska – but not at Sea-Tac!

Dr Hockaday has also reviewed the travel data on behalf of the Airport Communities Coalition, & he concludes that "the Port delay estimates are serious overestimates". Even using the Port's estimates of future travel for the years out to 2020, "[d]elays to aircraft [without a third runway] will still be low, affect a small percentage of the aircraft, and keep Sea-Tac as a low delay airport in the national rankings. In short, a third runway will not be needed, even by 2020, according to Port data."

If you build it, will they come?

All projections of unending increases in air traffic have been negated by the large drop in trip numbers caused by the business slow-down. And now, as a result of the terrorist attacks of 11 September, passenger traffic world-wide has been reduced even further—at least temporarily. Some experts predict that traffic levels will not reach levels of last year until the far future. The cost of new security measures will be immense, driving ticket prices much higher. The higher the cost of travel, the fewer travellers. If there are fewer travellers, why expand an airport?

Better Security, Slower Arrivals

Paradoxically, counter-terrorism measures may reduce delay. Sea-Tac is considered to be a "hub" airport, with passengers coming in from smaller airports to catch flights to distant destinations, and returning home in the same way. Bob Crandall, a former chairman of American Airlines, is widely credited as having invented this pattern. *The Economist* in its issue of 22 September quoted Mr Crandall's views on the impact of tightened security requirements at hub airports: this will result in slower check-ins and transfers, which "will prevent the airlines from operating big waves of flights at peak times, because passengers will not be able to connect quickly enough". What the airlines have not done voluntarily will be compelled by new circumstances—spreading out arrival times. So, one delay factor will be cured.

As to congestion at other airports, there is nothing that Sea-Tac Airport can do about that. A new airport in upstate Illinois (Peotone) is in the planning and land-banking stage, & it could dramatically reduce problems for flights that stop at Chicago. By-passing Chicago would also help & there are reasons to suppose that the whole hub-spoke travel pattern may be replaced by direct city-to-city flights, even for intercontinental trips.

Take the Train, Save Time

Use of LaGuardia Airport needs to be re-examined. Problems there, at the other two New York City airports, & at Logan in Boston could be made unimportant if true high-speed rail were put in place on the Eastern seaboard, so that the huge number of people who usually travel by air between Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., could take the train—and arrive just as fast, or faster. In a companion article (see "What Now?" on p.1), we report on the implications for air travel from the world-wide business slow-down & the recent terrorist activity: a very real possibility is that air travel will remain at a low level for many years to come. In that case, the arrival delays at Sea-Tac will not reach the levels predicted by the Port planners, & the third runway would have no justification at all.



Other Ways To Fix Delays

What else can be done, besides building billion-dollar runways, to reduce air-travel delays?

Better Scheduling

Kenneth Meade, Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Transportation, urges airlines to reduce peak-period scheduling. Mr Meade, like the FAA, sees that passenger lines are scheduling too many flights for the same time. Mr Meade, testifying on 3 May before the transportation subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, said that efforts to improve technology, build runways, & develop new routes would simply not produce results soon enough to prevent serious delays at some major airports, so that schedule adjustments were urgently needed now.

At Sea-Tac, the Benchmarks Study shows heavy over-scheduling at some peak periods of the day, with marked under-utilization at other times. For example, only three planes are scheduled to arrive in one quarter-hour period at mid-day, while 18 are scheduled for the next quarter hour, which far exceeds the capacity of the airport. Slight changes in the scheduling could produce big benefits.

Better Gear

The FAA came up with another approach in June 2001, announcing a ten-year plan, the Operational Evolution Plan (OEP). OEP calls for large-scale improvements in technology. Pilot projects using these technological changes have proven their worth. FAA says this plan will reduce flight time, reduce taxi-wait times (aircraft waiting for clearance to depart), & increase capacity.

Blame the FAA

The FAA plan appears in part to be a response to an especially blistering report "Approaching Gridlock", issued in 2000 by the industry group Air Transport Association (ATA). ATA noted that the cost of delay to airlines "can equal or exceed yearly profits". ATA figured that in 1998 delays caused by the federal Air Traffic Control (ATC) system cost users \$5 billion, & substantially more than that in 1999. "The ATC system has not met the demands of its customers", said the ATA. Taxi-wait times were identified as a very severe issue.

The full text of the Benchmark Study is available on the Internet at

www.faa.gov/events/benchmarks/ while copies of the portions relevant to Sea-Tac may be obtained from the RCAA office.

Meet Your Neighbors—SCAA

The Seattle Commission on Airport Affairs (SCAA) is the first independent, permanent organization in Seattle dealing with community concerns about Sea-Tac Airport, Boeing Field, Renton Municipal Airport, helicopters, & float planes.

SCAA grew out of several different small groups, each dealing with one or two issues. Georgetown was worrying about possible expansion of Boeing Field. Magnolia residents, also hearing a lot of new BFI traffic, began talking with Georgetown residents, & a group, C-FAN, Citizens Fed up with Aircraft Noise, was created. C-FAN's leaders began to meet with neighbors in South-East Seattle who were experiencing a large number of new overflights, & were creating their own organization. Neighborhoods in Central Seattle and Beacon Hill were also feeling impacts from Sea-Tac and Boeing Field. From these elements grew SCAA, a neighborhood-based coalition with 16 member groups and individual members from many parts of Seattle. SCAA publishes a quarterly newsletter & a website. It is a Washington not-for-profit corporation, with 501(c)(3) status granted by the IRS.

SCAA actively, & successfully, opposed establishment of a seaplane base on Seattle's central waterfront. The group is deeply involved in monitoring expansion plans at Boeing Field & has brought appeals against piece-meal expansion before the County Hearing Examiner on several occasions. Throughout the Summer, SCAA has been promoting a resolution calling for a moratorium on Sea-Tac expansion until noise issues have been successfully addressed.

The SCAA Board of Directors meets at 7 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at the Jefferson Community Center, 3801 Beacon Ave. So., Seattle, and quarterly public meetings are held at the same location & time on the third Thursday of March, June, September, and December (usually). For more information, visit the SCAA website, www.airportnoise.org, or leave a message at 206.763.7222.

The SCAA Board & officers are:

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Debra Adler, Secretary

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Chas Talbot, Membership Secretary

Linda Boyle, Board Member

Jeff Douthwaite, Board Member

Gwen Rench, Board Member

Update:

CASE Appeals Modification of NPDES permit

Citizens Against Sea-Tac Expansion (C.A.S.E.) has appealed the State Department of Ecology's order modifying the pollution permit of Sea-Tac Airport. C.A.S.E. argues that DOE's NPDES modifications violate the law it is supposed to enforce. The hearing is pending before the Pollution Controls Hearings Board. The Board has denied the request by C.A.S.E. for a stay of the order pending a full hearing.

Fund-raising in support of the appeal continues. C.A.S.E. Board member Jim Bartlemay, who heads the fund drive, says, "We have had a very good response from the community. Donations continue to come in from our August mailing. We hope that members and friends will be sure to send in a check." Checks should be made payable to CASE, & may be mailed to the RCAA office, 19900 4th S.W., Normandy Park, Washington 98166-4043.

"The only 'reasonable assurance' that Ecology has about the Port's plans is that the Port is not violating its permit, and that's because the way Ecology has written the permit, it's just about impossible to violate it!"—CASE Attorney Rick Poulin

Websites to watch

For fast-breaking news on local airport issues, and for back-up documentation, check the following websites. Remember that these days you can access the Internet at almost any public library.

www.rcaanews.org — The official website of the Regional Airport Commission, and the first major airport-concern website in the U.S. A huge collection of background documents relating to Sea-Tac Airport in the "Library" section, & much other background material as well. Extensive links to other websites, including King County (which has a page for Boeing Field), the Port of Seattle, and the City of Renton (which has a page for Renton Municipal Airport). This site is especially strong on links to out-of-town airport groups, including US Citizens' Aviation Watch and the world-class site maintained by the neighbors of El Toro airport in Southern California. Some breaking news, but not as much as we would like. Back issues of this newsletter are archived here.

www.airportnoise.org — The official website of Seattle Council on Airport Affairs. Focused on Seattle issues.

www.geocities.com/bzdiving/ — Maintained by an RCAA Board member. Sharply focused on environmental issues in the area West of Sea-Tac Airport, principally Miller Creek; strong on photo

Noise Mitigation Takes A Backseat

For the immediate future, mitigation of airport-related noise will probably take a backseat to other airport problems, according to Vince Mestre, president of the noise consultancy Mestre Graves Associates, in a copyrighted article published in *Airport Noise Reports*, an independent weekly newsletter.

Mestre and other noise experts consulted by *Airport Noise Reports* agreed that it is too early to predict just how the terrorist attacks of 11 September will impact noise-mitigation work. At some airports, mitigation programs are in place, & moving forward on schedule. Elsewhere, funds & airport staff will be diverted to other, immediate needs — especially improved security. This is almost certain to be the case at Reagan National Airport, serving Washington, D.C.

Future noise-mitigation measures at Sea-Tac Airport are in a sort of limbo, pending action by the FAA on the recent Part 150 (noise mitigation) study. The Port Commission seeks FAA approval for several programs, the most expensive being about \$90 million worth of buy-outs of noise-impacted properties. The Port is also awaiting an FAA decision on the Port's request for approval of new Passenger Facility Charges to fund these programs. For a more detailed report on the Commission's actions, see article "Sea-Tac Noise Study Ends Quietly", in our Spring 2001 issue (vol. 6, no. 4), at p. 5. Back issues are posted on the RCAA website.

documentation. (Mr Fish is a diver and underwater photographer.)

www.thirdrunway.homestead.com/ — Maintained by another Highline-area resident, with an engineering background. Over the years, Ms Brown has written numerous position papers on various aspects of Sea-Tac Airport, & they are posted on her site. A site with an "edge".

<http://www.ci.des-moines.wa.us/> — City of Des Moines. This is where you find materials relating to Airport Communities Coalition.

<http://www.us-caw.org/> — US-Citizens Aviation Watch is a watchdog group with affiliates in many parts of the country.

<http://www.netvista.net/~hpb/law-page.html> — This site contains copies of laws pertaining to aviation noise.

<http://www.faa.gov/> — Federal Aviation Administration's official site.

<http://www.fican.org/> — Federal Interagency Committee on Noise. Develops new federal standards for noise.

*For the record —
Because of an editing error, our last issue (Summer 2001) was labelled volume 7, number 2. It actually was vol. 7, no. 1, & this issue (Fall 2001) is the real vol. 7, no. 2.*

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: 25 Sept. 2001.

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Continued from page 1 **ACC Appeals**
charge. Which is it? DOE didn't know when it issued the certification.

Most puzzling, in some instances DOE actually says that the project *will* violate water quality regulations, but issued the certification anyway.

This is a key environmental decision because the proposed third runway would sit atop of the headwaters of four different streams and the hydrology of the entire area is affected. The runway creates over 300 acres of new impermeable surface which collects stormwater, then dumps into a pipeline that goes into Lake Washington without treatment. The pipe is so big that just the leakage from it will affect the local hydrology. The Port plans to fill all or portions of 50 wetlands totaling 18 acres and permanently impact 12 more. During dry periods, the runway reduces the flow to the streams affecting wetlands. The Port provided its low-flow stream report just two weeks before certification was issued.

The ACC appeal includes a stunning affidavit from Tom Luster, previously DOE's senior policy and technical expert for issues related to Section 401 review, assigned to the third runway project. Luster points to repeated efforts by DOE during his review to get the information from the Port necessary to process the certification, and concludes: "many of the same problems that prompted Ecology to inform the Port it would have to deny the previous 401 application have still not been resolved."

RCAA President Larry Corvari commented, "Instead of following the science and the law, DOE appears to have discarded the scientist and ignored the law. Let's hope the Pollution Controls Hearings Board cares more about both."

See www.rcaanew.org/libr.htm for documents.

RCAA Needs You! *Your contributions and participation are vital.*

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

E-mail: _____ FAX: _____

____ Please send me _____ "No Third Runway" bumper strips. (*No contribution is required.*)

____ **I want to contribute \$** _____

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

Editorial: What Now?

The Board of Directors and supporters of RCAA are deeply grieved by the events of 11 September. We put all the blame on the terrorists & their supporters & those who directed the actual terrorists. Is there an anti-Nobel Prize? It should be awarded to the evil genius who thought of using civil passenger aircraft as weapons of mass destruction. This was not the fault of the FAA, or the airlines, or of civil aviation in general. Yes, security could have been better, but security can *always* be better—after the fact. Vulnerabilities have been exposed. Whatever the cost, they will be corrected.

The terrorist attack has forced everyone interested in aviation in the U.S. to think long and hard about our present situation. The public has learned that our commercial air carriers are very fragile businesses. The U.S. may have to re-think its air transportation system. Clearly, cities with only one airport are shown to be at risk of severe disruption of vital travel services. And cities with heavily-used air corridors overhead have learned that those noisy jets are also potential instruments of mass destruction, intentional or otherwise. Adjustments will take time, but they can be made.

For people in our part of the world, the message is somber. Many of our friends, relatives, & neighbors employed in the aviation business will suffer greatly. Thousands of jobs at Boeing will be lost, perhaps forever. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of airline employees in our area face furloughs—most of which have yet to be announced.

The price of air travel to & from Seattle will surely increase greatly, but we do not have adequate high-speed rail transportation to the rest of North America that can substitute for air travel.

Our readers no doubt wonder what we think the impact of this will be on the proposed Sea-Tac expansion. No one really knows. The Port has said it wants to continue, but expansion projects depend both on their cost/benefit justification & on the financial health of the airlines. Congress is busy bailing out the airlines at this point while looking at the tail-end of the disappearing budget surplus, as well as planning a potentially very expensive war. Costly new security measures will have to take priority, not just for passenger flights but also at numerous cargo facilities.

Airport expansion plans all over the U.S. are in trouble. We think those most likely to survive are projects with predictable costs, secure financing, high return on investment, & strong public support. The third runway meets none of these conditions. The third runway requires heroic, expensive engineering for marginal returns. The budget depends on voo-doo financing. There is continued strong opposition from the public. Elected officials are starting to smell the blood in the water. This project cannot survive careful scrutiny. This is an excellent time for the Port Commission to ask their too-ambitious staff those hard questions that have yet to be answered. Federal money for aviation programs will be diverted to safety & security for the foreseeable future. The Port has good reason to pull the plug, & now is the time to do it.

Port Commission Ponders Long-range Planning

On Thursday, 20 September, the Port Commission gave approval to an eight-week process for preparation of a long-range plan, covering both the Airport & the Marine Divisions, to be developed by the consultancy, McKinsey & Company.

The consultants will look 30 years into the future to suggest several different but possible scenarios, & then propose ways to adapt Port

business plans to the problems & opportunities suggested by each scenario, including possible new lines of business.

As Commissioners Jack Block and Pat Davis noted, the Port has never had a long-range plan. Absent from the proposal was any co-ordination with any other agency, such as Puget Sound Regional Council, the State Department of Transportation, or the FAA.

Truth in Aviation

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What Now?

On 18 July, the Reuters news agency reported that one of the biggest U.S. carriers, United, had revealed a loss of \$292 million in the second quarter of the year, with American Airlines reporting a loss of \$105 million for the same period. Reuters called the situation "the sharpest decline in two decades". US Airways and Northwest Airlines reported losses in the \$20 million range.

United appears to be a victim of a major miscalculation, taking delivery of new aircraft more than a year after business began sliding. (Contracts for purchases of new passenger planes typically have opt-out or escape clauses.)

Two other major carriers, Delta and Northwest reported losses a few days later.

Midway Airlines, which had been in bankruptcy organization for a good while, suspended operations entirely on 12 September, putting its 1700 employees out of work, & saying that it would no longer try to come out of bankruptcy reorganization.

US Airways and America West face an uncertain future, according to Richard Aboulafia, an aviation analyst, quoted in an Associated Press article. *Airwise News*, an Internet daily, reported on 25 September that US Airways will close down its super-low-cost Metrojet operation by December, in addition to having laid off 11,000 employees. Shuttle America is seeking protection from its creditors in bankruptcy court.

Ansett, of New Zealand, went bankrupt in very early September, with serious repercussions in Australia.

British Airways is feeling a huge drop-off in trans-Atlantic travel (its main profit center).

David Greising, writing in the *Chicago Tribune* on 21 September, summed up the fragility of the passenger-airlines business: an industry that was expected to lose \$3.5 billion next year had only \$10 billion in cash on hand.

Temporary business interruptions are a fact of life. Earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, strikes, fires, & other disasters happen all the time, & most businesses have the strength to carry on if operations are shut down for a few days. It is a shock to learn that the biggest airlines in the U.S. are so weak that a three-day closure puts them all at the front door of the bankruptcy court.

Implications for Sea-Tac

Borgan Anderson, manager of finance for the Port of Seattle's airport division, told the *Daily Journal of Commerce*, "There's a lot of uncertainty. It's too soon to say what changes we will make, but there's no question that if there is a fundamental shift in the level of [air] traffic, we will be altering our plans accordingly." He said the airport is "looking at all the projects, and we will be meeting with the airlines and trying to understand how the needs are changing. There may be some changes to certain projects."

Mr Anderson puts a very bright face on a dismal picture. The Airport either does not know how

much their projects will cost, or is afraid to reveal the bad news. The financial people have yet to publish a total list of all projects with up-to-date cost estimates. There have been no official updates on the third-runway numbers since June 1999, and this project alone has trebled in cost since it was first announced. The Port has yet to explain how its airline tenants, awash in red ink, will be able to provide their usual 40-plus percent share of construction projects, now estimated to cost \$7 to \$10 billion. The absence of any detailed reports on the master-lease negotiations is a strong hint that the airlines are resisting strongly. (See companion article, "Will Airlines Pay for Third Runway?" on p.2.)

RIPPLE EFFECTS FELT IN CANADA

The Canadian air system has been affected by the problems in the U.S. A pending \$4.4 (Cdn) billion dollar renovation of Pearson International Airport, which serves Toronto, Ontario, "may have its wings clipped", says the *Toronto Star*. The later phases of a major terminal reconstruction project at Canada's busiest airport may have to be abandoned.

Side effect: New, stricter security measures may drive up the price of illegal drugs in Canada — Pearson is the main gateway for drug smugglers into the country, with \$164 (Cdn) million in illegal drugs having been seized there in 2000.