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Metropedias & Features

Title: **Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Part 1 -- Founding**

Abstract: Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, or Sea-Tac as it commonly called, was developed as a direct response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Military needs limited civilian access to existing airports such as Seattle's Boeing Field and Tacoma's McChord Field, and the federal Civilian Aviation Authority sought a local government to undertake development of a new regional airport. The Port of Seattle accepted the challenge on March 2, 1942. After rejecting creation of a seaplane base on Lake Sammamish, the Port chose Bow Lake in southwest King County for the new airfield. Initial construction was completed in October 1944, but full civilian operation did not commence until dedication of a modern terminal building on July 9, 1949. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Part 2 -- From Props to Jets (1950-1970)**

Abstract: Seattle-Tacoma International Airport experienced dramatic growth between 1950 and 1970 as a result of new aircraft technologies, the increasing popularity and affordability of air travel, and the Puget Sound region's expanding economy and population. The advent of passenger jets in the late 1950s placed a strain on Sea-Tac's runways and facilities and led to a continuing series of improvements in response to ever faster and bigger aircraft. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Part 3 -- Boeing Bust to Deregulation (1970s)**

Abstract: The Port of Seattle built Seattle-Tacoma International Airport during World War II to relieve pressure on existing airports such as Seattle's Boeing Field. Following the war, Sea-Tac quickly established itself as the region's aviation hub, but it had to undertake major improvements to accommodate newer jet aircraft and steadily increasing numbers of passengers. During the early 1970s, the post-war climb in air travel suddenly stalled, triggering a national aerospace recession known locally as the Boeing Bust. Sea-Tac traffic ultimately recovered, leading the Port in the mid-1970s to pioneer the nation's most ambitious noise abatement program. Federal deregulation of airlines followed in 1978, sparking a revolution in air service and posing new challenges for the airport. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Part 4 -- Ascent and Dissent (1980-2003)**

Abstract: Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and its owner, the Port of Seattle, faced major challenges during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Foremost, their own successful investments and management, and the Puget Sound's growing prominence as a business and cultural center on the Pacific Rim, fueled steady growth in the numbers of aircraft, passengers, and cargo shipments passing through the airport. With these increases, the impacts of noise on airport neighbors and along flight paths became complex and expensive problems. While hailed as a national leader in its noise-mitigation efforts (detailed in a companion essay), Sea-Tac also faced stiffening criticism from neighboring residents, cities, and institutions, which set the stage for continuing battles over its plan to add a third runway to maintain capacity in the twenty-first century (detailed in a companion essay). Then came the terror of September 11, 2001, and an entirely new set of challenges and obligations. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's Third Runway Project -- A Snapshot History**

Abstract: The development of a third "dependent" runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, the state's largest airport, is one of the largest and most sensitive public works projects in regional history. The need for an additional runway for bad-weather operations was first recognized in 1988 when the Port of Seattle (which owns and operates the airport), the Federal Aviation Administration, and regional planners predicted that the airport could reach its maximum efficient capacity as early as 2000. The Puget Sound Regional Council and Port of Seattle launched a "Flight Plan" study in 1989 to determine how best to meet regional airport needs, and the Washington State Air Transportation Commission later examined the problem from a statewide perspective. After a public involvement program of unprecedented scale, regional planners ultimately concluded that development of a new regional airport and other alternatives were infeasible and that the addition of a third runway at Sea-Tac was the only viable solution to meeting regional air service needs. The Port formally launched the project in 1992, but encountered substantial opposition from cities and communities neighboring the airport, which won a two-year state moratorium on the runway and challenged necessary environmental permits. As a result, the runway's completion date has slipped from 2000 to 2008 at the earliest, and its cost has risen from a preliminary estimate of $430 million to $1.1 billion as of June 2003. **Full Text>>>**

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Title: **Port of Seattle forecasts Seattle-Tacoma International Airport could maximize capacity by 2000 in a study issued on December 28, 1988.**

Abstract: On December 28, 1988, the Port of Seattle publishes a "Comprehensive Planning Review and Airspace Update Study." This study concludes that the existing two runways at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport could reach "maximum efficient capacity" by the year 2000, giving impetus to the idea of constructing a third "dependent" runway. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **Port of Seattle and Puget Sound Council of Governments (now Puget Sound Regional Council) launch the Flight Plan study on May 23, 1989.**

Abstract: On May 23, 1989, the Port of Seattle Port of Seattle and Puget Sound Council of Governments (reorganized as the Puget Sound Regional Council in 1991) sign an Interagency Agreement to launch the “Flight Plan” study of future air service capacity needs and solutions, including the possible expansion of the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. The effort is guided by a 39-member Puget Sound Air Transportation Committee and leads to a controversial decision in 1992 to add a third “dependent” runway at Sea-Tac to maintain airport capacity during low visibility weather conditions. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **Washington State Legislature expands mandate of the Air Transportation Commission (AIRTRAC) and imposes moratorium on new runway development in March 1992.**

Abstract: In March 1992, the Washington State Legislature adopts the Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 2609. This bill further refines the task before the Washington State Air Transportation Commission (AIRTRAC), which had been established in June 1990 by Senate Bill 6408. AIRTRAC is directed to study the complicated air transportation issues facing the state, and to report to the Legislative Transportation Commission (LTC) and to the various Regional Transportation Planning Organizations throughout the Puget Sound region. ESHB 2609 also declares a moratorium on new runway development at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and at other western Washington airports, pending the committee’s findings. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **Puget Sound Air Transport Committee (PSATC) adopts final regional Flight Plan report endorsing construction of a third runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport plus supplemental facilities on June 17, 1992.**

Abstract: On June 17, 1992, after a two-and-one-half-year process of public discussion and technical analysis, dubbed “Flight Plan,” the Puget Sound Air Transportation Committee (PSATC) adopts its final report by a vote of 29 to 6. The PSATC recommends the addition of a third runway to the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, commercial use of Snohomish County's Paine Field and possibly Tacoma’s McChord Air Force Base, and development of a “supplemental airport” in Pierce or Thurston County to meet projected commercial airline service needs in the region through 2020. The special 39-member committee was established in late 1989 by the Port of Seattle and the Puget Sound Council of Governments (now Puget Sound Regional Council), and its plan laid the foundation for the construction of Sea-Tac’s third runway. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **Port of Seattle authorizes planning for new runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on November 3, 1992.**

Abstract: 
On November 3, 1992, the Seattle Port Commission approves Resolution 3125 to commence planning for a “third runway” at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. The action follows a three-year “Flight Plan” study and public discussion conducted by the Puget Sound Regional Council. The new runway is intended to maintain airport operations during inclement weather, but it generates criticism from neighboring cities opposed to Sea-Tac’s expansion. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **Puget Sound Regional Council adopts Resolution A-93-03, amending the Regional Air Service Plan for expansion of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and development of a major supplemental airport, on April 29, 1993.**

Abstract: On April 29, 1993, the Puget Sound Regional Council's General Assembly adopts Resolution A-93-03 amending the 1988 Regional Air Service Plan on the basis of a three-year "Flight Plan" study concluded in 1992. The Resolution declares that "... the region should pursue vigorously, as the preferred alternative, a major supplemental airport and a third runway at Sea-Tac," subject to additional Expert Arbitration Panel reviews. The motion passes with an 89 percent majority. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **The Puget Sound Regional Council Executive Board adopts Resolution EB-94-01, ending the search for a major supplemental airport site on October 27, 1994.**

Abstract: On October 27, 1994, the Puget Sound Regional Council Executive Board adopts Resolution EB-94-01, ending the search for a new airport site to supplement Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, which is owned and operated by the Port of Seattle. This action leaves the construction of a third runway at Sea-Tac as the Council's sole "preferred alternative" for meeting the region's projected air capacity needs through 2020. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **Federal Aviation Administration and Port of Seattle publish a Final Environmental Impact Statement for proposed Seattle-Tacoma International Airport improvements, including a third runway, on February 1, 1996.**

Abstract: On February 1, 1996, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Port of Seattle formally issue a seven-volume, 5,500-page Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for planned Seattle-Tacoma International Airport improvements, including a controversial third runway. The Environmental Impact Statement finds that the project is needed to meet future air travel needs and that all anticipated effects on the natural and social environment can be mitigated. This determination gives the Port of Seattle, Sea-Tac's operator, the green light to begin detailed planning and engineering and to apply for needed state and federal permits. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **Port of Seattle Commission passes Resolution 3212 adopting the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's Master Plan Update, including a third runway, and the Puget Sound Regional Council's A-96-02 enhanced noise criteria on August 1, 1996.**

Abstract: On August 1, 1996, Port of Seattle adopts Resolution 3212, adopting the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's Master Plan Update (MPU) and the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) Resolution A-96-02 noise criteria. These resolutions authorize detailed planning, property acquisition, and permit applications for construction of a third runway at Sea-Tac Airport. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **Port of Seattle adopts Resolution 3245, approving a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and permit applications for third runway construction at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on May 27, 1997.**

Abstract: On May 27, 1997, the Port of Seattle adopts Resolution 3245, approving the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement prepared by the Port and Federal Aviation Administration. The Resolution also authorizes construction of a third runway for Seattle-Tacoma International Airport pending approval of necessary permits. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **Washington State Department of Ecology issues a 401 permit to the Port of Seattle for proposed third runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on August 10, 2001.**

Abstract: On August 10, 2001, the Washington State Department of Ecology issues a 401 permit, which certifies compliance with Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act, to the Port of Seattle. This permit is a key step in the long process to allow construction of a third dependent runway for Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. The Airport Communities Coalition (ACC), a consortium of six communities surrounding the airport, quickly files an appeal. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **Washington State Pollution Control Hearings Board approves, with conditions, the 401 Water Quality Certification for Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's proposed third runway on August 12, 2002.**

Abstract: On August 12, 2002, the Washington State Pollution Control Hearings Board grants a 401 Water Quality Certification to the Port of Seattle for construction of a third runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. The certification imposes 16 additional conditions beyond those mandated in the original 401 permit issued by the Washington State Department of Ecology on August 10, 2001. The Hearings Board Certification, with its new conditions, is subsequently appealed on various grounds by the Port of Seattle, by the Department of Ecology, and by third-runway opponents. **Full Text>>>**

Title: **U. S. Army Corps of Engineers issues a 404 permit for filling wetlands in connection with Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's third runway on December 13, 2002.**

Abstract: On December 13, 2002, the United States Army Corps of Engineers issues to the Port of Seattle a 404 Permit to begin filling wetlands within the area designated for the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's third runway. The Port had halted processing of an earlier application after determining that more wetlands were potentially impacted by the project than originally estimated. **Full Text>>>**

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Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Part 1 -- Founding

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, or Sea-Tac as it commonly called, was developed as a direct response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Military needs limited civilian access to existing airports such as Seattle's Boeing Field and Tacoma's McChord Field, and the federal Civilian Aviation Authority sought a local government to undertake development of a new regional airport. The Port of Seattle accepted the challenge on March 2, 1942. After rejecting creation of a seaplane base on Lake Sammamish, the Port chose Bow Lake in southwest King County for the new airfield. Initial construction was completed in October 1944, but full civilian operation did not commence until dedication of a modern terminal building on July 9, 1949.

Use of seaplanes made Lake Sammamish an early favorite for new regional airport
Courtesy Boeing Archives

Seattle and Tacoma Port Commissioners broke ground for new airport on January 2, 1943

New Sea-Tac terminal opened on July 9, 1949

Early Seattle-Area Airports

Prior to World War I, just about any level grassy field or calm body of water could serve as an informal “airport” for the aircraft of the day. The first airplane to fly in Seattle was demonstrated by daredevil pilot Charles Hamilton (1881-1913) on March 11, 1910, at Georgetown’s Meadows Racetrack (near the present location of the Museum of Flight). Other early pilots such as Terah Mahoney and Herb Munter (1887-1970) flew floatplanes from Lake Washington or the mouth of the Duwamish River.

Young timber magnate William E. Boeing (1881-1956) took his first flight from Lake Washington on July 4, 1915. He chose the foot of Roanoke Street on Lake Union as the site for the Pacific Aero Club in 1916. There he and his partner, Navy Captain Conrad Westervelt built first aircraft, a pair of float planes dubbed the B&W. When America entered World War I in 1917, the Navy ordered an advanced version as a trainer

and thereby launched the Boeing Airplane Company. Boeing expanded production by converting his private Duwamish River boatyard (now the famed Plant I "Red Barn," which was relocated across the river to the Museum of Flight in the early 1980s) into an airplane factory.

In response to defense concerns during World War I, the Navy began scouting Puget Sound for a suitable site on which to establish an airfield, and chose Sand Point on Lake Washington. Army pilots also landed at Seattle's Jefferson Park municipal golf course during a War Bond drive. Military interest in aviation briefly vanished following the November 11, 1918, Armistice, and almost bankrupted the Boeing Company. New airplane orders ultimately arrived from the Army, prompting Boeing to build a primitive landing field next to his Red Barn factory.

Meanwhile in 1920, King County acquired the Sand Point site previously recommended by Navy surveyors in the expectation that the Navy would quickly take over development of an air station. This in fact took another six years, and the airfield, although useful for Boeing aircraft assembly and testing and for other aviators, became a financial albatross for the County and lost $2.5 million. Bryn Mar Airfield, now Renton Municipal Airport, on the south shore of Lake Washington, and Tacoma's Municipal (now McChord) Airfield were also developed in the 1920s. Pan American Airways later developed a seaplane terminal at Matthews Beach, just north of Sand Point.

In 1925, Congress passed the "Kelly Act" which authorized the Post Office to contract with private companies to carry airmail and paying passengers on fixed routes. This was the seed for the modern airline industry, and Boeing's Chicago-San Francisco airmail franchise was the basis of both its own future airliner development and United Air Lines.

The Navy's acquisition of Sand Point in 1926 created a new headache by displacing Boeing and other civilian pilots. William Boeing threatened to move his company, already the city's largest civilian employer, unless the County built a new airport that he could use. Seattle Mayor Bertha K. Landes called development of a public airfield one of the city's "most urgent and important problems," and Port of Seattle Commissioner George B. Lamping opined that port authorities were the best suited public agencies for the task

Sea-Tac Airport opening day ceremonies, July 9, 1949
Courtesy MOHAI (Neg. P-I 020340)

Ticket counter at new Sea-Tac terminal, 1949

(but his colleagues did not agree at the time).

In August 1927, the Seattle Chamber of Commerce recommended development of land south of Georgetown along the Duwamish, including the former Meadows Race Track where Seattleites had seen their first airplane. Charles Lindbergh visited soon after and endorsed development of the 147-acre tract, which was mostly owned by King County. County Commissioner Frank Paul balked at the use of public property for private industrial use, but he was overruled and Boeing Field (aka King County International Airport) was dedicated by its eponym on July 26, 1928. William Boeing, who had already begun building his adjacent Plant 2, said, “This is just about the happiest day of my life.”

War Clogs Existing Airfields

Even before December 7, 1941, construction of growing numbers of B-17 bombers was clogging Boeing Field. Following the Pearl Harbor attack, the military took control of it, Renton’s airport, and Tacoma's McChord Field. This spurred demands for a new airport to serve the greater Seattle area.

On January 6, 1942, the federal Civil Aviation Authority offered $1 million to any local government that would undertake the task of building a new regional airport. After much political hand wringing, the Port of Seattle rose to the challenge.

On February 25, 1942, Port Commission chair Horace Chapman (1871-1950) declared that building the airport "is our duty, and if we can do it, we will." The Chamber of Commerce pledged its support at a mass meeting on March 2, and the Port Commission formally voted to accept the job five days later.

The early favorite for the new airport's location was Lake Sammamish. Seaplanes still dominated commercial Pacific and Alaskan airline routes. The lake offered an attractive base away from busy urban waterways, but its proximity to the Cascades posed serious safety concerns. The other candidate was a tract of rough scrubland at Bow Lake, approximately midway between Seattle and Tacoma on Highway 99. It was the site of a small private airfield, developed by Dean Spencer and George Wolf in 1940. Planners thought it would be

Philip G. Johnson (1891-1944), Boeing executive
Courtesy Boeing Archives

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relatively fog-free -- despite public warnings that it was, in the words of a neighbor, "one of the foggiest places in the whole state." Tacoma and Pierce County tipped the balance by offering $100,000 to help build the airport at Bow Lake. Given that the field ended up costing more than $4 million, that proved to be quite a bargain.

A New Nest at Bow Lake

The Port of Seattle approved the Bow Lake site on March 30, 1942. Planners surveyed 906.9 acres roughly bounded by South 188th Street on the south, Des Moines Memorial Way on the west, South 160th Street on the north, and Highway 99 on the east. The Port spent $637,019 to acquire the site from 264 individual owners.

The Civil Aviation Authority took charge of actual construction. Crews led by Ray Bishop began detailed surveys on April 18, 1942, for north-south and east-west runways forming a “T” connected by an “X” of taxiways. Surveyors encountered coyotes, deer, an Army machine gun nest, and at least one pair of young lovers while laying out the future airport and taking samples of its sandy soil. The condition of the ground pushed construction bids up to $1.7 million, far over initial estimates. The California-based firms of Minnis & Moody, Vista Construction and Finance, and Johnson, Inc. won the final contract and their crews were on the site by Christmas Eve.

Ground was broken on January 2, 1943, by dignitaries including Governor Arthur Langlie, Congressman (soon to become Senator) Warren G. Magnuson, Seattle Port Commission president Horace Chapman, and Tacoma Port Commission President Fred Marvin. Actual construction proved much harder than turning the ceremonial shovels of earth and ultimately required the excavation of 6.5 million cubic yards of earth to establish a level plateau. When this was finally done, the workers laid 14 miles of pipes and six miles of electrical cable, and Seattle’s Fiorito Brothers poured 450,000 cubic yards of concrete for the runways.

Shortly before the airport’s completion, Boeing president Philip Johnson died of a cerebral hemorrhage on September 14, 1944. The Seattle Port Commission proposed renaming the new field in his memory, but quickly retreated in the face of Tacoma’s strenuous objections. Costs had risen to

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$4,235,000 by the time the new Seattle-Tacoma Airport was dedicated with ceremonial landing by United Air Lines DC-3 on October 31, 1944.

On May 31, 1945, a Northwest Airlines DC-3 inaugurated transcontinental service when it departed Sea-Tac for New York City. On July 17, Pan Am signed the first lease to build an airline terminal and hangar at Sea-Tac, but this would have to wait. The Army Air Force had taken control of the new Seattle-Tacoma Airport for transshipment of B-29 bombers, two of which would drop the atomic bombs that ended World War II in August 1945.

Significant commercial use did not begin until 1946, and passengers had to use a Quonset hut, called “The Pantry,” heated by a single potbellied stove. Port planners recognized that such primitive accommodations would have to be replaced quickly to meet the anticipated post-war surge in air travel. The Port placed a $3 million bond issue on the November 5, 1946, ballot for a new administration building and terminal. Although the bonds won a sizable majority, insufficient voters turned out to validate the election, and the Port had to apply its reserves to the terminal project.

On January 8, 1947, Sea-Tac experienced its first crash when a Pan Am DC-3 overshot the runway, shaking up but not injuring its 17 passengers. A second crash turned out less happily on November 30, 1947. An Alaska Airlines DC-4 charter came in too fast and bounced through buffer lands into the middle of Des Moines Way, and struck a car. The driver survived but not a blind woman riding with him, along with a flight attendant (stewardess) and six passengers on the plane. The pilot, copilot, and 19 passengers made it out alive.

Meanwhile in 1947, Northwest Airlines and Western Airlines inaugurated the new airport’s first scheduled flights on September 1. One month later, Colonel Earle S. Bigler, a native Kansan who had headed the Chamber of Commerce’s aviation efforts during World War II, took command of Sea-Tac for the Port.

Bigler coordinated design of the new administration building by Herman A. Moldenhour (1880-1976) and Port of Seattle architects. The building was constructed by Lease-Leighland, while Northwest Airlines built a new hangar to service its new “Oriental” runs to the Far East.

Upon completion, the gleaming white building and its soaring control tower and airy, glass-walled concourses were hailed as the state of the art for airport design. Thirty thousand attended the terminal's dedication on July 9, 1949, dubbed "Conqueror's Day." They watched Boeing president William Allen present Northwest Airlines with its first Model 377 Stratocruiser and gawked at the squadrons of military jets and bombers that roared overhead. Governor Arthur Langlie (1900-1966) warned the eagles and the skylarks to move over for "we, too, have won our place in the firmament of heaven."

Sea-Tac officially became the Seattle-Tacoma *International* Airport on that day. The federal government, Port of Seattle, and airlines had by then invested $11 million in the facility, which remains Puget Sound's aviation gateway to the world.

Sources:

King County Board of Commissioners Resolution 2220, October 26, 1926; King County Board of Commissioners Resolution 2658, August 3, 1927; *The Seattle Times*, March 11-13, 1910; August 24, 1924; January 7 and March 8, 1942; January 3, 1943; October 31, 1944; July 17, 1945; November 14, 1946; October 8 and December 1, 1947; *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, January 18, February 25 and 26, and March 14, 1942; September 16, 1944; June 1, 1945; January 9, 1947; July 10, 1949; *Seattle Star*, February 25, April 2, and March 30, 1942; Minutes of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce Airport Subcommittee, February 18, 1942 (typescript, Port of Seattle archives); Ray Bishop and Chet Clausen, "Seattle-Tacoma International Airport History, 1942-1962" (typescript, 1975, Port of Seattle archives); J. K. King and V. A. Breindl, "Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and Its Impact upon the Economy of Puget Sound" (typescript report, 1962, Port of Seattle archives); Harold Mansfield, *Vision: The Story of Boeing* (New York: Popular Press, 1966); Robert Serling, *Legend & Legacy: The Story of Boeing and Its People* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Richard C. Berner, *Seattle in the Twentieth Century, Vol. 2* (Seattle: Charles Press, 1992); Padraic Burke et al., *Pioneers and Partnerships: A History of the Port of Seattle* (Seattle: Port of Seattle, 1995): Paul Dorpat and Genevieve McCoy, *Building Washington: A History of Washington State Public Works* (Seattle: Tartu Publications, 1998).

By Walt Crowley, June 23, 2003

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Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Part 2 -- From Props to Jets (1950-1970)

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport experienced dramatic growth between 1950 and 1970 as a result of new aircraft technologies, the increasing popularity and affordability of air travel, and the Puget Sound region's expanding economy and population. The advent of passenger jets in the late 1950s placed a strain on Sea-Tac's runways and facilities and led to a continuing series of improvements in response to ever faster and bigger aircraft.

Sea-Tac Airport brochure, 1956
Courtesy Port of Seattle

Taking Wing

The Port of Seattle agreed to develop Seattle-Tacoma International Airport in 1942 to help relieve pressure on existing airports, notably Seattle's Boeing Field and Tacoma's McChord Field, during World War II. The original runways were completed in 1944 and significant civilian operations began in 1946. The first permanent Administration Building and terminal opened in 1949 under the direction of Earl Bigler.

Northwest Airlines hangar and Douglas DC-4 at Sea-Tac Airport, 1948
Courtesy MOHAI (Neg. 83.10.16,871)

Northwest Airlines and United Air Lines were the first airlines to set up shop at the new airport, and Western Airlines, Alaska Airlines, and Pan American Airways operated frequent flights through Sea-Tac, although through 1949 most scheduled service remained based at Boeing Field. In 1950, Sea-Tac's first full year of operation, more than half a million passengers -- 86 percent of all Seattle-area commercial air traffic -- and 6,234 tons of air freight passed through its gates.


Sea-Tac Airport, 1950s
Postcard

This volume of traffic, and the introduction of faster and larger aircraft such as the four-engine DC-6, quickly strained the capacity of the main north-south runway. The strip was extended to 7,500 feet in 1950 and resurfaced two years later

at a total cost of $900,000. Meanwhile, traffic soared with the arrival of Trans-Canada Airlines on August 1, 1951, followed by Alaska Airlines, when it won federal approval for scheduled operations later that same month.

Flying Tiger Line, many of whose pilots had “flown the hump” ferrying troops and war material over the Himalayas, began regular airfreight service to and from Sea-Tac in 1952. Pan Am and Western airlines permanently shifted over from Boeing Field the following year, followed by Pacific Northern Airlines. Sea-Tac was finally “taking off.”


Waiting room, Sea-Tac Airport, 1950s
Postcard

Overtaken by Jets

In the early 1950s, Douglas Aircraft supplied the mainstays for these and most other U.S. airlines, including the durable DC-3, the four-engine DC-4, the newer DC-6 with a pressurized cabin, and later, the luxurious, high-speed DC-7. Lockheed’s Constellation and Boeing’s 377 Stratocruiser remained popular with passengers on long flights, but these planes were really updates of decade-old designs. The next leap forward in aircraft size and speed would require a new kind of power plant.

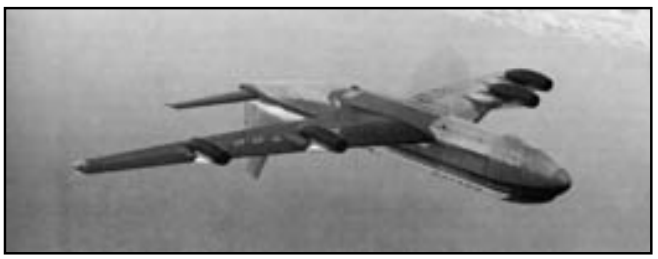

Northwest Airlines Constellation airliner at Sea-Tac Airport, 1950s
Postcard

The first jet engines were developed in the 1930s, and German engineers developed advanced jet aircraft designs during World War II. Much of this data became available to U.S. airplane makers after the war and aided Boeing engineers in creating jet bombers such as the B-47 and B-52. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, Britain’s de Haviland company rolled out the world’s first passenger jetliner, the Comet, in 1949.

Although the Comet was plagued by accidents, it raised the ante in passenger aircraft design. As Boeing delivered the last of its propeller-driven Stratocruisers in 1950, it began exploring designs for a jet-powered aerial tanker (ultimately the KC-135) and recognized that the same principles could be applied to a passenger jetliner. Boeing invested $16 million of its own funds in the prototype Model 367-80, or “Dash-80,” which flew for the first time on July 15, 1954, from Boeing Field. From this design would follow Boeing’s popular 707 and 720 jetliners, but Sea-Tac’s runways were as yet too short to accommodate them.


DC-6 in flight
Courtesy Boeing Historical Archive

In the year of the Dash-80’s first flight, the number of


Boeing Dash-80

passengers annually using Sea-Tac nudged past the one million mark. Port planners knew that air travel was poised for explosive growth with the coming of jets. The 707 was soon joined by the DC-8 and the Convair 880, and these new planes were not only faster than their piston antecedents, they were much larger. This meant longer landing and takeoff rolls, more frequent flights on major routes, and more passengers and luggage to handle per departure and arrival. Sea-Tac would have to scramble to be ready for the revolution launched in its backyard.

Fair Weather

The Port bought an additional 80 acres north of the airport so that the main runway could be extended by 1,000 feet to handle jets. A parking lot was added for 500 more cars and a new Air Cargo Terminal was built. The longer strip permitted the Dash-80 to pay its first call at Sea-Tac on September 27, 1956, but planners decided that further expansion was needed. Another 170 acres were acquired on the north and the Post Office built a new airmail center in 1957. A new northern wing was added to the terminal and parking was expanded for another 500 cars.

The main runway was extended and state-of-the-art "strobeacon" lights and ground-control radar were installed to improve safety. The Port also established the airport's first professional fire department, taking over responsibility from airlines and local volunteers. Construction was done in time for the airport's first regular jet service, inaugurated on October 3, 1959, when a Pan Am 707 took off for Honolulu. That same year, Japan Airlines became the first Asian-flag airline to operate at Sea-Tac when its DC-7 Supercourier arrived from Toyko on June 28.

Sea-Tac still wasn't big enough in 1960 as Donald Shay succeeded his boss, Earl Bigler, as the Port's director of aviation. On March 30, 1960, the Port Commission authorized funds to lengthen the main runway southward by yet another 1,700 feet, which required the grading of two million cubic yards of earth and a bridge over S 188th Street, the airport's original boundary. The terminal also grew. With a new Concourse D and an expanded Concourse A, parking doubled to accommodate more than 2,000 cars, and the air cargo center was enlarged.

Courtesy Boeing Historical Archive

Sea-Tac Airport window decal, 1950s

Workers rushed to finish these improvements by late 1961 so that the airport would be ready for visitors to Seattle's "Century 21" world's fair the following year. The fair's lure helped to boost Sea-Tac's total passenger traffic to two million in 1962 -- a jump of nearly 400,000 over the previous year.

By the time the world's fair ended, the Port, its airline tenants, and the federal government had invested a total of $28 million in Sea-Tac's development and operation to date. The first analysis of Sea-Tac's economic benefits in 1962 revealed that the airport and its tenants generated an annual payroll of $40 million for 6,000 workers. In all, airport-related activities supported $133 million in regional business and 30,000 local residents.

The Next Wave

The popularity of the 707 and its imitators launched a dramatic expansion in air travel, but these four-engine jets were limited to large metropolitan airports. Despite the success of smaller four-engine jets, notably the Boeing 720, propellers still ruled the shorter routes. This began to change in the mid-1960s with the introduction of smaller "regional" jetliners such as the triple-engine Boeing 727.

Thanks in large part to the 727, passenger traffic through Sea-Tac more than doubled during the 1960s. The number of airliner "operations" (landings and takeoffs) also rebounded, having dropped to fewer than 50,000 in 1961 as jets replaced smaller prop liners on major routes. Jet service took another giant leap on September 1, 1966, when Scandinavian Airways System started flying DC-8s non-stop "over the pole" between Sea-Tac to Copenhagen. This pioneering route helped to dramatize Sea-Tac's unique position as the only major U.S. airport located midway between Europe and Asia, being almost precisely the same distance by air from London as it is from Toyko.

This position made Sea-Tac a natural base for the next generation of jets already on the drawing boards: supersonic transports. Speed and capacity were still the driving forces behind aircraft design (fuel efficiency and other operational economies would come later), so the idea of a large supersonic transport (SST) seemed the logical next step beyond the 707 and its cousins. Construction of such a plane

Chevron Map for the 1962 Seattle World's Fair
Courtesy Chevron


Boeing 737
Courtesy The Boeing Company

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became a matter of national pride. France and Great Britain joined forces to design the Concorde while the Soviet Union rushed development of its Tu-144. In the U.S., government and airline planners forecast that a fleet of 300 SSTs would be needed in the 1970s. Because of the scale and cost of the project, the federal government pledged to subsidize development of the two prototypes.

Boeing won the nod to design America's supersonic jetliner in 1966. As its designers toiled in Seattle, the national SST project drew increasing scrutiny from Congressional critics of federal "boondoggles" and from leaders of the new environmental movement, who worried that dozens of daily supersonic flights might damage the ozone layer and pollute the stratosphere. Closer to earth, residents of metropolitan areas fretted about the impact of dozens of daily "sonic booms" as SSTs roared overhead. The noise of conventional jets was already becoming an issue, especially for neighbors of airports such as Sea-Tac, whose own success had seeded nearby development.

Boeing's other big project -- emphasis on "big" -- in the mid-1960s was the 747. Its development was closely related to the SST in that some airline executives, notably at Pan Am, calculated that long-haul passengers would opt for supersonics, and that intercontinental subsonic planes would be needed chiefly for cargo. This was something of an irony, since Boeing had lost the contract to build the Air Force's huge C-5A transport, and it had always seen the 747 as a passenger jet. Pan Am and Boeing compromised on a giant convertible passenger-cargo design that the press immediately dubbed the "jumbo jet." Its development and production required a corresponding "jumbo plant" at Everett's Paine Field, north of Seattle, a structure that to this day reigns as the world's largest building by volume.

At the other end of the aircraft scale, Douglas launched development of its small DC-9 jet, powered by two engines mounted on the tail. Boeing responded with the 737, which carried its two engines tucked under the wings. After a slow start, beginning with its maiden flight on April 9, 1967, the 737 went on to become the best-selling jet transport in history.

New generations of jets were now poised to take over most of the work of air travel, rendering Sea-Tac's improvements for

707-class aircraft outdated after fewer than 10 years of service. Port planners recognized that it was time to catch up again, and fast.

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By Walt Crowley, August 13, 2003
Tesearch by Alyssa Burrows, Paula Becker, and Daryl McClary

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Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Part 3 -- Boeing Bust to Deregulation (1970s)

The Port of Seattle built Seattle-Tacoma International Airport during World War II to relieve pressure on existing airports such as Seattle's Boeing Field. Following the war, Sea-Tac quickly established itself as the region's aviation hub, but it had to undertake major improvements to accommodate newer jet aircraft and steadily increasing numbers of passengers. During the early 1970s, the post-war climb in air travel suddenly stalled, triggering a national aerospace recession known locally as the Boeing Bust. Sea-Tac traffic ultimately recovered, leading the Port in the mid-1970s to pioneer the nation's most ambitious noise abatement program. Federal deregulation of airlines followed in 1978, sparking a revolution in air service and posing new challenges for the airport.

Boeing 747 in flight
Courtesy the Boeing Company

Final Boeing SST mockup, which was scrapped in 1971
Courtesy Boeing

Will the Last Person Leaving Seattle... billboard, 1971

Clean Air Turbulence

In the late 1960s, the Port of Seattle found itself standing at the intersection of three converging aviation revolutions -- SSTs, jumbo jets, and short-haul jets -- with an airport that could not handle the needs of the larger planes nor the higher volumes of jet operations (take offs and landings) anticipated in the near future. Passenger traffic had already doubled between 1962 and 1966, and the arrival of Braniff, Eastern, Hughes Air West, Continental, and Pacific Western airlines would bring the number of Sea-Tac's regular carriers to an even dozen by 1970. Planners predicted that Sea-Tac would reach its maximum capacity a decade ahead of schedule.

This time, the Port vowed not only to pull even with but to leap ahead of the accelerating pace of airline travel. In October 1967, the Port announced a $44 million expansion program, including construction of a second north-south runway set 800 feet west of and parallel to the main runway.

By the time ground was broken for this a year later, the cost of airport improvements had risen to $90 million. They would continue to climb as lead architects and engineers at TRA, Inc., and the Port set about re-inventing every aspect of Sea-Tac.

The final plan encased the old terminal inside a dramatic new structure featuring auto access via an upper driveway for arrivals and a lower level for baggage collection and departures. Sky bridges connected the main terminal to the first phase of a multi-deck parking garage for 4,800 vehicles (and a maximum potential capacity of 9,200). This in turn was linked by an internal highway system and new feeder roads to offer the first direct access to Interstate-5.

The terminal itself was expanded to 35 passenger gates with the extension of Concourse C. Satellite terminals were added north and south of the main building, which passengers reached via a pair of subway loops equipped with driverless automatic shuttle trains. Other improvements included new facilities for fuel, air cargo, and aircraft maintenance. Sea-Tac also commissioned an unprecedented $300,000 worth of new works of art to adorn the terminal, supplemented by exhibits borrowed from regional museums. Financed through a combination of Port bonds, chiefly underwritten by airline landing fees and leases, federal grants, and airline investments, the project was well under way by late 1969.

Then the bottom dropped out.

The Boeing Bust

There were no “stall warnings” for the aerospace recession, and no one realized what was happening until it was too late. Passenger traffic had ballooned as travelers switched to air from trains and transoceanic ships. This conversion was already spent by the late 1960s, but airlines still clamored for giant new planes to handle the extrapolated growth. To meet this theoretical demand, Boeing gambled its net worth on the new 747, which first flew on February 9, 1969. McDonnell-Douglas (created by a 1967 merger) and Lockheed also pushed development of larger “wide-body” aircraft, respectively the DC-10 and L-1011, each of which featured two engines beneath the wings and a third installed in the tail.

Then, inflated airline forecasts collided with inflated prices

Courtesy The Seattle Times

A BULLETIN FROM THE F.B.I.

Following is an artist's conception of the hijacker who extorted $200,000 from Northwest Airlines on November 24, 1971.

THIS MAN IS DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

Race	White
Sex	Male
Age	Mid 40's
Height	5' 10" to 6'
Weight	170 to 180 pounds
Build	Average to well built
Complexion	Olive, Latin appearance, medium smooth
Hair	Dark brown or black, normal style, parted on left, combed back; sideburns, low ear level
Eyes	Possibly brown. During latter part of flight put on dark, wrap-around sunglasses with dark rims
Voice	Low, spoke intelligently; no particular accent, possibly from Midwest section of U.S.
Characteristics	Heavy smoker of Raleigh filter tip cigarettes
Wearing Apparel	Black suit; white shirt; narrow black tie; black dress suit; black rain-type overcoat or dark top coat; dark briefcase or attache case; carried paper bag 4" x 12" x 14"; brown shoes.

If you have any information which might lead to the identity of this individual, please contact the nearest FBI Office which would be found in the front of your telephone directory.

FBI bulletin showing artist's conception of skyjacker "Dan Cooper"
Courtesy Federal Bureau of Investigation

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driven up by the mounting costs of the war in Vietnam, Great Society programs, and decades of complacency in the aerospace industry itself. Air travel plummeted, and airlines tightened their financial seat belts. Boeing was caught in the wind shear, having staked $750 million -- virtually its net worth -- on the 747, which proved too big in a market that was suddenly too small.

The SST also hit rough air as Congress balked at its rising costs and potential noise and environmental impacts. The project was officially cancelled on March 24, 1971, and Boeing laid off 7,000 workers on that day. During the ensuing two-year “Boeing Bust,” the company laid off more than 60,000 employees, went a billion dollars into the red, and sent the regional economy into a tailspin. On April Fool’s Day 1971, a pair of local realtors satirized the mood of doom and gloom by posting a billboard sign near Sea-Tac that asked, “Will the last person leaving Seattle turn out the lights?” Nobody laughed.

Through it all, the Port kept rebuilding and expanding Sea-Tac according to its 1968 plan. The schedule survived angry protests from African-American contractors and construction workers who felt excluded from the project (this was quickly remedied through stronger affirmative action policies). The cost of airport expansion had risen to $175 million by 1973, driven in large part by the hyperinflation of the period. Despite these challenges, The Port unveiled its new terminals in July to general praise, and traffic rebounded to 5.2 million passengers that year.

Unfriendly Skies

Amid the political turmoil of the late 1960s, “skyjackings” and terrorist acts involving passenger aircraft began to surge. Sea-Tac would make headlines with one such incident on the stormy night of November 24, 1971.

A passenger listed as “Dan Cooper” -- later incorrectly but permanently dubbed “D.B. Cooper” -- boarded a Northwest Orient 727 at Portland, Oregon, for the Thanksgiving eve flight to Seattle. He passed a note to a flight attendant informing her that he had a bomb in his brief case that he would set off unless his demands were met. These consisted of four parachutes and $200,000 in twenties, which were put on the plane at Sea-Tac. The plane took off again for Mexico,

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and the skyjacker leapt from its rear passenger stairway over southern Washington. He was never heard from again, although some of his loot turned up 19 years later along the banks of the Columbia River.

Thanks to this and other incidents around the world, federal law mandated tighter security for airports in 1972 and the Port responded by establishing a professional police force for Sea-Tac. The following year, Sea-Tac more than doubled its police force to 83 officers while airlines installed and staffed X-ray and metal detector checks at departure gates. Flying lost its innocence long before the horrors of September 11, 2001.

Total airline operations dipped by nearly 9 percent in 1970 from a peak of nearly 166,000 landings and takeoffs the previous year, and then began a slow climb back. Total numbers disguised the growth in airliner operations, which set a record of 115,445 in 1973 while “general” aviation activity by small private aircraft leveled off at around 23,000 annual operations. This steady increase in airline traffic was all the more remarkable because it absorbed the decline of military passengers with the phasing out of American involvement in Vietnam and, later, the shock of the OPEC oil embargo in 1973.

Noise Becomes an Issue

Some of the people living closest to Sea-Tac did not celebrate the airport’s renewed activity. In fall 1971, a number of nearby residents organized “The Zone Three Committee,” named for the FAA-designated area stretching six miles north and south of Sea-Tac in which aircraft noise reached its highest levels. Nearly 7,000 area residents signed a petition demanding that the Port buy out the 2,000-plus households within Zone Three to establish a buffer zone.

Other residents sued the Port for lost property value, cracked windows and plaster, and frayed nerves. The Port had paid out $1.2 million by 1973, and 300 individual suits were still in the courts. They were joined by the Highline School District, which claimed that airport noise had caused $10.7 million in damages to school facilities and operations. Clearly, a comprehensive solution was needed.

With the active support and funding of the FAA, the Port

joined with the government of King County to launch the "Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and Vicinity Master Plan Project." Work began in January 1973 and took 18 months and more than $650,000 to prepare what became known as the "Sea-Tac Communities Plan" to address not only noise, but broader airport impacts on traffic, water and air quality, and land use patterns.

With adoption of the Sea-Tac Communities Plan in 1976, the Port became the first airport operator in the nation to establish a noise buffer around its facility by purchasing hundreds of homes as well as school buildings, and, later, by sound-proofing hundreds more. These innovations were honored with the American Institute of Planners' Meritorious Program Award in 1978. The Port's development of a public park on 420 acres of vacated land north of the airport later won the Federal Aviation Administration's Aviation Environment Award. (See companion essay on Sea-Tac's noise abatement efforts for more detail.)

While the Plan could not satisfy every airport critic, it provided a blueprint to guide the airport's development impacts through the balance of the twentieth century, during which traffic at Sea-Tac was expected to quadruple to 20 million annual passengers. This prospect was good news for the sizable business district of office buildings, restaurants, and hotels housing more than 2,000 guest rooms that had sprung up around the airport. Most were concentrated along "the strip" of Pacific Highway South (U.S. 99) bordering the airport on the east (renamed International Boulevard by the City of SeaTac after its incorporation in 1990). Airport-related consumer spending reached nearly $40 million annually by the early 1970s. The airlines themselves spent more that $300 million a year at Sea-Tac and supported an airport workforce of more than 7,000 persons.

Free Fall

The "Era of Deregulation" is usually associated with President Ronald Reagan, but the most dramatic reforms were actually undertaken by his predecessor, Jimmy Carter. During his single term, Carter loosened the federal reins on interstate trucking and banking as well as on the airlines. The latter action was approved by Congress in 1978 at the strong urging of the airline industry, which was trying to absorb massive increases in fuel prices -- which skyrocketed by 1000 percent

in 1974 alone -- and to cope with economic “stagflation” while fending off stiffening competition from foreign-flag carriers on international routes.

The direct effect of deregulation was to allow airlines to establish their own domestic routes as they chose (international routes still required federal approval) and set their own fares. The Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 also released them from requirements to serve smaller, unprofitable destinations. The theory was that greater competition would help erase the legacy of inefficient practices accumulated over 65 years of federal protection and that it would deliver lower prices to consumers.

Few airlines, however, were prepared for the bare-knuckle combat of unrefereed competition that followed. It didn’t help that a national recession coincided with the first years of deregulation.

Fare wars broke out on major routes, sometimes pushing prices to “loss-leader” lows, as older airlines tried to protect their market share from start-up lines that were not saddled with their debts and institutional traditions. At the same time, fares for travel to more remote destinations shot out of sight, and smaller cities faced the prospect of losing most or all of their accustomed air service.

The squeeze on operating costs was felt first and most by airline workers -- mechanics, attendants, pilots, and office staf- - who saw decades of union protection and good wages evaporate in “give-back” contracts. Airplane builders were similarly unprepared. Boeing had already committed itself to a pair of new twin-engine planes, the narrow-body 757 and a wide-body 767, as fuel-efficient replacements for aging 707s on traditional routes, but with deregulation there was no longer such a thing as a traditional route. The timing of the two planes’ first flights in 1981 and 1982 could not have been worse, but the aircraft later redeemed themselves by proving the safety of large twin-engine jets on long flights over the ocean.

After deregulation, airlines shifted to “hub and spoke” arrangements in which smaller aircraft fed into major airports, connected in turn by service with high-capacity planes. Boeing’s 737 and 747 proved to be perfect work mates in this system. Feeder routes also gave McDonnell-Douglas an

expanded market for the DC-9 and its MD-80 descendants. Both it and Lockheed ended production of their wide-body jets in the early 1980s, while the European Airbus consortium entered the field with a brand new family of advanced, fuel-efficient aircraft.

But it was the airlines themselves that endured the roughest ride. Before deregulation, America was served by 36 airlines; by 1984 there were 120. In between, 117 airlines filed for bankruptcy -- some more than once -- and aviation mainstays such as Pan Am, TWA, and Eastern were humbled or driven into extinction.

The effects of this aerial combat were felt on the ground at Sea-Tac. Passenger traffic had risen to 9.8 million by 1979. The following year, it plummeted by 600,000, and sank even lower in 1981. Airport director Don Shay wisely chose this year to retire. He had worked at Sea-Tac since the days of the first airline service in 1947, but the industry that he and his airport had grown up with was no longer recognizable.

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By Walt Crowley, June 24, 2003
Research by Alyssa Burrows, Paula Becker, and Daryl McClary

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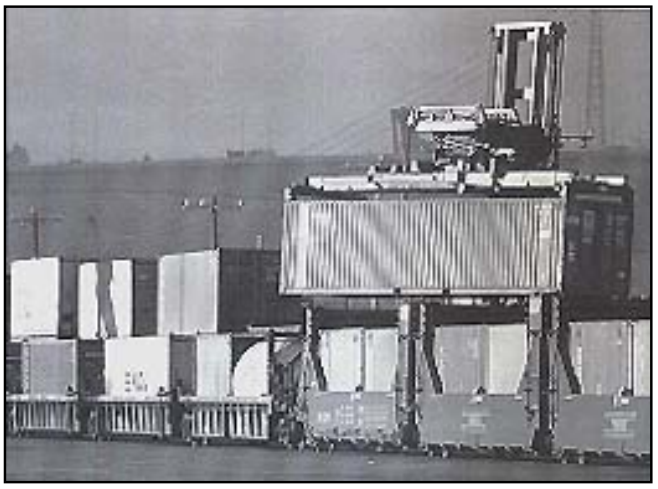
Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Part 4 -- Ascent and Dissent (1980-2003)

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and its owner, the Port of Seattle, faced major challenges during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Foremost, their own successful investments and management, and the Puget Sound's growing prominence as a business and cultural center on the Pacific Rim, fueled steady growth in the numbers of aircraft, passengers, and cargo shipments passing through the airport. With these increases, the impacts of noise on airport neighbors and along flight paths became complex and expensive problems. While hailed as a national leader in its noise-mitigation efforts (detailed in a companion essay), Sea-Tac also faced stiffening criticism from neighboring residents, cities, and institutions, which set the stage for continuing battles over its plan to add a third runway to maintain capacity in the twenty-first century (detailed in a companion essay). Then came the terror of September 11, 2001, and an entirely new set of challenges and obligations.

An air cargo jet is filled at Sea-Tac Airport, ca. 1990s
Courtesy Sea-Tac


Cargo containers at Sea-Tac Airport, ca. 1995
Courtesy Sea-Tac

Union Busting and Name Changes

The task of coping with a deregulated airline industry fell to Sea-Tac's new director, Otis Durham, in April 1981. By then, airport traffic had stabilized at around 200,000 aircraft operations (take-offs and landings) a year. The Port also signed a contract with Transiplex to build and manage a new $18 million air cargo center that would double the airport's cargo-handling capacity. (Sea-Tac would rank as the nation's busiest air cargo hub by 1992.)

On August 3, 1981, more than 11,000 members of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Association (PATCO) left their radar screens to strike against the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). President Ronald Reagan promptly fired the strikers and mobilized military controllers and other

federal personnel to keep the airways open. Other airline unions, notably pilots and machinists, declined to honor PATCO picket lines, isolating the union and breaking its strike. The crisis precipitated a major reorganization of the nation's air traffic control system and the investment of billions in new technology for advanced radars and automation.

President Reagan also reorganized the federal approach to airport noise issues by shifting lead responsibility from the Environmental Protection Agency to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The Port pressed on with its own programs, commissioning a new study on noise remedies. By 1983, it had spent more than $38 million to purchase Sea-Tac area homes and properties adversely affected by aircraft noise, and it was far from done.

Los Angeles' LAX airport hired away Otis Durham in June 1983, and longtime Port engineer Vernon Lungren took charge of Sea-Tac. He was soon tested by a mini-controversy over the airport's name.

On September 1, 1983, Washington's five-term U.S. Senator Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson died of a heart attack in his Everett home. Two weeks later, the Seattle Port Commission voted to rename Sea-Tac in his honor. Events mirrored those of 1944, when the Commission had proposed renaming the airport for recently deceased Boeing President Phil Johnson. In 1983, Tacoma protested promptly and vehemently. The Seattle Port Commission formally retreated on January 8, 1984.

Pass the Earplugs, Please

Also in 1984, the Port urged the FAA to address growing noise complaints from Seattle and Eastside neighborhoods sitting below Sea-Tac approach routes. The FAA had shifted these paths from over-water routes in the 1970s in response to growing Boeing Field and Sea-Tac traffic, and now outlining areas were beginning to complain along with airport neighbors. Experiments with alternative routes and "flight scattering" only brought more complaints from new areas.

Later route adjustments, combined with restrictions on nighttime operations by older, noisier aircraft and the introduction of quieter "Stage 3" jet engines on new aircraft,

Two Alaska Airlines planes in the fog at Sea-Tac Airport, ca. 1992
Courtesy Sea-Tac

Third runway embankment construction at Seattle-Tacoma Internatonal Airport, 2002
Courtesy Port of Seattle

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helped to muffle the problem. Thanks to U.S. Senator Slade Gorton, Sea-Tac's innovative approach to "noise budgeting" was exempted from new federal laws which overrode local regulation of aircraft noise impacts.

Closer to the airport, the Port had by already demolished or moved more than 750 homes by 1984. It identified another 524 properties for relocation and another 3,000 warranting soundproofing, and up to 7,000 residences potentially in need of noise insulation subsidies. To meet these and other noise-related needs, the Port Commission approved a new $140 million on January 8, 1985, using funds collected from airlines and passengers, not taxpayers. (The Port later undertook a new round of planning and community outreach that resulted in a pioneering "noise-mediation" program in 1990; see companion essay on noise abatement for more detail.)

Also in 1985, the Commission authorized $40.8 million for major terminal improvements including new gates on Concourse D; the following year, United Air Lines doubled the size of its facilities at Sea-Tac. Meanwhile, annual aircraft operations climbed steadily to pass 315,000 in 1988, serving nearly 14.5 million passengers. The airport's police force was also reorganized in the 1980s in the wake of the false conviction of a Seattle man for a rape/murder on airport property and embarrassing "sting operations" intended to discourage pickpockets and baggage thefts.

Pushing the Envelope

Vern Lundgren retired in 1988 and the Commission selected Andrea Riniker, the former director of the Washington State Department of Ecology (and current director of the Port of Tacoma) to succeed him on April 4. Riniker faced a challenging agenda dominated by noise issues, technological change, and the strains caused by ever-rising passenger and cargo traffic.

The issue of burgeoning traffic sounded alarm bells when Port and FAA planners predicted that at current growth rates, Sea-Tac could reach its "maximum efficient capacity" of 380,000 annual aircraft operations by the end of the century -- just 12 years distant. This triggered a massive regional planning and community involvement process, dubbed "Flight Plan." After eight years of study and debate and the exhaustion of

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numerous alternative approaches, the Puget Sound Regional Council, FAA, and Port concluded that the region's near-term air service needs could be met only by the construction of a third "dependent" (bad-weather) runway at Sea-Tac. This did not prevent concerted opposition by some of Sea-Tac's neighboring communities, which continues in 2003 (see companion essays on the third runway for more detail).

Fortunately, the Port did not wait for the Flight Plan process to run its course before addressing Sea-Tac's immediate needs. Thanks to expanding Pacific Rim travel and trade, Sea-Tac handled nearly 18 million passengers in 1992. That year, Sea-Tac put the finishing touches on a $167 million "First Class Upgrade" program of terminal, concourse, garage and other airport improvements. With additional federal funding, the Port also installed new ground-control radar and lighting to dramatically increase the capacity and safety of Sea-Tac's runways and taxiways during low-visibility conditions, which prevail more than 40 percent of the average year.

Choppy Air

In 1993, airport director Andrea Riniker was elevated to Deputy Executive Director under Port CEO Mic Dinsmore and shifted to the Port's new Pier 69 headquarters (she left to take charge of the Port of Tacoma in July 1997). Command of the aviation division was taken over by Gina Marie Lindsey, who remains in the pilot's seat as of this writing.

On Lindsey's watch, aircraft operations and passenger and cargo flows continued to increase, reaching and surpassing the airport's maximum efficient capacity in 1995 -- five years ahead of predictions made in 1988. Following the final determinations in the regional Flight Plan process and exhaustive environmental impact analyses by both the Port and the FAA, the Port Commission approved a major Master Plan Update for Sea-Tac expansion and improvements on August 1, 1996.

Airport traffic maintained its steady ascent through 2000, peaking that year at 445,677 aircraft operations and 28,408,553 passengers. Following the horrific attacks of September 11, 2001, these levels dropped precipitously, and total operations fell to 364,735 in 2002 amid the national and regional recession and geopolitical tensions.

Security for both passengers and cargo at Sea-Tac has was overhauled under new federal mandates and management. Traffic appears to have stabilized, and Sea-Tac ranked as the nation's 16 busiest airport in 2002 with nearly 365,000 operations transporting more than 26 million passengers and nearly 375,000 metric tons of air cargo. While legal challenges to the third runway remain in the courts, other facility upgrades were well underway at the airport in 2003.

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By Walt Crowley, June 24, 2003
Research by Alyssa Burrows, Paula Becker, and Daryl McClary
Updated and corrected, September 10, 2003

Related Resources:

- Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's Third Runway Project -- A Snapshot History
- Port of Seattle Commission passes Resolution 3212 adopting the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's Master Plan Update, including a third runway, and the Puget Sound Regional Council's A-96-02 enhanced noise criteria on August 1, 1996.

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Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's Third Runway Project -- A Snapshot History

The development of a third "dependent" runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, the state's largest airport, is one of the largest and most sensitive public works projects in regional history. The need for an additional runway for bad-weather operations was first recognized in 1988 when the Port of Seattle (which owns and operates the airport), the Federal Aviation Administration, and regional planners predicted that the airport could reach its maximum efficient capacity as early as 2000. The Puget Sound Regional Council and Port of Seattle launched a "Flight Plan" study in 1989 to determine how best to meet regional airport needs, and the Washington State Air Transportation Commission later examined the problem from a statewide perspective. After a public involvement program of unprecedented scale, regional planners ultimately concluded that development of a new regional airport and other alternatives were infeasible and that the addition of a third runway at Sea-Tac was the only viable solution to meeting regional air service needs. The Port formally launched the project in 1992, but encountered substantial opposition from cities and communities neighboring the airport, which won a two-year state moratorium on the runway and challenged necessary environmental permits. As a result, the runway's completion date has slipped from 2000 to 2008 at the earliest, and its cost has risen from a preliminary estimate of $430 million to $1.1 billion as of June 2003.

Landing at Bow Lake

On March 7, 1942, three months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Port of Seattle undertook development of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport at the urging of the federal government. A new airport was desperately needed to help relieve pressure on Seattle's Boeing Field and Tacoma's

Third runway embankment construction at Seattle-Tacoma Internatonal Airport, 2002
Courtesy Port of Seattle

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McChord Field, which were commandeered for warplane production and military use in World War II. After rejecting a site on the Sammamish Plateau as unsafe, the Port chose a sparsely populated plateau near Bow Lake, roughly midway between Seattle and Tacoma.

Sea-Tac's first runway was completed in 1944 at a final cost of $4.2 million (covered by the federal government), and limited civilian operations began in 1947. The airport's first permanent terminal and administration building was dedicated by Governor Arthur Langley on July 9, 1949.

Although hailed as the "state of the art" of airport design at the time, Sea-Tac was quickly overtaken by technological change and air traffic growth in the 1950s. The first modern jetliner, the Boeing 707, born in Seattle in 1954, could not land at Sea-Tac until the airport's main runway was lengthened to 8,500 feet in 1956 (it now stretches nearly 12,000 feet).

Catching Up With the Jet Age

In anticipation of new generations of faster and larger jetliners such as a planned supersonic transport and the Boeing 747 Jumbojet, the Port undertook a major construction program in 1968 to expand the terminal and add a second runway parallel to and 800 feet east of the first. This narrow separation would later create major problems because it prevents the simultaneous use of both runways when fog or low clouds limit visibility, which occurs about 44 percent of the year at Sea-Tac.

As the national and regional economy recovered from the "Boeing Bust" recession of the early 1970s, air traffic at Sea-Tac began to climb at double-digit rates. Complaints over growing aircraft noise led to Sea-Tac's first noise abatement and environmental mitigation programs in 1973 to relocate affected residents or to sound-proof affected structures. The Port later joined with local cities and governments in preparing an award-winning "Sea-Tac Communities Plan" to limit and offset airport impacts on neighboring areas.

Commercial air traffic at Sea-Tac took a steep dive after the federal government deregulated airlines in 1978, but the industry reorganized in the 1980s and airport use began to soar anew as Sea-Tac became a central "hub" for airline

service between the Pacific Rim and the nation. The Port of Seattle responded in 1985 to local concerns with one of the nation's most ambitious noise reduction programs, costing $140 million, and later limited flights by older, louder "Stage 2" aircraft during evening hours.

Racing Against Time

In the late 1980s, planners at the Port of Seattle, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the Puget Sound Council of Governments (which reorganized as the Puget Sound Regional Council in 1991) took a fresh look at Sea-Tac's air traffic trends as part of the process of updating the Regional Air System Plan (RASP) for Puget Sound. Extrapolating recent rates of air traffic growth, they predicted that Sea-Tac could reach its maximum efficient capacity of 380,000 annual "operations" (takeoffs and landings with no more than a five minute average delay) as early as the year 2000.

As operations exceeded this capacity measure, bad-weather delays would begin to increase dramatically, costing airlines and passengers millions of dollars annually as well as causing major inconvenience and logistical problems. The prospect of chronic delays also raised the risk that airlines might shift their hubs to other West Coast airports and thereby reduce Puget Sound's direct connections with the Pacific Rim and the rest of the world. Thus, Sea-Tac's physical limitations in handling projected growth in air traffic were an issue of regional and statewide importance.

Given the amount of time required for major airport development projects, this forecast sounded regional alarm bells. At the same time, the Port Commission and other local officials recognized that undertaking a major Sea-Tac expansion or construction of a major new airport demanded a regional discussion and, they hoped, consensus.

All Options on the Table

On this basis, the Port and regional Council of Governments agreed on May 23, 1989, to empanel an independent and broadly representative 39-member Puget Sound Air Transportation Committee (PSATC) to lead a thorough review of all of the options for meeting Puget Sound's airport needs through 2020. The process was dubbed "Flight Plan" and $693,000 was budgeted for an unprecedented program of

public outreach, citizen participation, and technical analysis.

Guided by its citizen chair, Eastside developer Bob Wallace, PSATC implemented an extensive program including 26 pubic working sessions, six openhouses, and four public hearings (not counting 11 public hearings conducted by the Port Commission during the same period). The Committee began with a full menu of options including:

- Construction of a second major regional airport in the Puget Sound region;
- Development of one or more “supplemental airports” in the region;
- Commercial airline use of existing runways at Snohomish County's Paine Field in Everett, Tacoma’s McChord Air Force Base, and an existing general aviation airport in Arlington;
- Diversion of Sea-Tac’s air cargo, private plane traffic, and regional commuter flights to other airports;
- Development of high-speed interurban rail service to reduce intraregional air traffic;
- Linking the large Moses Lake airport (used chiefly for Boeing training and military flights) in Eastern Washington to Puget Sound via a fast “bullet train” line through the Cascades;
- New operational and “demand management” approaches to improve Sea-Tac’s efficiency;
- Expansion of Sea-Tac with a new “dependent” runway for foul weather operations; or
- Some combination of these approaches.

Ironically in light of future controversy, the attendees at the first Flight Plan public hearings loudly endorsed expansion of Sea-Tac, and communities near alternative airports such as Paine Field quickly rallied opposition to their increased use. In 1990, not long after the Flight Plan process began, the Washington State Legislature mandated the Air Transportation Commission (AIRTRAC) to examine the issue from a statewide perspective. It would review many of the same options identified by PSATC (and reach similar conclusions), with special attention to the idea of linking Sea-Tac with an existing Moses Lake airfield via a high-speed rail line through Stampede Pass.

Advise and Dissent

In its Draft Report and detailed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS*), both published on January 7, 1992, the PSATC Flight Plan study concluded that the region's future air service needs could be met best by the addition of a third "dependent" runway for use during bad weather at Sea-Tac, commercial airline use of Paine Field, and pursuit of existing or new sites for a future "supplemental" airport in Pierce or Thurston Counties.

(*An Environmental Impact Statement is a detailed analysis of the likely effects of a proposed plan or project, including reasonable alternatives, on the natural and social environment. The federal requirement for EIS preparation was established by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970, which has since been emulated by most states and local governments. The findings of an EIS do not necessarily dictate final policy decisions, but the "adequacy" of its analysis can be challenged by opponents in court to delay and/or modify a project.)

The Flight Plan findings were criticized by citizens and local officials from areas neighboring both Paine Field and Sea-Tac. In the latter area, the cities of Normandy Park and Des Moines, Highline Community College, and Highline Hospital organized an ad hoc Regional Commission on Airport Affairs (RCAA) and hired environmental attorney Richard Aramburu to challenge the third runway plan. Also that year, the State Legislature imposed a two-year moratorium on new runway construction at Sea-Tac and other Puget Sound airports pending the findings of AIRTRAC.

On June 17, 1992, after several public hearings, PSATC voted 29 to 6 to approve its final report without major changes, and dissolved. The PSRC published the final Flight Plan EIS on October 6.

Outreach and Backlash

Based on this policy framework, the Port of Seattle Commission unanimously approved Resolution 3125 on November 3, 1992, which authorized a "Master Plan Update" for Sea-Tac and preparation of a new Environmental Impact Statement for its expansion. This represented the Port's formal commitment to planning for a third runway.

Sensitive to local concerns engendered by the concept of a

third runway at Sea-Tac, the Port launched a new public information and involvement program, including an ongoing "Sea-Tac University" to engage citizens in detailed discussion of airport plans. The Port also invited third runway critics from the Regional Commission on Airport Affairs and newly formed Airport Communities Coalition (ACC) to join planners and officials on a special Technical Advisory Committee.

These overtures did not mollify third runway foes. New opposition groups, Citizens Against Sea-Tac Expansion (CASE) and Washington Alliance of Taxpayers and Travelers (WATT) were organized. The Highline School District and cities of Burien, Federal Way, and Tukwila joined the anti-runway coalition. The new City of SeaTac, which incorporated in 1990, negotiated its own interlocal agreement with the Port in September 1997 to minimize and mitigate airport impacts, and Des Moines withdrew from the Airport Communities coalition in a controversial City Council vote in late 2002 after spending $5 million to fight the runway.

On April 29, 1993, an 89 percent majority of the Puget Sound Regional Council's General Assembly voted to adopt resolution A-93-03, which affirmed the "that the region should vigorously pursue, as the preferred alternative, a major supplemental airport and a third runway at Sea-Tac" subject to PSRC's final approval by April 1, 1996. The resolution made the final decision contingent upon reviews by up to three Expert Arbitration Panels to be appointed by the Secretary of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). A panel was appointed to examine the ability to expand Sea-Tac's effective capacity through better "demand and system management," but it never met because this option was soon found to be inadequate to meet air travel needs. The other panel focused on the effectiveness of Sea-Tac's noise mitigation programs.

The subsequent quest for a supplemental airport site pared down an initial list of 41 candidates to 19 and then to 12 before concluding there were no viable sites in the region. This conclusion was affirmed on October 27, 1994, with PSRC Executive Board Resolution EB-94-01. A related study found in July 1996 that improved "demand and system management" of existing Sea-Tac's facilities also could not effectively absorb its projected air traffic growth.

Meanwhile, the State's AIRTRAC submitted its final report a year ahead of schedule in November 1993. It also could not find ready alternatives to Sea-Tac expansion, but added that "the third [Sea-Tac] runway alone does not solve the region's long-term capacity problem." Regardless, the moratorium on Sea-Tac's expansion expired and the Legislature rebuffed proposals to curtail the Port Commission's authority or to interfere with its airport planning. (Interestingly, AIRTRAC staff director Kenneth Reid took the helm of the anti-runway Airport Communities Coalition in January 1995.)

Moving Mountains

The Port of Seattle and Federal Aviation Administration issued their draft Environmental Impact Statement for the third runway project on April 27, 1995. It proposed a new runway of up to 8,500 feet in length located 1,700 feet west of the existing second landing strip. This would require the westward extension of the airport plateau atop some 17 million cubic yards of fill dirt, to be secured on the north, south, and west by retaining walls averaging between 27 and 74 feet. The Draft EIS identified the need to acquire about 400 homes and cited potential effects on nearby creeks and wetlands. Among other mitigation measures, it proposed to restore about 80 acres of wetland habitat and buffer land along Miller Creek, 30 acres along Des Moines Creek, and 34 acres along Green River in Auburn, augmented by the creation of 30 acres of new wetland.

Under this plan, the Port proposed to restore or create five acres of habitat for each single acre potentially affected by the expansion. Despite the project's scale, the EIS concluded that all of its construction and operational impacts could be reduced or compensated for with sensitive design and development of replacement wetlands. The initial cost estimate for the runway penciled out at $430 million, excluding other airport and terminal improvements, to be financed by federal aid, the airlines, and fees -- not new or higher taxes.

After extensive public comment, the Port and FAA published a final EIS, numbering 5,500 pages in seven volumes, on February 1, 1996. The following month, the Expert Arbitration Panel on noise abatement issued its report. While praising the Port's "impressive array" of noise mitigation efforts, a two-member majority wrote on March 27 that Sea-

Tac had “not shown a reduction in real on-the-ground noise impacts sufficient to satisfy the noise-reduction condition” set by PSRC Resolution A-93-03.

Runway opponents predicted the project’s demise. WATT spokesperson Susanne Albright declared, “It’s a big win for us,” and Airport Communities Coalition attorney Peter Kirsch warned, “It would be the height of audacity for the Port to even attempt to move forward at this point.” State Secretary of Transportation Sid Morrison agreed that it was “a setback for the third runway,” but the Port took heart in the panel’s overall praise of its noise program. Aviation Division director Gina Marie Lindsey observed, “They have already said we are the best there is, that we’re doing a terrific job. The issue ... is whether that’s enough or not” (*The Seattle Times*, March 28, 1996).

Holding Patterns

In response to the Expert Panel findings, the Regional Council concluded that the Port could do more to reduce noise but that its record to date was not a fatal flaw for the runway project. With passage of Resolution A-96-02 on July 11, 1996, the PSRC gave the third runway project its official blessing by formally adding it to the federally mandated Regional Transportation Plan. At the same time, it imposed new noise abatement standards on Sea-Tac.

The Port Commission accepted these conditions with passage of Resolution 3212 on August 1, 1996, and officially adopted its Sea-Tac Master Plan Update. This moved the runway closer to reality by authorizing detailed planning and engineering, acquisition of needed properties, and preparation of applications for environmental permits from local, state, and federal agencies.

The Port promptly undertook an aggressive “Acquisition Communications” program to contact owners and residents of properties it needed to purchase on the airport’s fringes. It held 35 community meetings, established an independent ombudsman program, and went door to door to inform affected property owners, residents, and businesses through 1999.

Meanwhile, the acceleration in actual air traffic growth at Sea-Tac and other issues related to third runway development led

the FAA and Port to announce on December 27, 1996, that they would prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to revisit and refine earlier analyses. The Final SEIS was issued on May 13, 1997, following public comment, and the Port Commission adopted Resolution 3245 two weeks later to reaffirm its Sea-Tac expansion plan.

The FAA issued a “record of decision” on July 3, 1997, finding that the project posed no insurmountable environmental challenges. That same year, Sea-Tac operations reached 385,000 takeoffs and landings, exceeding its maximum efficient capacity three years ahead of initial projections.

The Permit Phase

Simultaneously in 1997 and in response to PSRC conditions, the Port launched a new “Part 150 Noise Exposure and Land Use Study” under FAA regulations. The Port’s three-year effort far exceeded requirements for citizen involvement and was approved in 2000. In a related initiative dubbed “Sound Environment for Education,” the Port and federal government ultimately agreed to pay half of a 10-year, $200 million noise insulation and mitigation program for the Highline School District, with the State of Washington and Highline district splitting the balance. The latter’s contribution was financed by passage of a new school levy in 2002, although the district remained an official opponent of the third runway.

Meanwhile, the Port began preparing applications for a crucial “401” water quality permit from Washington State Department of Ecology (WSDOE) and a “404” wetlands protection permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Both processes created new opportunities for administrative appeals and legal challenges by Sea-Tac expansion opponents. (The numerical designations of these permits derive from sections of the Federal Clean Water Act.)

The Port filed its first applications in December 1996, and the first of many public hearings were convened in April 1998. The Port soon recognized that the third runway project would affect more wetlands than initially anticipated and requested that state and federal authorities halt their reviews. The Port submitted revised applications one year later, but withdrew them in September 2000 to address remaining technical issues.

The Port reapplied the following month, and Washington State Department of Ecology and the Corps of Engineers convened joint public hearings on January 26 and 27, 2001. The State approved the Port's 401 permit in August of that year, but project opponents promptly appealed to the Washington State Pollution Control Hearings Board, which scheduled a hearing for March 18, 2002.

Clear Skies Ahead?

The Hearings Board ultimately approved the permit on August 12, but added 16 additional conditions, which proved too onerous for both the Port and State Department of Ecology. They, and runway opponents, filed various appeals to the Board's rulings, some of which are still pending as of June 2003. The Port and the state Department of Ecology objected in particular to the Board's imposition of unprecedented testing standards related to contaminants in needed fill dirt. The State Legislature overruled this condition in April 2003.

On December 13, 2002, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued its 404 wetlands permit, directing the Port to restore or preserve 14 acres of wetlands, enhance another 77 acres, and create 30 new acres of wetlands near Auburn, essentially as proposed by the Port. Runway opponents also appealed this permit.

While these various political and regulatory maneuvers were fought on the ground, air traffic at Sea-Tac soared beyond its maximum efficient capacity to nearly 446,000 operations in 2000, leading to significant delays. Traffic then declined to 365,000 operations in 2002, due to the regional recession and national decline in air travel following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

If nothing else, this temporary decline has bought the airport and the region time in preparing for the inevitable resumption of air traffic growth. Originally targeted to meet 2000 demand, the third runway is now slated for completion in 2008, at the earliest.

Sources:

"Regional Airport System Plan, 1988-2020," Puget Sound Council of

Governments, September 29, 1988; Port of Seattle and Puget Sound Council of Governments Interagency Agreement for Long Term Air Carrier System Planning, May 23, 1989; "The Flight Plan Project, Final Environmental Impact Statement," Puget Sound Council of Governments, October 6, 1992; Port of Seattle Commission Resolution 3125 Amended, November 3, 1992; Washington State Air Transportation Commission (AIRTRAC) newsletters and reports, September 1992-December 1993; Puget Sound Council of Governments General Assembly Resolution A-93-03, April 29, 1993; "Major Supplemental Airport Feasibility Study," Puget Sound Regional Council, March 23, 1995; "Final Environmental Impact Statement for Proposed Master Plan Update Actions at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport," Port of Seattle and Federal Aviation Administration, February 1, 1996; Puget Sound Regional Council General Assembly Resolution A-96-02, July 11, 1996; "General Chronology Related to Regional Commercial Aviation Development in the Central Puget Sound Region," Puget Sound Regional Council memorandum, May 9, 2002; "Detailed History of the 3rd Runway Planning Process," Port of Seattle memorandum, October 3, 2002; "Regional Air Capacity -- Public Involvement History," Port of Seattle memorandum, February 5, 2003; Roger Downey, "Risky Runway," *Seattle Weekly*, September 28, 2000; *The Seattle Times*, July 27, 1988, April 22, 1990, March 21, June 15, 1992; January 15, 1993; February 14, 1994; January 27, April 27, 1995; March 28, June 25, June 28, August 2, 1996; July 4, 1997; July 24, 1998; March 24, 1999; September 29, October 31, 2000; May 24, August 10 and 11, December 20, 2001; August 13, September 19, December 13 and 21, 2002; March 16, 2003; *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, January 27, March 24, June 19, 1999; January 26, May 26, September 29, October 21 and 27, 2000; May 21, June 13, July 25 and 27, August 10 and 24, October 17, November 5, December 19, 2001; January 3 and 14, March 17, August 13, August 26, September 10, December 14, 2002. Port of Seattle Website, (www.portseattle.org), as of March 21, 2003; Regional Commission on Airport Affairs Website, (www.rcaanews.org), as of March 21, 2003; Airport Communities Coalition Website, (www.ci.des-moines.wa.us/acc.html), as of March 21, 2003.

By Walt Crowley
Research by Daryl McClary and Paula Becker
June 21, 2003
Updated with minor corrections, September 10, 2003

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Port of Seattle forecasts Seattle-Tacoma International Airport could maximize capacity by 2000 in a study issued on December 28, 1988.

On December 28, 1988, the Port of Seattle publishes a "Comprehensive Planning Review and Airspace Update Study." This study concludes that the existing two runways at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport could reach "maximum efficient capacity" by the year 2000, raising for the first time the idea of constructing a third "dependent" runway.

Crowded Sky

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport opened with one runway in 1944 and became fully operational in 1949. An additional runway was built 800 feet to the west in 1970 to accommodate increased air traffic and larger jetliners. This narrow separation prevents the use of both runways during fog and low clouds, or about 44 percent of the time, and caps the airport's efficient capacity with minimum delays at about 380,000 operations (landings and takeoffs) per year.

Deregulation of U.S. airlines in 1978 stimulated competition within the airline industry and more than doubled the number of major carriers using Sea-Tac's two runways. Airport operations grew by half again from 195,000 operations to 316,000 operations in 1988, while annual passenger counts nearly doubled from 8.4 million to 14.5 million during the same period. Port planners projected that Sea-Tac could reach 400,000 annual operations by 2000, resulting in significant flight delays during times of limited visibility. (Sea-Tac operations passed 385,000 in 1997 and peaked at nearly 446,000 in 2000 but then declined to 365,000 in 2002 due to slumps in the economy and national air travel after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.)

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The Puget Sound Council of Governments (reorganized as the Puget Sound Regional Council in 1991) reached the same conclusion about the limited ability of Sea-Tac Airport to meet the region's growing air transportation needs with current facilities. Their findings were published as the "Regional Airport System Plan," adopted by the Council under Resolution A-88-13 on September 29, 1988. The following year, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) published the "Seattle-Tacoma International Airport Capacity Plan." This plan mirrored the findings of the Port and the Council.

"Flight Plan" Takes Off

In 1989, the Council and the Port immediately launched what was known as the "Flight Plan" process. A special Puget Sound Air Transportation Committee conducted this extensive three-year investigation into possible solutions for Sea-Tac Airport's runway crisis.

The Flight Plan attempted to address the following questions:

"1. What are the major implications and trade-offs between regional alternatives?
"2. What is the probable long-term demand for commercial transportation?
"3. What are the alternative regional air transportation systems?
"4. What are the impacts with respect to noise, air quality, land use, and other community factors?
"5. How does commercial air transportation capacity relate to other regional planning activities?" (quoted from "The Flight Plan Project" introduction).

Birth of the Third Runway

The hallmark of the Flight Plan process was extensive public outreach, including 26 PSATC public working sessions, 11 Port of Seattle public working meetings, six PSATC open house/scooping meetings throughout the region, and four final PSATC public comment meetings.

After examining many other options, the Puget Sound Regional Council, FAA, and Port concluded in 1996 that the addition of a third "dependent" runway to Sea-Tac for bad-weather use offered the best approach to meet projected regional air capacity needs. The project met determined opposition from

nearby communities and environmental groups. Necessary environmental permits had been issued by early 2003 but remained under appeal or litigation by opponents. The third runway is currently scheduled for completion in 2008 at a cost of $1.1 billion.

Sources:

"Comprehensive Planning, Review and Airspace Update Study," Port of Seattle memorandum, December 28, 1988; "Regional Airport System Plan 1988–2020 Air Transportation Element of the Regional Transportation Plan," Seattle: Puget Sound Council of Governments, September 1988; "Flight Plan Public Process Background," Port of Seattle memorandum, September 9, 1992; "Port of Seattle Frequently Asked Questions," Port of Seattle Website (www.portseattle.org); "Port of Seattle Resolution 3125," November 3, 1992; The Flight Plan Project, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Puget Sound Regional Council, October 6, 1992; "Airport Planning Takeoff -- Committee Looks For Solutions to Growing Sea-Tac Congestion," *The Seattle Times*, April 22, 1990; "Long Delays Ahead For Airport -- Study of Congestion May Renew Calls For Third Runway," *Ibid.*, May 22, 1990; Paul Dorpat and Genevieve McCoy, *Building Washington: A History of Washington State Public Works* (Seattle: Tartu Publications, 1998), 403.

By Walt Crowley
Research by Daryl McClary and Paula Becker
March 21, 2003

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Port of Seattle and Puget Sound Council of Governments (now Puget Sound Regional Council) launch the Flight Plan study on May 23, 1989.

On May 23, 1989, the Port of Seattle Port of Seattle and Puget Sound Council of Governments (reorganized as the Puget Sound Regional Council in 1991) sign an Interagency Agreement to launch the "Flight Plan" study of future air service capacity needs and solutions, including the possible expansion of the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. The effort is guided by a 39-member Puget Sound Air Transportation Committee and leads to a controversial decision in 1992 to add a third "dependent" runway at Sea-Tac to maintain airport capacity during low visibility weather conditions.

The need for the "Flight Plan" effort was first identified in 1988 during preparation of the Port of Seattle's "Comprehensive Planning Review and Airspace Update Study." This analysis projected that the existing two runways at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport could reach "maximum efficient capacity" by the year 2000. Planners and forecasters at the Puget Sound Council of Governments (PSCOG) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) soon arrived at the same conclusion.

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport opened with one runway in 1944 and became fully operational in 1949. An additional runway was built 800 feet to the west in 1970 to accommodate increased air traffic and larger jetliners. This narrow separation prevents the use of both runways during fog and low clouds, or about 44 percent of the time, and caps the airport's efficient capacity with minimum delays at about 380,000 operations (landings and takeoffs) per year.

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Port Aviation Division director Andrea Riniker (a former director of the Washington State Department of Ecology and now executive director of the Port of Tacoma) recognized that addressing air service capacity needs would require a credible and objective examination and, with luck, a regional consensus. The Port Commission and PSCOG began planning a joint study in July 1988. The final agreement was authorized by PSCOG Resolution 3042 and signed by director Curtis Smelser and his Port counterpart, Zeger J. J. van Asch van Wijck.

The Puget Sound Air Transportation Commission comprised 39 members representing the following groups and constituencies:

- six representatives of King County and its cities;
- two representatives of Pierce County;
- two representatives of Snohomish County;
- one representative of Kitsap County;
- four members of the Washington State Legislature;
- one representative of the Governor (then Booth Gardner);
- four representatives of the regional business community;
- three representatives of major airlines;
- one representative of the Washington Environmental Council;
- three representatives of the Port of Seattle;
- one representative of the Federal Aviation Administration;
- three unaffiliated citizens, one each from Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties;
- one citizen member of the Port of Seattle Noise

Management Mediation Committee.

The Port and PSCOG agreed to split the Committee's initial $683,000 budget down the middle. Work began almost immediately and continued over the next two and one half years. The PSATC adopted its final report on June 17, 1992, which called for construction of a third dependent runway at Sea-Tac, addition of commercial airline service at Snohomish County's Paine Field, and development of a supplemental airport in Pierce or Thurston County. The Port and the Regional Council ultimately adopted its recommendations, but only the third Sea-Tac runway would survive as a viable solution to the region's projected air service capacity needs.

Sources:

"Port of Seattle and Puget Sound Council of Governments Interagency Agreement for Long Term Air Carrier System Plan," Exhibit A-1, PSCOG Resolution 3042, as amended, May 23, 1989; "The Flight Plan Project, Final Environmental Impact Statement," Puget Sound Regional Council and Port of Seattle, October 6, 1998; Puget Sound Regional Council Resolution A-93-02, April 19, 1993; "Port of Seattle Commission Resolution No. 3125, As Amended, November 3, 1992; "Regional Air Capacity -- Public Involvement History," Port of Seattle memorandum, July 29, 2002; "Seattle-Tacoma International Airport Detailed History of the Third Runway Planning Process," Port of Seattle Memorandum, October 3, 2002; *The Seattle Times*, July 27, 1989; April 22, May 22, 1990; March 21 and June 15, 1992; *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, November 1, 1990; February 13 and June 18, 1992.

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Research by Daryl McClary and Paula Becker,
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Washington State Legislature expands mandate of the Air Transportation Commission (AIRTRAC) and imposes moratorium on new runway development in March 1992.

In March 1992, the Washington State Legislature adopts the Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 2609. This bill further refines the task before the Washington State Air Transportation Commission (AIRTRAC), which had been established in June 1990 by Senate Bill 6408. AIRTRAC is directed to study the complicated air transportation issues facing the state, and to report to the Legislative Transportation Commission (LTC) and to the various Regional Transportation Planning Organizations throughout the Puget Sound region. ESHB 2609 also declares a moratorium on new runway development at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and at other western Washington airports, pending the committee's findings.

A State Overview

The Washington State Air Transportation Commission was an acknowledgement by the Washington State Legislature that the state's air transportation facilities were in need of a thorough examination in light of both regional growth and the modern air fleet that utilized the state's airport facilities. Its new focus on Puget Sound airport planning activities reflected the skepticism, if not opposition, of some legislators toward evolving plans for a third runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

In 1988, the Port of Seattle's "Comprehensive Planning Review and Airspace Update Study" predicted that Sea-Tac Airport would reach its all-weather landing capacity (the ability to land planes in a safe and timely fashion) by the year 2000. In the same year the Puget Sound Council of Governments (later

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Puget Sound Regional Council) reached the same conclusion in its “Regional Airspace System Plan.”

In 1989, the Federal Aviation Administration completed a study that concurred, citing limits placed on bad-weather operations by the mere 800-foot distance separating Sea-Tac’s two existing parallel runways. As these groups began to move forward in studying how to expand air-transport capacity in the region, the state of Washington stepped in. The State considered it essential that it play a significant role in coordinating Washington’s air transportation facilities. Thus AIRTRAC was established.

The State’s mandate to AIRTRAC was a broad, statewide study of air transportation needs, not only airport capacity but how passengers could access the airports via possible future public transportation systems. AIRTRAC also studied the efficacy of existing environmental impact mitigation efforts. The Commission paid special attention to the idea of operating high-speed trains to connect Western and Eastern Washington communities and airports through Stampede Pass in the Cascades.

Many Studies, Few Remedies

The AIRTRAC commission had 27 members, 22 of whom were voting. Nineteen members were Governor-appointed. Four were legislative representatives appointed by the chairs of the State House and Senate Transportation committees. Five were filled by statute: a representative for the Governor, the Director of the Washington State Transportation Research Center, a representative for the Secretary of Transportation, the Assistant Secretary of Aeronautics, and an FAA representative. These members were drawn from across the state.

AIRTRAC conducted the following public meetings and programs between 1991 and 1993:

- 32 public information meetings held throughout the state;
- Five independent expert review panels, open to the public;
- Five focus group meetings intended to encourage citizens to voice their concerns about air transportation;
- A "public shareholder survey" intended to update Committee members on how the public prioritized

transportation policy considerations;
- Regional public forums;
- Numerous fact sheets, newsletters, press releases, editorials, and media briefings.

The Commission also reviewed the findings of the Flight Plan Project, a joint project of the Puget Sound Regional Council and the Port of Seattle. The Commission published an interim report on its findings for the State Legislative Transportation Commission in December 1992, and issued its final report in December 1993, a year early.

Final AIRTRAC policy recommendations forecast that growth in the Puget Sound region would be so great that a third runway at Sea-Tac Airport would not adequately solve the region's growing air transportation dilemma. In its 1994 session, the Legislature dissolved the commission and the moratorium on Puget Sound airport expansion expired. AIRTRAC staff director Kenneth Reid later became director of the anti-third-runway Airport Communities Coalition.

Sources:

"Regional Air Capacity -- Public Involvement History," Port of Seattle memorandum, July 29, 2002; "AIRTRAC: Who Are The Commissioners for AIRTRAC?," AIRTRAC Public Information brochure, undated; "Report to the Legislative Transportation Committee," AIRTRAC, November 20, 1992; RCW 47.86 Airport Transportation Commission; *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, November 1, 1990; February 13, 1992; *The Seattle Times*, January 27, 1995.

By Paula Becker
Research by Daryl McClary and Walt Crowley,
March 21, 2003

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Puget Sound Air Transport Committee (PSATC) adopts final regional Flight Plan report endorsing construction of a third runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport plus supplemental facilities on June 17, 1992.

On June 17, 1992, after a two-and-one-half-year process of public discussion and technical analysis, dubbed “Flight Plan,” the Puget Sound Air Transportation Committee adopts its final report by a vote of 29 to 6. The PSATC recommends the addition of a third runway to the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, commercial use of Snohomish County's Paine Field and possibly Tacoma’s McChord Air Force Base, and development of a “supplemental airport” in Pierce or Thurston County to meet projected commercial airline service needs in the region through 2020. The special 39-member committee was established in late 1989 by the Port of Seattle and the Puget Sound Council of Governments (now Puget Sound Regional Council), and its plan laid the foundation for the construction of Sea-Tac’s third runway.

On May 23, 1989, the Port of Seattle and Puget Sound Council of Governments (reorganized as the Puget Sound Regional Council in 1991) signed an Interagency Agreement to launch the “Flight Plan” study of future air service capacity needs and solutions, including the possible expansion of the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. The effort was triggered in 1988 during preparation of the Port of Seattle’s “Comprehensive Planning Review and Airspace Update Study.” This analysis projected that the existing two runways at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport could reach “maximum efficient capacity” by the year 2000. Planners and forecasters at the Puget Sound Council of Governments (PSCOG) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) soon arrived at the same conclusion.

Related Topics:

- Aviation
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Seattle-Tacoma International Airport opened with one runway in 1944 and became fully operational in 1949. An additional runway was built 800 feet to the west in 1970 to accommodate increased air traffic and larger jetliners. This narrow separation prevents the use of both runways during fog and low clouds, or about 44 percent of the time, and caps the airport's efficient capacity with minimum delays at about 380,000 operations (landings and takeoffs) per year.

Deregulation of U.S. airlines in 1978 stimulated competition within the airline industry and more than doubled the number of major carriers using Sea-Tac's two runways. Airport operations grew by half again from 195,000 operations to 316,000 operations in 1988, while annual passenger counts nearly doubled from 8.4 million to 14.5 million in the same period. Port planners projected that Sea-Tac could reach 400,000 annual operations by 2000, resulting in significant flight delays during times of limited visibility. (Sea-Tac operations passed 385,000 in 1997 and peaked at nearly 446,000 in 2000 but then declined to 365,000 in 2002 due to slumps in the economy and in national air travel after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.)

The Puget Sound Air Transportation Commission comprised 39 members representing the following agencies, groups and constituencies:

- six representatives of King County and its cities;
- two representatives of Pierce County;
- two representatives of Snohomish County;
- one representative of Kitsap County;

- four members of the Washington State Legislature;
- one representative of the Governor (then Booth Gardner);
- four representatives of the regional business community;
- three representatives of major airlines;
- one representative of the Washington Environmental Council;
- three representatives of the Port of Seattle;
- one representative of the Federal Aviation Administration;
- three unaffiliated citizens, one each from Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties;

- one citizen member of the Port of Seattle Noise Management Mediation Committee.

The Port and PSCOG agreed to split the Committee's initial $683,000 budget down the middle. Work began almost immediately and continued over the next two and one half years. Under the chairmanship of King County developer Bob Wallace, the committee and its staff examined a broad range of options, including construction of new primary and supplemental airports, expanded interurban rail services, and even development of a "remote airport" in Eastern Washington linked to Puget Sound by "bullet trains."

An important part of the Flight Plan study was soliciting public opinion and educating and informing the public about the purpose of the study. During November 1990, a series of six open house meetings were held throughout King, Pierce, Kitsap, and Snohomish counties to review the potential scope of the study. In April and May 1991, four public meetings were held in Sea-Tac, Des Moines, Everett, and Tacoma to elicit public comment on a draft list of air transportation alternatives prepared by the Committee. These four meetings drew testimony from 150 people and written comments from more than 200 people.

Between December 1989 and June 1992, another 26 open public working sessions were held to promote a dialogue between the Committee and the public about regional air capacity needs. The Port of Seattle Commission also conducted 11 public briefings on airport issues during the same period.

The Committee voted on its preliminary preference on December 4, 1991, splitting 29 for and six against a plan that included the construction of a third runway for bad-weather operations at Sea-Tac Airport, addition of commercial air service at Snohomish County's Paine Field, and development of a "supplemental airport" either at Tacoma's McChord Air Force Base or at a new site in Thurston County.

PSATC then conducted 11 public hearings on its draft recommendations and the draft environmental impact statement between January 7 and March 23, 1992, in King, Pierce, Kitsap, Snohomish, and Thurston Counties. These meetings drew more than 4,300 people, of whom 650 testified. During the 75-day public comment period that followed, more than 2,100 written comments were received. In all, the committee

received 25 pounds of correspondence.

The idea of a third Sea-Tac runway drew much criticism from cities and communities surrounding Sea-Tac, but expansion of other airports in the region were also opposed by their neighbors. Businesses and other economic interests supported quick action to preserve Puget Sound's aviation links to the Pacific Rim and beyond.

Despite criticism by third-runway foes, PSATC chair Bob Wallace was confident of the Committee's approach. The day of the final vote, he told the *Seattle-Post Intelligencer*, "We were looking to see if there was some fatal flaw in our plan, but there wasn't." Unable and unlikely ever to satisfy all interests and constituencies, the PSATC adopted its final recommendations on June 17, 1992, by an unchanged vote of 29 to 6. In summary, it advocated that the Council of Governments and Port pursue:

> "...The phased implementation of a Multiple Airport System including the addition of a dependent air carrier runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport before the year 2000, and the introduction of scheduled air carrier service to Paine Field before the year 2000, and the identification of a two-runway supplemental airport site in Pierce County for development by the year 2010 in collaboration with the military [i.e., McChord Air Force Base], and failing that, the identification of a suitable site in Thurston County" (PSATC motion, June 17, 1992).

The final environmental impact statement reflecting for the Flight Plan process was published on October 6, 1992. The Port of Seattle Commission unanimously adopted its core recommendations on November 3, 1992, and the newly renamed Puget Sound Regional Council's General Assembly adopted the essence of the PSATC report by an 89 percent majority on April 29, 1993.

Opponents of a third Sea-Tac runway and of expanded use of other regional airports quickly organized. The PSRC abandoned the search for a supplemental airport in October 1994, leaving the third runway as the lone strategy to meet future air capacity needs. Project planning began in earnest in 1996, and the Port was still awaiting the results of litigation over needed permits as of March 2003.

An early estimate slated the new runway for completion in 2000 at a cost of $430 million. Due to forces beyond the Port's control, the third runway is currently budgeted at $1.1 billion and cannot open before 2008 at the earliest.

Sources:

"Port of Seattle and Puget Sound Council of Governments Interagency Agreement for Long Term Air Carrier System Plan," Exhibit A-1, PSCOG Resolution 3042, as amended, May 23, 1989; "The Flight Plan Project, Final Environmental Impact Statement," Puget Sound Regional Council and Port of Seattle, October 6, 1998. Puget Sound Regional Council Resolution A-93-02, April 19, 1993; "Port of Seattle Commission Resolution No. 3125, As Amended, November 3, 1992; "Regional Air Capacity -- Public Involvement History," Port of Seattle memorandum, July 29, 2002; "Seattle-Tacoma International Airport Detailed History of the Third Runway Planning Process," Port of Seattle Memorandum, October 3, 2002; *The Seattle Times*, July 27, 1989; April 22, May 22, 1990; March 21 and June 15, 1992; *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, November 1, 1990; February 13 and June 18, 1992.

By Walt Crowley
Research by Daryl McClary and Paula Becker,
March 21, 2003

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Port of Seattle authorizes planning for new runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on November 3, 1992.

On November 3, 1992, the Seattle Port Commission approves Resolution 3125 to commence planning for a "third runway" at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. The action follows a three-year "Flight Plan" study and public discussion conducted by the Puget Sound Regional Council. The new runway is intended to maintain airport operations during inclement weather, but it generates criticism from neighboring cities opposed to Sea-Tac's expansion.

Filing a Flight Plan

In 1988, Port of Seattle and regional transportation planners recognized that traffic at Sea-Tac was growing far faster than expected and could reach capacity by 2000. A major factor limiting airport use is the narrow separation of the two existing runways, which prevents their simultaneous use when weather limits visibility.

In 1989, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and Port of Seattle appointed a new 39-member Puget Sound Air Transportation Committee to undertake an independent examination of alternative approaches to serving the region's future air transportation needs. This "Flight Plan" effort examined a broad array of approaches including construction of one or more new airports and expanded rail service. The State of Washington also created a special Air Transportation Commission (AIRTRAC) to examine these issues from a statewide perspective.

A Long Roll to Takeoff

After three years of study and dozens of public hearings, the

Third runway embankment construction at Seattle-Tacoma Internatonal Airport, 2002
Courtesy Port of Seattle

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PSRC concluded that the region's needs would be best served by construction of a new "dependent" runway at Sea-Tac to maintain flight operations in bad weather and by development of a second regional airport at a site yet to be named. The PSRC mandated stricter aircraft noise restrictions and mitigation as a condition for the additional runway.

Based on the Flight Plan conclusions, the Port of Seattle Commission voted to update its Airport Master Plan and to prepare necessary environmental studies in conjunction with the Federal Aviation Administration.

The Next Stage

Resolution 3125 also empowered Port of Seattle staff to undertake the preparation of a Master Plan Update for Sea-Tac, including the environmental impact studies, planning, engineering, and public involvement processes needed to begin construction of a third runway. The Port empanelled a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to advise the Master Plan Update process. The Committee held five public sessions between July 1994 and July 1995 to review air traffic forecasts and facility issues. The TAC was composed of more than 40 members including representatives of the anti-third-runway Airport Communities Coalition and Regional Commission on Airport Affairs, the Federal Aviation Administration, Puget Sound Regional Council, Puget Sound Air Pollution Control Agency, and other Washington State agencies.

As part of the Master Plan Update, the Port also established "Sea-Tac University," an innovative citizen participation process for in-depth discussion of air transportation matters. Sea-Tac University held nine public sessions broadcast on government access channels throughout the region. In addition, the Port conducted four special Planners Forums to brief and involve city planners from Sea-Tac area cities and the Highline School District.

In addition, Master Plan Update issues were reviewed and discussed at 10 public Port of Seattle Commission meetings between 1993 and 1994, and Port staff made more than 50 presentations to civic and community groups. Over the course of the Master Plan Update process, the Port mailed regular editions of Airport Forum newsletter to a mailing list of 27,000 Sea-Tac area residents and circulated their News Flash

update publication to local elected officials. The Port also published two special daily newspaper inserts, each reaching a combined circulation of 400,000 and generating more than 1,500 responses from citizens. In addition, detailed “Project Notebooks” were placed in 17 local libraries for citizen reference.

Despite these efforts, the planning engendered opposition from municipalities and communities near Sea-Tac concerned over the filling of wetlands and other runway-related impacts. The first permit application for the third runway in 1996 triggered lengthy regulatory reviews and extensive litigation, which continue to the present day.

Sources:

Port of Seattle Resolution 3125, November 3, 1992; "General Chronology Related to Regional Commercial Aviation Development in the Central Puget Sound Region," Puget Sound Regional Council memorandum, May 9, 2002; “Regional Air Capacity -- Public Involvement History,” Port of Seattle memorandum, July 29, 2002; “Seattle-Tacoma International Airport Detailed History of the Third Runway Planning Process,” Port of Seattle Memorandum, October 3, 2002); “The Flight Plan Project, Final Environmental Impact Statement,” Puget Sound Regional Council and Port of Seattle, October 6, 1998.

By Paula Becker
Research by Daryl McClary and Walt Crowley,
March 21, 2003

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Puget Sound Regional Council adopts Resolution A-93-03, amending the Regional Air Service Plan for expansion of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and development of a major supplemental airport, on April 29, 1993.

On April 29, 1993, the Puget Sound Regional Council's General Assembly adopts Resolution A-93-03 amending the 1988 Regional Air Service Plan on the basis of a three-year "Flight Plan" study concluded in 1992. The Resolution declares that "... the region should pursue vigorously, as the preferred alternative, a major supplemental airport and a third runway at Sea-Tac," subject to additional Expert Arbitration Panel reviews. The motion passes with an 89 percent majority.

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) represents more than 50 cities and King, Pierce, Kitsap, and Snohomish counties as the federally chartered Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Puget Sound region. Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, owned and operated by the Port of Seattle, is the largest and busiest of the region's 27 public airports. The region's air service needs and development investments are governed by a federally mandated Regional Airport System Plan (RASP).

Beginning in 1988, the Port of Seattle and other planners forecast that Sea-Tac could reach all-weather capacity by the year 2000. Because Sea-Tac's two parallel runways lie only 800 feet apart, only one can be used under low visibility conditions, which prevail approximately 44 percent of the time and result in flight delays and cost airlines and passengers millions of dollars annually.

Between 1989 and 1992, the Port of Seattle and Puget Sound Regional Council conducted a public study of possible

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solutions to this problem. Known as "Flight Plan," the two-year-plus effort entailed extensive citizen outreach and technical analysis of numerous options for meeting regional air travel needs through 2020.

Passage of Resolution A-93-03 modified the Regional Airport System Plan to accommodate construction of a third runway at Sea-Tac and development of a major supplemental airport, subject to studies and findings of Expert Review Panels appointed by the Secretary of the Washington State Department of Transportation. The panel charged to research the feasibility of a new airport never met because the Puget Sound Regional Council soon abandoned its quest for a second airport as infeasible. The panel appointed to explore the potential effectiveness of improved “demand and systems management” approaches at Sea-Tac never met because this option was also deemed inadequate. This left one active panel to review and verify Sea-Tac’s plans and performance in reducing aircraft noise impacts on its neighbors.

After extensive public hearings and input, the Regional Council formally concluded that no feasible site could be found in the region for a supplemental airport with adoption of Resolution EB-94-01 on October 27, 1994. The Expert Panel later reported that demand and system management improvements would be inadequate to cope with projected capacity needs. It also found that Sea-Tac noise abatement efforts had fallen short of PSRC goals and recommended stricter standards and criteria for noise reductions. These findings led to adoption of PSRC Resolution A-96-02 on July 11, 1996, which reaffirmed development of a third Sea-Tac runway subject to better progress on noise abatement and mitigation.

Sources:

Puget Sound Regional Council General Assembly Resolution A-93-03, April 29, 1993; “Resolution A-93-03 Implementation Steps,” PSRC Executive Board, August 26, 1993 and September 23, 1993. PSRC General Assembly Resolution A-96-02, July 11, 1996; Port of Seattle Commission Resolution 3212, August 1, 1996; “Regional Air Capacity -- Public Involvement History,” Port of Seattle memorandum, July 29, 2002; Detailed History of the Third Runway Planning Process,” Port of Seattle memorandum, October 3, 2002; *The Seattle Times*, March 28, 1996.

By Walt Crowley
Research by Daryl McClary and Paula Becker,
March 21, 2003

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The Puget Sound Regional Council Executive Board adopts Resolution EB-94-01, ending the search for a major supplemental airport site on October 27, 1994.

On October 27, 1994, the Puget Sound Regional Council Executive Board adopts Resolution EB-94-01, ending the search for a new airport site to supplement Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, which is owned and operated by the Port of Seattle. This action leaves the construction of a third runway at Sea-Tac as the Council's sole "preferred alternative" for meeting the region's projected air capacity needs through 2020.

Beginning in 1988, the Port of Seattle and other planners forecasted that Sea-Tac could reach all-weather capacity by the year 2000. Because Sea-Tac's two parallel runways were built only 800 feet apart, only one can be used when cloud cover is lower than 5,000 feet or visibility is less than five miles. This condition prevails approximately 44 percent of the time and results in flight delays and higher costs to airlines and their passengers.

The Port of Seattle and Puget Sound Regional Council conducted a public study of this problem between 1989 and 1992. Known as "Flight Plan," the three-year effort entailed extensive citizen outreach and technical analysis of numerous options for meeting regional air travel needs through 2020. In 1996, the Regional Council narrowed its "preferred alternative" to the third runway and to development of a "major supplemental airport," and formed an independent Expert Arbitration Panel to review potential sites.

Nowhere to Land

The search began with 41 options, which were narrowed to 19 and then to a dozen. Final possibilities considered were

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commercial airline use of Snohomish County's Paine Field in Everett and McChord Air Force Base in Tacoma, and existing airports or new sites in Arlington, Marysville West on the Tulalip Reservation, Marysville East due north of Lake Stevens, Bothell/Mill Creek, Duvall, Redmond, Lake Sawyer near Black Diamond, Enumclaw, Fredrickson, and Tanwax Lake.

All of these sites posed various logistical problems, and the neighbors of most candidate sites adamantly opposed their expanded commercial use. By the fall of 1994, it became clear to the Panel and its consultants that none of the sites were practical.

Resolution EB-94-01 also reaffirmed that planning should proceed for a third runway at Sea-Tac, provided that further study proved that a third runway could satisfy demand, meet noise reduction standards, and not cause irreparable environmental harm.

Sources:

Puget Sound Regional Council Executive Board Resolution EB-94-01, October 7, 1994, "Major Supplemental Airport Feasibility Study Summary Report," Puget Sound Regional Council, March 23, 1995; "Regional Air Capacity -- Public Involvement History," Port of Seattle memorandum, July 29, 2002; "General Chronology Related To Regional Commercial Aviation Development In The Puget Sound Region," Puget Sound Regional Council memorandum, May 9, 2002; "Detailed History of the Third Runway Planning Process," Port of Seattle memorandum, October 3, 2002; "Stop Passing The Buck," *The Seattle Times,* September 25, 1994.

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Research by Daryl McClary and Paula Becker
March 21, 2003

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Federal Aviation Administration and Port of Seattle publish a Final Environmental Impact Statement for proposed Seattle-Tacoma International Airport improvements, including a third runway, on February 1, 1996.

On February 1, 1996, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Port of Seattle formally issue a seven-volume, 5,500-page Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for planned Seattle-Tacoma International Airport improvements, including a controversial third runway. The Environmental Impact Statement finds that the project is needed to meet future air travel needs and that all anticipated effects on the natural and social environment can be mitigated. This determination gives the Port of Seattle, Sea-Tac's operator, the green light to begin detailed planning and engineering and to apply for needed state and federal permits.

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is a detailed analysis of the likely effects of a proposed plan or project, including reasonable alternatives, on the natural and "built" environment, and outlines measures to "mitigate" (soften or compensate for) negative impacts. The federal requirement for EIS preparation, which typically evolves through draft and final stages of publication, was established by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970, which has since been emulated by most states and local governments. The findings of an EIS do not necessarily dictate final policy decisions, but the "adequacy" of its analysis can be challenged by opponents in court to delay and/or modify a project.

Not Cleared For Takeoff

Publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the third runway was a major -- but far from final -- step in a

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regional planning process that began in 1988 with forecasts that Sea-Tac could reach its maximum efficient capacity by the year 2000. Because Sea-Tac's two parallel runways were built only 800 feet apart, only one can be used when cloud cover is lower than 5,000 feet or pilot visibility falls below five miles. This condition prevails approximately 44 percent of the time at Sea-Tac and results in flight delays and higher costs for airlines and their passengers.

The Port of Seattle and Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) conducted a public study of this problem between 1989 and 1992. Known as "Flight Plan," the three-year effort entailed extensive citizen outreach and technical analysis of numerous options for meeting regional air travel needs through 2020. The Regional Council narrowed its "preferred alternative" to the third runway in 1996.

The Final Sea-Tac Environmental Impact Statement also found that the Port's existing noise and pollution reduction programs were sufficient to address the impacts of new construction and expanded airport operation. The Final EIS cautioned that the Seattle-Tacoma region would experience increasing demand for air services due to explosive growth in both the region's population and income level during the 1990s. Critics and opponents of the third runway, including Sea-Tac-area cities and institutions and environmental groups, challenged the Final Environmental Impact Statement's findings with administrative and legal appeals.

Despite these objections, the Puget Sound Regional Council blessed the third runway by adding it to the federally mandated Regional Transportation Plan on July 11, 1996. The Port of Seattle Commission made the project official by adopting its Master Plan Update for Sea-Tac on August 1, 1996.

The original analysis was confirmed by a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) published on May 13, 1997. The FAA, as the lead responsible agency for airport construction, filed its final "record of decision" supporting the third runway on July 3, 1997. That same year, Sea-Tac aircraft operations topped its maximum efficient capacity of 380,000 landings and takeoffs. (They would rise to nearly 446,000 operations in 2000, then decline with the economy and post-9/11 air travel slump to about 365,000 operations in 2002.)

Sources:

“Regional Air Capacity -- Public Involvement History,” Port of Seattle memorandum, July 29, 2002; “Detailed History of the Third Runway Planning Process,” Port of Seattle memorandum, October 3, 2002; “Federal Register Environmental Documents,” United States Environmental Protection Agency Website (www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-IMPACT/1996/December/Day-27/pr-17278.html)

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Research by Daryl McClary and Paula Becker,
March 21, 2003.

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Port of Seattle Commission passes Resolution 3212 adopting the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's Master Plan Update, including a third runway, and the Puget Sound Regional Council's A-96-02 enhanced noise criteria on August 1, 1996.

On August 1, 1996, Port of Seattle adopts Resolution 3212 adopting the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's Master Plan Update (MPU) and the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) Resolution A-96-02 noise criteria. These resolutions authorize detailed planning, property acquisition, and permit applications for construction of a third runway at Sea-Tac Airport.

The idea of a third runway for Sea-Tac Airport arose in 1988 when long-range planning studies predicted that Sea-Tac could reach its maximum efficient capacity by the year 2000. Eight years of further planning, studies, public comment, and controversy followed before the Puget Sound Regional Council, Federal Aviation Administration, and the Port concluded that construction of a third dependent runway at Sea-Tac was the only viable approach to meeting the region's future air capacity needs.

Port Commissioner Patricia Davis told the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, "This is the single most important regional and statewide decision that this body has made in the last ten years that I've been here." Commissioner Davis had defeated an avowed anti-runway activist for re-election in 1993.

The Seattle-Tacoma International Airport Master Plan Update entailed an aggressive program of public education and public involvement, technical advisory panels, a unique "Sea-Tac University" program, a newsletter, and planning forums. This enormous effort was conducted between 1993 and 1997. The

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results served as a foundation for the Environmental Impact Statements prepared by the Federal Aviation Administration and the Port of Seattle in 1996 and 1997.

The Puget Sound Regional Council's previous adoption of Resolution A-96-02 amended the Regional Transportation Plan to include construction of an 8,500-foot runway on Sea-Tac Airport's western perimeter and more stringent noise standards for planes using the airport. The passage of Resolution 3212 also certified that the Port of Seattle Commission found that the 1996 Federal Aviation Authority/Port of Seattle's Final Environmental Impact Statement satisfied the requirements of national and state Environmental Policy Acts.

The Port of Seattle Commission approved $8.1 million for the beginning of the property acquisition process, involving approximately 400 homes and additional businesses, and apartment buildings. The land to be acquired lay along the Airport's western border in the City of SeaTac.

The Port created an Acquisition Communications Program to assist residents within the area of land needed for the new runway with property sales and relocation. The Acquisition Communications Program included a Hardship Committee made up of citizens and Port staff. Residents within the impacted areas could petition this Hardship Committee if their circumstances called for early acquisition of their properties.

A total of 35 public sessions concerning acquisition and relocation were held between September 1997 and November 1999. Residents also had the services of an impartial Ombudsman program during the acquisition process. In addition, the Airport Forum newsletter published regular updates and the Port gave regular briefings to update the public on the acquisition process.

The Port's efforts did not satisfy several nearby cities and the Highling School District previously opposed to the new runway. Anti-third-runway organizations continue to pursue administrative, legal, and public relations challenges to the project through this writing (spring 2003).

Sources:

"Regional Air Capacity -- Public Involvement History," Port of Seattle memorandum, July 29, 2002; "Detailed History of the Third Runway

Planning Process," Port of Seattle memorandum, October 3, 2002; "General Chronology Related to Regional Commercial Aviation Development in the Puget Sound Region," Puget Sound Regional Council memorandum, May 9, 2002; "After Ten Years of Debate Port Votes To Build A Third Runway," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 2, 1996.

By Paula Becker
Research by Daryl McClary and Walt Crowley
March 11, 2003

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Port of Seattle adopts Resolution 3245, approving a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and permit applications for third runway construction at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on May 27, 1997.

On May 27, 1997, the Port of Seattle adopts Resolution 3245, approving the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement prepared by the Port and the Federal Aviation Administration. The Resolution also authorizes construction of a third runway for Seattle-Tacoma International Airport pending approval of necessary permits.

The year before, on February 1, 1996, the Port and the FAA had finalized an earlier Environmental Impact Statement for the third runway project. But when it became apparent that the enormous growth of the Puget Sound region during the mid-1990s might render obsolete the facts and figures considered in this earlier Environmental Impact Statement, the FAA and Port undertook a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement with updated figures. The Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement addressed comments, both oral and written, that had been taken on the draft statement. It reaffirmed that there were no significant construction or operational impacts on the environment, buildings, or people that could not be mitigated by the procedures the Port planned to use.

Long Road Behind and Ahead

Planning for a third runway for Sea-Tac Airport began in 1988 when the Port of Seattle published a long-term study of the air traffic future of the Seattle-Tacoma region. This study, called the "Comprehensive Planning Review and Airspace Update Study," predicted that Sea-Tac Airport would reach its maximum efficient capacity as early as 2000. This forecast triggered a comprehensive "Flight Plan" study sponsored by

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the Port and the Puget Sound Regional Council and guided by an independent Puget Sound Air Transportation Committee between 1989 and 1992.

By May 1997, citizens of the Puget Sound region had participated in this public process for 11 years. Numerous studies had occurred, numerous experts had been empanelled, and the Port of Seattle and the FAA had prepared a 5,500 page Environmental Impact Statement that concluded that all possible environmental impacts possibly arising from runway construction and operation could be mitigated. Resolution 3245 also approved the additional noise-reduction measures mandated by Puget Sound Regional Council Resolution A-96-02 in July 1996.

The Port of Seattle's adoption of Resolution 3245 and the FAA's final "record of decision" on July 3, 1997, marked the end of 11 years of study, regional planning, and environmental assessments leading up to the third runway. The next steps would include detailed project planning, engineering, and application for essential "401" and "404" environmental permits from the Washington State Department of Ecology and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers respectively, with ample opportunity for public comment and potential administrative and legal appeals.

Sources:

Port of Seattle Resolution 3245, May 27, 1997; "Regional Air Capacity – Public Involvement History," Port of Seattle memorandum, July 29, 2002; "Detailed History of the Third Runway Planning Process," Port of Seattle memorandum, October 3, 2002; "Federal Register Environmental Documents," United States Environmental Protection Agency Website (www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-MPACT/1996/December/Day-27/pr-17278.html); *The Seattle Times*, July 4, 1997.

By Paula Becker
Research by Daryl McClary and Walt Crowley
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Washington State Department of Ecology issues a 401 permit to the Port of Seattle for proposed third runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on August 10, 2001.

On August 10, 2001, the Washington State Department of Ecology issues a 401 permit, which certifies compliance with Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act, to the Port of Seattle. This permit is a key step in the long process to allow construction of a third dependent runway for Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. The Airport Communities Coalition (ACC), a consortium of six communities surrounding the airport, quickly files an appeal.

A 401 permit certifies compliance with the section of the 1972 federal Clean Water Act relating to potential impacts of new construction and projects on water quality. The United States Environmental Protection Agency charges states with ensuring that all projects adhere to the standards laid out in the Clean Water Act.

The 401 certification and an additional 404 permit from the United States Army Corps of Engineers concerning wetlands protection were necessary before the Port could begin construction of a third runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. During a planning process initiated in 1989 that included extensive community involvement, the third runway project emerged as the best of numerous options to preserve regional air service. A number of federal, state, and regional agencies ultimately determined that construction of a third dependent runway was essential to maintain the capacity of Sea-Tac during bad-weather conditions. The project's potential environmental impacts and appropriate mitigation measures were analyzed in several detailed Environmental Impact Statements.

Related Topics:

- Aviation
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The Port's progress toward the 401 permit was arduous. It had voluntarily halted processing of its original 1996 application after discovering that third runway construction would impact more wetlands than had originally been thought. The Port withdrew a second application in September 2000 in order to resolve a few lingering issues and to give permitting agencies adequate time for analysis.

The 401 permit obtained on August 10, 2001, required the Port to protect and monitor the health of streams within the watershed of the construction area, in addition to mitigating the project's environmental impact on water quality and restoring wetlands displaced by the project. The permit was issued despite significant community protest of the project. The State Department of Ecology, however, found that the Port's proposal satisfied both state and federal requirements.

On August 23, 2001, the Airport Communities Coalition filed an appeal protesting the issuance of the 401 permit. Third runway opponents charged that "science took a backseat to politics" with the permit's issuance.

The matter was referred to the Washington State Pollution Control Hearings Board, which took testimony at a crowded session on March 18, 2002. The Board ultimately approved the 401 permit, but attached 16 additional conditions. The Port and the state Department of Ecology appealed several of these, taking particular issue with new and unprecedented testing standards imposed by the Board to certify the quality of the 17 million cubic yards of fill dirt required for the project. Runway opponents also appealed the granting of the permit, which remains in dispute at this writing (June 2003). The State Legislature overruled the Pollution Control Hearings Board in April 2002, but other issues raised by runway opponents remain in litigation as of June 2003.

Sources:

"Third Runway Gets Key Permit," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 10, 2001; "Sea-Tac Gets Permit To Build A Third Runway," *The Seattle Times*, August 10, 2001; "A Major Win For Third Runway," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 11, 2001; "Third Runway Foes Challenge Permit," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 24, 2001; "Clean Water Act, Section 401 Certification," United States Environmental Protection Agency Website (www.epa.gov/OWOW/wetlands/regs/sec401.html).

By Paula Becker

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March 21, 2003

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Washington State Pollution Control Hearings Board approves, with conditions, the 401 Water Quality Certification for Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's proposed third runway on August 12, 2002.

On August 12, 2002, the Washington State Pollution Control Hearings Board grants a 401 Water Quality Certification to the Port of Seattle for construction of a third runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. The certification imposes 16 additional conditions beyond those mandated in the original 401 permit issued by the Washington State Department of Ecology on August 10, 2001. The Hearings Board Certification, with its new conditions, is subsequently appealed on various grounds by the Port of Seattle, by the Department of Ecology, and by third-runway opponents.

The Port of Seattle began planning a third runway expansion for Sea-Tac Airport in 1988. Over the years the plan met many legal challenges from community and environmental groups fearing the runway's impacts on the area surrounding the airport.

Among the many permits that the Port was required to obtain during the lengthy federally mandated period of public input and debate on the third runway issue was a 401 certification. The nomenclature refers to the fact that the certification addresses Section 401 of the Federal Clean Water Act relating to water quality. The federal Environmental Protection Agency charges states with providing this certification.

Mitigation Measures

The Port of Seattle and Federal Aviation Administration issued their draft Environmental Impact Statement for the third runway on April 27, 1995. It proposed a third runway of up to

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8,500 feet in length located 1,700 feet west of the existing second runway. This in turn would require the westward extension of the airport plateau atop some 17 million cubic yards of fill dirt secured by retaining walls averaging 74 feet high on the west, 54 feet high on the north, and 27 feet high on the south. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement identified the need to acquire about 400 homes and cited potential effects on nearby Miller Creek and on several acres of wetland habitat.

The Port had prepared two earlier applications but withdrew them to address new information on wetlands impacts. On August 10, 2001, the Washington State Department of Ecology issued the 401 permit to the Port of Seattle. The Airport Communities Coalition (a group strongly opposed to third runway construction) appealed the issuance of the 401 permit to the Washington State Pollution Control Hearings Board, which stayed issuance of the permit pending a hearing on March 18, 2002.

Following the issuance of the Board's conditional permit approval, the Port of Seattle decided to appeal the Hearings Board's findings. Although the 401 permit was long sought, the Port found the conditions extreme. On September 26, 2002, the Port of Seattle appealed eight of the newly mandated conditions. On September 18, 2002, the Washington State Department of Ecology also appealed three of these eight contested conditions. In addition, the Airport Communities Coalition (opposed to the runway), filed an appeal.

The Port alleged that the Hearings Board had exceeded the boundaries of its authority, and also that it had improperly limited the evidence heard prior to making the decision. The primary issue for both the Port and the Department of Ecology's appeals involved the Hearing Board's criteria for fill dirt quality, which the agencies felt set a higher standard than even those found in nature. The State Legislature voided the new criteria in April 2003.

Sources:

"Appeals Fly Challenging State Permit To Start Third Runway," *The Seattle Times*, September 19, 2002; "Port of Seattle: Port to Appeal Pollution Board Conditions on Runway Permit," Port of Seattle Website (http://www.portseattle.org/press/09_06_2002_62.htm); "Clean Water Act, Section 401 Certification," Environmental Protection Agency Website (www.epa.gov/OWOW/wetlands/regs/sec40.html).

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Research by Daryl McClary and Walt Crowley,
June 21, 2003

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U. S. Army Corps of Engineers issues a 404 permit for filling wetlands in connection with Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's third runway on December 13, 2002.

On December 13, 2002, the United States Army Corps of Engineers issues to the Port of Seattle a 404 Permit to begin filling wetlands within the area designated for the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's third runway. The Port had halted processing of an earlier application after determining that more wetlands were potentially impacted by the project than originally estimated.

The nomenclature "404 Permit" refers to the fact that such permits are issued in compliance with the 1972 passage of Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act. Under this Act, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is charged with weighing protection for U.S. waters and wetlands against the public benefits of each development proposal. Section 404(b)(1) requires that the Army Corps of Engineers ensure that projects to which it issues permits are the least environmentally damaging of all available options, and, after mitigation, will not significantly degrade affected aquatic ecosystems. The permitting process involves extensive public notice and time for public comment and hearings.

The Port initially applied for both the 404 permit from the Army Corps of Engineers and a 401 permit from the Washington State Department of Ecology in December 1996. The 401 permit refers to Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act relating to water quality. These two permits were essential documents pursuant to construction of a third runway at Sea-Tac Airport.

Mitigation Measures

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- Aviation
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The Port of Seattle and Federal Aviation Administration issued their draft Environmental Impact Statement for the third runway on April 27, 1995. It proposed a third runway of up to 8,500 feet in length located 1,700 feet west of the existing second runway. This in turn would require the westward extension of the airport plateau atop some 17 million cubic yards of fill dirt secured by retaining walls averaging 74 feet high on the west, 54 feet high on the north, and 27 feet high on the south. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement identified the need to acquire about 400 homes and cited potential effects on nearby Miller Creek and on several acres of wetland habitat.

In September 1998 the Port withdrew both permit requests when it was discovered that the wetlands area involved was more extensive than had been thought originally. The Port had also acquired new properties containing wetlands not assessed in previous environmental studies. The Port resubmitted the updated permit applications in September 1999 but withdrew them again a year later in order to address lingering issues and to provide more time for analysis by permitting agencies.

Public hearings accompanied all steps of the application process. The Airport Communities Coalition (ACC), an organization comprising six communities surrounding Sea-Tac Airport, strongly opposed issuance of both the 401 and 404 permits. Upon the news that the Army Corps of Engineers had issued a 404 permit to the Port, the Airport Communities Coalition immediately filed an appeal in federal court.

In announcing its approval of the 404 permit, Corps district commander Col. Ralph Graves spoke of the need to balance protecting some 20 acres of wetlands with the air safety concerns which prompted third runway planning. Under the 404 the Port will restore 80 acres of buffer and wetlands along Miller Creek and 33 acres of buffer and wetlands on Des Moines Creek. In Auburn, the Port will create 30 acres of new wetlands and restore 34 acres of buffer and wetlands, among many other environmental improvements and investments in the greater Sea-Tac area.

Sources:

“USACE Regulatory Program: Section 404 of the Clean Water Act,” United States Army Corps of Engineers Website (http://hq.usace.army.mil/cepa/pubs/wetland.htm); “Clean Water Act, Section 401 Certification,” under "Wetlands," United States

Environmental Protection Agency Website (www.epa.gov/OWOW/wetlands/regs/sec401.html); “Sea-Tac Gets Key Third-Runway Permit, But It’s Quickly Challenged,” *The Seattle Times*, December 14, 2002; “Port Gets Permit For Third Sea-Tac Runway,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, December 13, 2002; “Port Withdraws Request For Third Runway,” *The Seattle Times*, September 29, 2000; “Setback For New Runway: Port Drops Application For Wetlands Permit,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 29, 2000.

By Paula Becker
Research by Daryl McClary and Walt Crowley
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