



December 4, 2019

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
United States Senate

The Honorable Adam Smith
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Pramila Jayapal
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Rick Larsen
United States House of Representatives

Dear Senator Murray, Senator Cantwell, Representative Smith, Representative Jayapal and Representative Larsen,

We are pleased to write to share our collectively developed near-term priorities for addressing airplane noise and emissions through implementation of existing law and passage of relevant legislation. We look forward to working with you and your staff toward swift and successful completion of these provisions.

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (Sea-Tac) is the 8th busiest airport in the country in terms of passenger volumes and one of the fastest growing – increasing from approximately 31 million travelers served in 2010 to almost 50 million last year. The airport plays a vital role in the region’s ongoing economic vitality, but this growth is straining the capacity of our airport and having significant impacts on our communities. For this reason, the Port and the six cities immediately surrounding the airport have identified federal policies, regulations and programs that we believe are essential to help address local community concerns.

Specifically, we have looked at two areas of focus: 1) implementation of provisions of the 2018 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act, and 2) passage of legislation that helps address ongoing issues of concern:

FAA Reauthorization Provisions

While all of the Subtitle D noise provisions are important, we have identified three top priorities – 1) the provisions related to evaluation of the 65 DNL noise standard (sections 173, 187 and 188), 2) the study of the impact of overflight noise on human health (section 189), and 3) the proposed environmental

mitigation pilot program (section 190). The timely and effective execution of these provisions can help address community concerns and have the potential for substantive benefit to our region. In particular:

1. In terms of the 65 DNL, we know that the FAA has completed its comprehensive and detailed survey of noise annoyance levels but has yet to release those findings. We also know they are examining alternative noise metrics and revised land use compatibility guidelines. We urge you to encourage the FAA to release these studies and guidelines as soon as possible. The combined findings will hopefully provide improved noise mitigation best practices to address the noise impacts affecting our communities.
2. As one of the metropolitan areas called out in the legislation for focus, we are obviously particularly interested in the scope, methodology and findings of the study of health and economic impacts of overflight noise. We want to ensure that results of the study align as closely as possible to the Congressional intent behind this FAA bill provision. We urge you to pressure the FAA to take swift action on this provision and to express our interest in being engaged with the FAA and the research university carrying out this work throughout the process.
3. Finally, our region is known for both its innovation and commitment to sustainability, and so we are very excited about the potential for a pilot program that would allow us to experiment with new approaches to reducing or mitigating aviation impacts on noise, air quality, and water quality. We certainly intend to apply for this funding and offer our willingness to provide input to the design and structure of the grant program. We urge you to ensure sufficient appropriations for this provision.

New Legislation

There are also pieces of legislation that we believe would help move our priorities forward and we look forward to working with you toward their passage. These include:

1. Representative Smith's Protecting Airport Communities from Particle Emissions Act, which would direct the FAA to report on ultrafine particles and their health impacts for communities around the 20 largest U.S. airports. The study would also analyze the potential impacts of mitigation options, emissions reductions, and the increased use of aviation biofuels.
2. Representative Lynch's Air Traffic Noise and Pollution Expert Consensus Act, which would direct the FAA to enter into appropriate arrangements with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to provide for a report on the health impacts of air traffic noise and pollution.
3. A new piece of legislation that would allow for secondary noise mitigation investments in previously insulated homes, in specific situations where those noise reduction packages failed or were flawed in some way.
4. Other additional federal investments and policies that expedite the creation and implementation of alternatives to commercial airplane travel – from Urban Air Mobility technology to high speed surface mass transportation options.

We also support Representative Smith’s request¹ that the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) include “single site” airports in the study requested by several of your Congressional colleagues² asking for a study of how the FAA measures, mitigates and engages the public on aircraft noise. The initial request related to so-called “metroplexes,” but we believe that it would be valuable to have similar questions answered related to other large airports. We request your help in ensuring the GAO’s action on this study.

We will be in touch with your staff on next steps. In the meantime, do not hesitate to contact Eric Schinfeld, Senior Manager of Federal Government Relations for the Port of Seattle, at 206.787.5031 or schinfeld.e@portseattle.org with ideas of how we can be most helpful and impactful in our efforts. We deeply appreciate your partnership in ensuring that aviation is as clean, quiet and environmentally sustainable as possible.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Stephanie Bowman
President
Port of Seattle Commission



Mayor Erin Sitterly
City of SeaTac



Mayor Jimmy Matta
City of Burien



Mayor Matt Pina
City of Des Moines



Mayor Jim Ferrell
City of Federal Way



Mayor Allan Ekberg
City of Tukwila



Mayor Jonathan Chicquette
City of Normandy Park

¹ https://b-townblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Smith_GAO.pdf

² <https://schiff.house.gov/imo/media/doc/2019-06-19%20GAO%20noise%20study%20request%20letter.pdf>