



July 19, 2013

Port of Seattle Commission
2711 Alaskan Way
Seattle, WA 98121

Dear Commissioner Albro, Bowman, Bryant, Creighton and Gregoire:

On behalf of the members of the Washington Council on International Trade – retailers, manufacturers, farmers, services providers and others who support strong, pro-trade policies that increase our state’s international competitiveness – I am pleased to write to you in strong support of investments to upgrade and expand the International Arrivals Facility at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

A modern and efficient international arrivals facility is key to our state’s international competitiveness, because of its role as a global gateway for business and leisure travelers from around the world. International tourism is one of Washington state’s top services exports, accounting for \$3.6 billion in exports annually. Approximately half a million international visitors travel to Washington state each year, a trend that has increased dramatically over the last few years. This growth has been led by visitors from Europe, Japan and increasingly China; in 2011 alone visits to Seattle from China increased by 48 percent. Foreign visitors come as business travelers, students at our local universities, and tourists, contributing almost \$17 billion to our economy in 2011. Unfortunately, Sea-Tac International Airport has not been able to keep up with this growth.

International passenger activity at Sea-Tac has grown by 59 percent since 2004. Eleven new international flights have been added since 2007, yet the aging International Arrival Facility has had minimal updates since 1973. As a result, congestion at the customs area becomes a major problem during peak periods, especially mid-day. On a typical day, 1,200 international passengers now arrive in a single hour, creating capacity problems in the current facility, which causes airlines to hold passengers onboard aircraft due to a lack of space at the gates or in the inspection facilities. Facility congestion will result in longer minimum connection time between international and domestic flights; this risks potential loss of market share for Sea-Tac and the region as competitor airports, such as Vancouver, BC, are implementing major initiatives to improve their international connections with capital improvements.

We must invest in our airport, or we will lose our potential to advance Washington state as a leader in the global economy. Thank you for your consideration of this project, and please do not hesitate to contact me at erics@wcit.org or 206.389.7273 with any questions. I look forward to working with you on this project and many other efforts to improve Washington’s international competitiveness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Schinfeld". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "E".

Eric Schinfeld
President
Washington Council on International Trade