

**PORT OF SEATTLE**  
**MEMORANDUM**

**COMMISSION AGENDA**  
**STAFF BRIEFING**

<b>Item No.</b>	<u>7a</u>
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<u>November 24, 2015</u>

**DATE:** October 30, 2015  
**TO:** Ted Fick, Chief Executive Officer  
**FROM:** Michael Ehl, Director, Airport Operations  
**SUBJECT:** Flight Corridor Safety Obstruction Management Briefing

**SYNOPSIS**

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires airport operators to protect flight operations into and out of the airport and assure that objects obstructing approach and departure areas are removed. Approximately 1,600 obstructions have been identified at and around Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (airport), consisting of trees and other vegetation, which must be removed to maintain compliance with regulatory requirements.

To support effective communication and transparency with communities affected by the Flight Corridor Safety Obstruction Management Program, a comprehensive outreach and communication strategy has been developed.

**BACKGROUND**

Obstructions are any objects penetrating FAA designated approach and departure paths at or around an airport. Obstruction studies and the related publication of obstruction charts were completed every ten years by the FAA until approximately 1994. In preparing for the activation of the Third Runway, the FAA produced obstruction analyses in 2005 which led to the removal of trees in 2006-2008. An aerial obstruction analysis was conducted by the Port in 2015 identifying approximately 1,600 obstructions, consisting of trees and other vegetation. These trees have grown to the point where they are considered obstructions by FAA. As trees surrounding the airport continue to mature, it is likely that additional trees will penetrate the approach and departure surfaces and become obstructions. The number of trees designated as obstructions and therefore requiring removal must be verified as part of an ongoing program for obstruction identification and removal.

Similar obstructions in approach and departure areas near the airport have been removed in the past; however, these efforts have been relatively minor in nature. Work is

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underway to develop a comprehensive Flight Corridor Safety Obstruction Management Plan, which will occur in several phases, spanning multiple years. Implementation will be based on a phased delivery approach which will generally occur in the following sequence:

1. Port-Owned Property (on and off of airport)
2. Publicly-Owned Properties (Burien, Des Moines, SeaTac, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Seattle Public Utilities and Highline Public Schools) and Commercial Properties
3. Residential Properties

The Port will conduct an environmental review process for the removal of obstructions to aircraft operations, which includes the opportunity for community input. This environmental review in accordance with federal, state, and local requirements will ensure that the Port evaluates alternatives and potential environmental impacts of the program. A revegetation plan will be developed to minimize future obstructions, identify planting requirements, and consider various approaches to replanting. Environmental review and permitting associated with adjacent jurisdictions will be included in the program.

To support effective communication and transparency with communities affected by the Flight Corridor Safety Obstruction Management Program, a comprehensive outreach and communication strategy has been developed. The cities of SeaTac, Burien and Des Moines, Highline Public Schools, Seattle Public Utilities and WSDOT will be involved in the communication strategy, engagement process, and finalization of the Flight Corridor Safety Obstruction Management Plan.

Justification for this program falls under the following categories:

1. Federal Requirements for Airport Operators to Control Obstructions
  - a. Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) Part 139, Certification of Airports
  - b. Advisory Circular (AC) AC 150/5300.13A change 1, Maintenance of obstacle clearance surfaces
  - c. Grant Assurance 20 “Hazard Removal and Mitigation”
  - d. Grant Assurance 21 “Compatible Land Use”
2. State Requirement for Airport Operators to Control Obstructions
  - a. RCW 14.12.020 “Airport hazards contrary to public interest”
3. Airport’s Strategic Goals and Objectives
  - a. Strategic Goal No. 1, Operate a world-class international airport by: Ensuring safe and secure operations

## **ATTACHMENTS TO THIS BRIEFING**

- PowerPoint presentation

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**PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS**

None