



COMMISSION
AGENDA MEMORANDUM

Item No. 11b

BRIEFING ITEM

Date of Meeting March 9, 2021

DATE: February 18, 2021

TO: Stephen P. Metruck, Executive Director

FROM: Lance Lyttle, Managing Director, Aviation Division
Marco Milanese, Community Engagement Manager, External Relations
Eric Schinfeld, Federal and International Government Relations Senior Manager, External Relations

SUBJECT: SEA Stakeholder Advisory Round Table (StART) 2020 Annual Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Port of Seattle developed the SEA Stakeholder Advisory Round Table (StART) in 2018 to enhance cooperation between the Port and the Highline Forum-member cities of SeaTac, Burien, Des Moines, Normandy Park, Tukwila and Federal Way. This voluntary, non-governing, regional roundtable is convened by the Aviation Managing Director and was influenced by discussions with leadership from the Highline Forum-member cities and other representational entities.

During 2020, the cities of Des Moines, Burien, and Federal Way, temporarily suspended their membership; therefore, membership consisted of the three-remaining airport-area cities until late in 2020, when all three suspended cities reinstated their involvement in StART.

Once the three cities reinstated their involvement, StART took action to revise its Operating Procedures building on work that had begun in early 2020 and then interrupted by COVID-19. The revised Operating Procedures were finalized on January 26, 2021. Among the numerous changes, the revised Operating Procedures establish a more formal relationship with the Highline Forum, create a Steering Committee that provides StART with shared strategic direction, offer the StART membership greater input on the facilitator and strengthen the behavior expectations for the entire membership.

StART's major accomplishments are primarily the result of efforts initiated by its two working groups: The Aviation Noise (AN) Working Group and the Federal Policy (FP) Working Group.

In 2020, the AN Working Group, with a mission to prioritize and explore potential near-term actions to reduce and prevent aviation noise, focused its efforts on refining and reviewing the results of initiatives implemented in its Near-Term Aviation Noise Action Agenda. These included the Late-Night Noise Limitation Program, Revised Runway Use Plan, Glide Slope Adjustment, A320 Aircraft Noise, and Monthly Noise Comment Reporting. Due to COVID-19, two efforts, the Ground Noise Analysis and Noise Abatement Departures Profiles Study, are currently on hold and will be revisited in 2021.

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In 2020, The Federal Policy Working Group, with a mission to create a shared understanding of information, influence legislation, and accelerate the implementation of policies most important to StART, focused its efforts on the development of its Port-Cities Federal Advocacy Agenda. Throughout 2020, the Working Group identified a significant number of shared federal policy priorities – both implementation of existing laws from the 2018 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act as well as new policies and investments to pass into law. Some of the major priorities identified include Representative Smith’s Protecting Airport Communities from Particle Emissions Act, Representative Lynch’s Air Traffic Noise and Pollution Expert Consensus Act, Representative Smith’s legislation that would allow for secondary noise mitigation investments in previously insulated homes and more funding for the existing FAA noise insulation program, more funding for research and deployment of sustainable aviation fuels, more funding and incentives for aircraft modernization and other environmental performance improvements and more research and investment into the future of aircraft.

At their last meeting of 2020, StART members went through a facilitated exercise to define what StART’s top priorities should be in 2021. The results were shared with StART’s Steering Committee’s which then selected several tentative priorities that they believed were most relevant and deserving of further discussion at 2021 StART meetings. Those include ultrafine Particles (UFPs) and the status of studies, aviation fuel dumping and FAA and airport procedures, the 2021 aviation forecast, the South King County Fund, noise insulation and air cargo operations. In 2021, expect the AN Working Group to continue to prioritize efforts that fit within its Near-Term Aviation Noise Action Agenda. For the FP Working Group, expect a continued focus on its Port-Cities Federal Advocacy Agenda and advocating for these priorities through a series of “Virtual DC Fly-in” meetings with Members of Congress and representatives from the Biden Administration.

StART OVERVIEW

Cognizant of SEA’s continued growth and the community impacts associated with that growth, the Port of Seattle is committed to building open relationships with the community and local jurisdictions that foster trust, accountability and collaboration. An important component of that commitment is the creation of StART in early 2018.

The Port of Seattle developed StART to enhance cooperation between the Port and the Highline Forum-member cities of SeaTac, Burien, Des Moines, Normandy Park, Tukwila and Federal Way. This voluntary, non-governing, regional roundtable is convened by the Aviation Managing Director, the Chair, and was influenced by discussions with leadership from the Highline Forum-member cities and other representational entities.

As described in the Operating Procedures, StART is the preeminent forum for information-sharing, discussing the Highline Forum-member cities’ concerns, and providing feedback to the Port for issues related to the airport.

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Each city designates three members to serve on StART who are joined by airline representatives, an air cargo representative and Port staff. The Federal Aviation Administration provides agency expertise.

Meetings, in 2021, are facilitated by Brian Scott, BDS Planning & Urban Design.

StART created two working groups to empower StART’s members to work on identified priorities between StART meetings: The Aviation Noise (AN) Working Group in late 2018 and the Federal Policy (FP) Working Group in early 2019.

MEMBERSHIP & REVISED OPERATING PROCEDURES

From the summer of 2019 to the fall of 2020, three of StART’s six Highline Forum-member cities temporarily suspended their membership: Burien, Des Moines and Federal Way. The three cities have now rejoined and are actively involved on StART and on both working groups.

Though COVID delayed the effort, the Port and all six Highline Forum-member cities collaborated throughout 2020 to address ways to increase StART’s effectiveness and shared accountability. On January 26, 2021, an updated set of operating procedures, including a revised Code of Conduct, was confirmed by the Highline Forum-member cities and the Port. Some of the major changes to the Operating Procedures include:

Reporting Structure with the Highline Forum

The Operating Procedures formalize the relationship between the Highline Forum and StART. StART updates are now provided regularly at Highline Forums with opportunities for input and feedback. Agreed upon recommendations from StART are presented at Highline Forum meetings for consideration.

Establishment of Steering Committee

A newly established Steering Committee provides support, guidance, and strategic direction for StART including agenda setting, speaker identification and external communications. Membership includes the chair, primary non-elected city representatives and an airline representative.

Feedback on Facilitator

The Steering Committee now provides feedback annually on the facilitator’s management of StART meetings and members.

Behavior Expectations of Members

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The Operating Procedures strengthen expectations and clarify responsibilities for all with adhering to StART's Code of Conduct.

AVIATION NOISE WORKING GROUP

In June 2019, StART formed its first working group: The AN Working Group comprised of a subset of StART members, Port staff and additional staff from the Highline Forum-member cities along with a noise consultant to provide expert advice. Its assignment: prioritize and explore potential near-term actions to reduce and prevent aviation noise.

Near-Term Aviation Noise Action Agenda

In 2020, the AN Working Group focused on reviewing and refining efforts implemented within the Near-Term Aviation Noise Action Agenda, including:

- (1) **The Late-Night Noise Limitation Program** – Voluntary measure to reduce late-night noise by incentivizing air carriers to fly at less noise sensitive hours or transition to quieter aircraft. Program commenced in July 2019 with regular reporting each quarter to external audiences.
- (2) **Revised Runway Use Plan** – Informal Runway Use Plan, implemented in late 2019, to minimize use of the 3rd Runway during the late-night. Late-night operations on the 3rd Runway have dropped dramatically in 2020 with a majority of nights absent of any late-night operations on the 3rd Runway.
- (3) **Glide Slope Adjustment** – Raise Runway 34R's glide slope to lessen aircraft approach noise. The 34R glide slope adjustment is incorporated into an airport taxiway reconfiguration project estimated to be finished in 2023. The glide slope adjustment's completion is also contingent on the Sustainable Airport Master Plan's (SAMP) finalization and FAA approval.
- (4) **A320 Aircraft Noise** – Encourage air carriers to install a vortex generator on pre-2014 A320 series aircraft to lessen descent noise. Many air carriers, due to COVID-19's impact have begun retiring pre-2014 A320 series aircraft and the Port will continue to track fleet changes to see how it impacts aircraft noise and help determine any next steps.
- (5) **Monthly Noise Comment Reporting** – Provide up-to-date, accessible information on noise complaints and comments submitted by the public. Monthly reporting began with June 2020.

Two efforts are currently on hold: The **Ground Noise Analysis**, a program to analyze airfield ground noise sources and identify potential mitigation measures, and the **Noise Abatement Departures Profiles Study**, a program to analyze the feasibility of implementing a "distant" departure profile to lessen aircraft departure noise for farther out airport communities. Further discussions will need to occur on StART before next steps can be identified.

In 2020, the AN Working Group recognized that conditions had significantly changed in the airline industry due to COVID-19 and that uncertainty about how and when the aviation industry recovers will have an impact on their action agenda's efforts. Discussions at meetings

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focused on identifying emerging trends in air traffic and exploring new action items that could be undertaken.

FEDERAL POLICY WORKING GROUP

The Port of Seattle is extremely limited in its authority to address some of the core issues that local residents have expressed about aviation: it has no authority to set flight paths or control when planes take off or land; it is required by federal law to accommodate all legitimate airline requests; it cannot determine what airplanes or engines are used by airlines; and airport revenue can only be used for noise insulation if the properties are within the FAA's approved 65 DNL noise contour.

For those reasons, StART formed a FP Working Group – to identify areas of consensus and collaboration between the Port and airport cities on new tools, new authorities, new resources, new approaches and new engagement from the federal government, and to engage Members of Congress in pushing for these shared priorities.

Over a year-long period, the Port and the airport cities successfully identified a significant number of shared federal policy priorities – both implementation of existing laws from the 2018 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act as well as new policies and investments to pass into law. They are as follows:

FAA Reauthorization Provisions:

While all of the FAA Reauthorization noise provisions are important, there are 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 are well aligned with community concerns and have the potential for substantive benefit to the region.

- **Sections 173/187/188:** In terms of the 65 DNL, the FAA put out a brief report finding that the 65 DNL is the only viable metric, but the FP Working Group is interested in them taking a more comprehensive review of this topic. The FAA also recently released its comprehensive and detailed survey of noise annoyance levels, and the findings of this study will be a key driver of next steps related to noise mitigation best practices. The Federal Policy WG is urging policy guidance based on the release of the survey as soon as possible.
- **Section 189:** As one of the metropolitan areas called out in the legislation for focus of the human health study, the FP Working Group is particularly interested in the scope, methodology and findings of the study of health and economic impacts of overflight noise. In addition to urging swift action on this provision, the Federal Policy WG would like to be engaged with the FAA and the research university carrying out this work throughout the process.

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- **Section 190:** The Puget Sound region is known for both its innovation and commitment to sustainability, and so the FP Working Group was very excited about the potential for a pilot program that would allow for experimenting with new approaches to reducing or mitigating aviation impacts on noise, air quality, or water quality. The FP WG certainly intends to apply for this funding, but also offer its willingness to provide input to the design and structure of the grant program. The Federal Policy WG also looks forward to working to ensure sufficient appropriations for this provision.

New Legislation:

There are also pieces of legislation that the FP Working Group believe would help move its priorities forward:

- **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 10 of the busiest U.S. airports. The study would also analyze the potential impacts of mitigation options, emissions reductions, and the increased use of aviation biofuels.
- **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.
- **Representative Smith’s 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.

New Investments:

- **More funding for the existing FAA noise insulation program** – The FP Working Group supports increased set asides for airport improvement grants for airport emission reduction projects, airplane noise mitigation and other airport projects that reduce the adverse effects of airport operations on the environment and surrounding communities.
- **More funding for research and deployment of sustainable aviation fuels as well as other low-zero carbon alternative fuels for ground transportation vehicles such as renewable natural gas and electrification** – The FP Working Group is focused on not only pursuing this goal through legislation and appropriations but also executive action, especially because sustainable aviation fuels not only decrease carbon emissions, but also decrease other air particle emissions.
- **More funding and incentives for aircraft modernization and other environmental performance improvements** – The FP Working Group is impressed and excited about the work that the European Union and the European aviation industry has done to tie together COVID recovery and environmental sustainability, and will be doing more research on how those efforts can be applied in the United States.

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- **More research and investment into the future of aircraft** – The FP Working Group supports federal investments and policies that drive cleaner aircraft, such as electric jets and eVTOL, while ensuring that these new planes don't increase noise impacts. Any new commercial jets – including supersonic aircraft – should meet or exceed existing noise standards.

Now that StART has agreed on these priorities, the FP Working Group is focused on actively advocating for these priorities through a series of “Virtual DC Fly-in” meetings with Members of Congress and representatives from the Biden Administration (specifically FAA and US Department of Transportation).

START IN 2021

At the December 9, 2020 StART meeting, StART members went through a facilitated exercise to define what StART’s top priorities should be in 2021. The results of that exercise were summarized and shared with the StART Steering Committee. At the Steering Committee’s inaugural meeting on January 29, members reviewed the summary and selected several tentative priorities that they believed were most relevant and deserving of further discussion at 2021 StART meetings. Steering Committee members also recommended additional priorities to consider as topics at StART meetings in 2021.

Tentative priorities for 2021 StART meetings:

- 1) Ultrafine Particles (UFPs) and the status of studies
- 2) Aviation fuel dumping and FAA and airport procedures
- 3) 2021 aviation forecast
- 4) South King County Fund
- 5) Noise insulation
- 6) Air cargo operations

The StART AN Working Group and FP Working Group set their own workplans and meeting agendas. In 2021, expect the AN Working Group to continue to prioritize efforts that fit within its Near-Term Aviation Noise Action Agenda. For the FP Working Group, expect a continued focus on its Port-Cities Federal Advocacy Agenda. Both working groups are also receptive to tackling additional topics and priorities as they arise.

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

The 2019 StART Annual Report to the Commission was cancelled in 2020 because of impacts related to COVID-19.

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS BRIEFING

- (1) Presentation slides
- (2) 2020 StART Annual Report

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- (3) StART Operating Procedures
- (4) StART Membership Roster
- (5) Snapshot of StART 2020 Accomplishments & Results
- (6) Near-term Aviation Noise Action Agenda Summary
- (7) StART Federal Policy Advocacy Plan

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

January 22, 2019 – The Commission was briefed on StART’s 2018 Annual Report