



COMMISSION
AGENDA MEMORANDUM

Item No. 11a

BRIEFING ITEM

Date of Meeting May 14, 2024

DATE: April 22, 2024

TO: Stephen P. Metruck, Executive Director

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

SUBJECT: SEA Stakeholder Advisory Round Table (StART) 2023 Annual Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018, the Port of Seattle launched the SEA Stakeholder Advisory Round Table (StART) in partnership with the Highline Forum-member cities and other representational entities to enhance cooperation and tackle the issues of most relevance to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's (SEA's) neighboring cities.

StART provides the Port of Seattle with a dedicated forum intended specifically for discussing and tackling airport and aviation industry concerns from Highline Forum-member cities and their residents. With the Port, the FAA, the primary air carriers, and the airport's neighboring cities all represented around the table, StART brings together all the relevant parties with a common purpose to share information, collaborate and achieve results.

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

StART OVERVIEW

Cognizant of SEA Airport's traffic and location within a dense residential and commercial area in the Puget Sound, the Port of Seattle is committed to building open relationships with the community and local cities that foster trust, accountability, and collaboration. An important component of that commitment was 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 and was developed in partnership with the leadership from the Highline Forum-member cities and other representational entities.

StART provides all parties with the opportunity to:

Meeting Date: May 14, 2024

- Support meaningful and collaborative public dialogue and engagement on airport-related issues;
- Provide an opportunity for the Highline Forum-member cities to inform airport-related decision-making;
- Raise public knowledge about the airport; and
- Most significantly, focus on practical solutions to address community concerns about aircraft operations and the airport.

Each of the neighboring cities designates three members to serve on StART, two community representatives and a city employee, who are joined by representatives from Alaska Airlines and Delta Air Lines, an air cargo representative and Port staff. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) provides agency expertise.

Meetings, in 2023, were facilitated by Brian Scott and Andres Mantilla from Uncommon Bridges with assistance from Dori Krupanic and Cheryl Swab.

For the last several years, StART has staffed two working groups to empower StART’s members to work on identified priorities between StART meetings: the Aviation Noise (AN) Working Group and the Federal Policy (FP) Working Group.

StART MEMBERSHIP

The size and extent of StART’s membership is a decision solely made by StART’s Steering Committee, which was established to provide support, guidance and strategic direction for StART. StART’s Steering Committee has given consideration to requests by other communities to join StART and has decided to retain the current size of the membership due to the shared belief that the experience of the close-in Highline Forum-member cities is different and more multi-faceted than the experience of further out communities.

Changes to StART’s membership or to any of StART’s Operating Procedures cannot be made solely by the Port of Seattle. Consensus-based guidance is what shapes all decisions taken by StART’s Steering Committee, StART’s working groups, and StART itself.

AVIATION NOISE WORKING GROUP

Since its inception, StART’s AN Working Group, with a mission to prioritize and explore potential near-term actions to reduce and prevent aviation noise, has made its focus its Aviation Near-term Noise Action Agenda which includes several programs and efforts, some already implemented and others in development, intended to provide aviation noise relief to the Highline Forum-member cities.

Meeting Date: May 14, 2024

The AN Working Group is comprised of a subset of StART members, Port staff and additional staff from the Highline Forum-member cities and other representational entities along with a noise consultant to provide expert advice.

In 2023, the AN Working Group began to make a pivot primarily due to the extensive groundwork already covered during the Aviation Near-term Noise Action Agenda’s development in previous years. Work with the agenda continued but with more of a focus on results monitoring, considering refinements, if needed, and promoting the agenda’s outcomes both with internal and external audiences.

The AN Working Group also discussed several noise-related topics at meetings that Port staff believed would expand the group’s overall understanding of the noise environment or StART members expressed interest in exploring more. These included a legal dive into aviation easements, ongoing noise insulation efforts, air cargo trends at SEA, the utilization of optimized profile descents at SEA and when and why aircraft go-arounds occur.

Additionally, the AN Working Group began to make its transition to serving as the SEA Part 150 Noise and Land Use Compatibility Study’s Technical Review Committee. A Part 150 Study is required by the FAA to update airport noise programs and establish eligibility for FAA grant funds. SEA’s last Part 150 Study was completed and approved by the FAA in 2014. Airports typically stand up a Technical Review Committee during a Part 150 Study and task it with providing technical input and guidance throughout the life of the study.

Aviation Near-term Noise Action Agenda – 2023 Highlights

In 2023, the AN Working Group continued its work with monitoring the agenda’s programs and efforts and developing and finalizing new programs and efforts to include within the agenda.

Highlights in 2023 include:

(1) **Encouraging Continuous Taxi to Takeoffs** – Recommended in StART’s Ground Noise Study, continuous taxi to takeoffs, also known as rolling takeoffs, have less of a noise footprint than traditional takeoffs that require aircraft to power up after coming to a complete stop. In coordination with the FAA, the air carriers and the members of the AN Working Group, new, voluntary SEA language promoting continuous taxi to takeoffs was enacted mid-2023 and followed by a summer air carrier awareness campaign to encourage greater use by pilots.

(2) **Promoting Single-engine Taxiing** – Also recommended in StART’s Ground Noise Study, single-engine taxiing is an established practice with many air carriers and though it has a modest effect on reducing noise, it does have a measurable effect on reducing aircraft emissions. Language promoting its use is in development and when complete, will be shared with the AN Working Group for consideration.

Aviation Near-term Noise Action Agenda – Earlier Achievements

Meeting Date: May 14, 2024

(1) **Late Night Noise Limitation Program** – The Program is a voluntary effort to reduce late night (12:00 AM to 5:00 AM) noise by incentivizing air carriers to fly at less noise sensitive hours or transition to quieter aircraft. The Program commenced in July 2019 with regular reporting each quarter to StART, air carriers and other external audiences. Four noise monitors track all late night operations between the hours of 12:00 AM and 5:00 AM and capture any takeoffs or landings above established noise thresholds. In early 2021, the program achieved its first success with EVA Air’s switch to the quieter 787 during the late night hours. Previously, EVA Airways flew the 777 and was routinely the air carrier that topped the list of late night air carriers with the most noise exceedances. In 2023, FedEx Express, which had been the late night air carrier with the most noise exceedances post-EVA Airways, began incorporating into their fleet the quieter 767 in place of the older and noisier MD-11. FedEx Express’ decision quickly demonstrated success with the Program’s 2023 second quarter results confirming that FedEx was no longer the air carrier with the most noise exceedances during the late night hours. Leadership from the Port and the Highline-member cities sent a congratulatory letter to FedEx Express encouraging the carrier to continue forward with their fleet renewal efforts.

(2) **Runway Use Plan** – The Informal Runway Use Plan, implemented in late 2019, minimizes use of the Third Runway during the late-night hours (12:00 AM to 5:00 AM). Late night operations on the Third Runway have dropped dramatically since implementation of the Runway Use Plan from a typical average of 12 to 13 operations during the late night hours pre-Runway Use Plan to a 2023 average of less than two operations per night post-Runway Use Plan implementation. And on 240 of the late nights in 2023, there were zero operations on the Third Runway.

(3) **Glide Slope Adjustment** – The goal is to raise Runway 34R’s glideslope to lessen aircraft approach noise. Implementation is contingent on the Sustainable Airport Master Plan’s (SAMP) finalization and FAA approval.

(4) **Noise Comment Reporting** – The Port provides up-to-date, accessible information on noise complaints and comments submitted by the public. Online monthly reporting began with June 2020 with updates provided at all AN Working Group meetings.

(5) **Discouraging Reverse Thrust** – Identified as a noise source in the Ground Noise Study, reverse thrust is used by pilots to deaccelerate aircraft upon landing. In coordination with the FAA, the air carriers and the members of the AN Working Group, updated language discouraging the use of reverse thrust at SEA at all times of the day and beyond what is necessary was implemented in early 2023 and followed by a summer air carrier awareness campaign.

FEDERAL POLICY WORKING GROUP

Because the Port of Seattle is extremely limited in its authority to address some of the core concerns that local residents have expressed about aviation activities, StART formed the FP Working Group as a way to identify areas of consensus and collaboration between the Port and the Highline Forum-member 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. The FP Working Group has developed and continues to implement a shared Port-Cities Federal Policy Priorities agenda.

Meeting Date: May 14, 2024

The FP Working Group is comprised of a subset of StART members, Port staff, and additional staff from the Highline Forum-member cities along with US Congressional staff from offices that represent the Highline Forum-member cities.

Last year, the FP Working Group prioritized advocacy surrounding the FAA Reauthorization Act as well as several agency rulemakings related to aircraft emissions standards and FAA noise policies.

In particular, the Port and the airport cities successfully identified seven shared federal policy priorities for proposed inclusion in the FAA Reauthorization Act:

- 1) Reducing the impact of overflight noise on near-airport communities by:
 - a. Advocating for US Senator Murray’s and US Representative Smith’s legislation to allow for homes located within the airport’s current FAA-recognized noise contour that meet broader criteria for “failed” insulation to be eligible for secondary investments – particularly those homes where the warranty has expired, or the product manufacturer is out-of-business and therefore unavailable to honor warranties.
 - b. Advocating for US Representative Smith’s Aviation Noise and Emissions Mitigation Act, which would empower the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to play a productive role in addressing community concerns about aircraft noise and emissions. This legislation would support the collection of data and then fund initiatives to mitigate aircraft noise and emissions. These new tools could make a significant difference, particularly in terms of environmental justice.
 - c. Instituting a deadline for action and a stakeholder advisory committee on the FAA Noise Policy Review (NPR). Without a clear timeline and deadline for whether and how the FAA may act on the results of the NPR, airports and communities are stuck in a frustrating limbo of uncertainty. The FP Working Group also believes that the FAA could use a wider range of input on this challenging and complicated topic.
- 2) Reducing aircraft emissions through:
 - a. Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) incentives and investments including those contained in the Inflation Reduction Act. The FP Working Group urges Congress to direct the FAA to do everything possible to successfully implement these policies in ways that move the United States toward the Biden-Harris’ Administration’s SAF Grand Challenge goal of producing at least three billion gallons per year of SAF by 2030. Similarly, the FP Working Group supports additional, complementary programs, policies, and investments that the FAA can undertake to facilitate progress – including but not limited to collaboration with other federal agencies such as the US Departments of Energy, Agriculture and Defense.
 - b. Continuing the Environmental Mitigation Pilot Program contained in Section 190 of the 2018 FAA Reauthorization. The FP Working Group supports the authorization of this program at six million dollars per year, because of its potential to support innovative technology solutions to reduce aircraft noise and emissions.

Meeting Date: May 14, 2024

- c. Advocating for US Representative Smith’s Protecting Airport Communities from Particle Emissions Act which would bring more federal attention and engagement on the sources, characteristics, dispersion, and potential health effects of ultrafine particulates from aircraft engines.
- 3) Addressing regional airport capacity needs by ensuring FAA support for new regional airport capacity. In particular, the FP Working Group would like to see policy language in the FAA Reauthorization legislation that 1) clarifies the process for FAA regulatory review and agency collaboration with cities and states in high air travel demand regions looking to invest in new airport capacity; and 2) provides additional FAA guidance on necessary steps to implement any final decisions from the State of Washington’s Commercial Aviation Working Group.

A key part of the advocacy for the federal policy priorities was the first ever StART DC Fly-in, which brought two dozen local elected officials and staff from the airport communities and the Port to Washington, DC to meet with Congress and the FAA. Thanks in large part to those efforts, four of the priorities were included in the House and/or Senate versions of the FAA Reauthorization Act as of March 2024, with a final bill expected to be passed through Congress by May 10: items 1a, 1c, 2c, and 3 above.

In addition, the Federal Policy Working Group submitted several joint comment letters on agency rulemakings, including a highly detailed response to the FAA’s Noise Policy Review.

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS BRIEFING

- (1) Aviation Near-term Noise Action Agenda Summary
- (2) Port-Cities 2023 FAA Reauthorization Priorities One Pager
- (3) 2023 StART Annual Report – Overview
- (4) 2023 StART Annual Report – Federal Policy Working Group
- (5) 2023 StART Annual Report – Aviation Noise Working Group
- (6) Presentation Slides

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

- March 28, 2023 – The Commission was briefed on StART’s 2022 Annual Report
- March 22, 2022 – The Commission was briefed on StART’s 2021 Annual Report
- March 9, 2020 – The Commission was briefed on StART’s 2019 Annual Report
- January 22, 2019 – The Commission was briefed on StART’s 2018 Annual Report