

Truth in Aviation

Newsletter of the Regional Commission
on Airport Affairs (RCAA)

June 29, 2005
Vol. 13, No. 1

High Costs Drive Airlines To Reconsider Their Commitment to Sea-Tac Airport

Citing the high cost of doing business at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Southwest Airlines & King County Executive Ron Sims announced on 14 June that the County and Southwest Airlines were in negotiations to enable low-cost carrier Southwest to shift its local operations from Sea-Tac to King County International Airport (Boeing Field, or BFI). On 23 June, Alaska Airlines said that while it opposed the move by Southwest...[more](#)



King County International Airport (Boeing Field)

After Years of Inaction, Legislature Passes Bill For Major Study of Statewide Airport Needs; State Department of Transportation Begins Work

After years of inaction, the Legislature passed a bill, ESSB 5121, at the recent session, directing that the state conduct a statewide long-term air transportation study on general aviation and commercial airports. ...[more](#)

RCAA – Keeping a Low Profile But Still Working Hard

An interview with Larry Corvari, President of the Regional Commission on Airport Affairs ...[more](#)

More Protection for Des Moines Creek As Ecology Accepts City's Action Request

Des Moines Creek and its East Tributary are slated to receive much higher protection against pollution as the result of action in early June by the Department of Ecology to add both streams to the Department's list of water bodies that need special protection because of ongoing, intractable violations of state water quality standards, as provided by sec. 303 (d) (5) of the federal Clean Water Act. ...[more](#)

Airport's Water Pollution Permit Improved by Department of Ecology

The State Department of Ecology has issued a draft revision of the main water pollution permit for Sea-Tac Airport which includes greatly improved protection for the environment. Incorporating changes ordered by the state's Pollution Control Hearings Board, the draft was issued for public comment in mid-May. [...more](#)

Editorial

Leaks in the dike – Major airlines talk about fleeing Sea-Tac's high costs; Port of Seattle, other airlines, & neighbors fret

RCAA is still trying to sort out the news that Southwest Airlines and Alaska Airlines might leave Seattle-Tacoma International Airport to escape the big cost increases for airlines being levied to pay for the expansion. [...more](#)

Runway embankment work ongoing – and a long way still to go

According to a Port spokesman, the third-runway embankment is 52 percent complete as of this date. The embankment portion of project will require placement of 19.84 million cubic yards of fill (which will settle down & be compacted to 17 million cubic yards). TIA calculates that the third runway will actually require 21.11 million cubic yards of fill. [...more](#)

Summer Break for C.A.S.E.

Regular monthly meetings of Citizens Against Sea-Tac Expansion (C.A.S.E.) are suspended for the summer, & will resume on Wednesday, 7 September, at 7 p.m.. C.A.S.E. meetings are held at the "ERAC" (Highline School District administrative building), 15675 Ambaum Blvd. S.W., Burien. All are welcome.

Truth in Aviation Available by Email

You can now subscribe to have this newsletter conveniently delivered directly by email. Just click [here](#), and then choose send.

[Back issues of Truth in Aviation](#)

Visit our homepage at rcaanews.org... Don't forget to check our [What's the Latest Page](#) for updates between newsletters.

Truth in Aviation

Newsletter of the Regional Commission
on Airport Affairs (RCAA)

High Costs Drive Airlines To Reconsider Their Commitment to Sea-Tac Airport

Citing the high cost of doing business at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Southwest Airlines & King County Executive Ron Sims announced on 14 June that the County and Southwest Airlines were in negotiations to enable low-cost carrier Southwest to shift its local operations from Sea-Tac to King County International Airport (Boeing Field, or BFI). On 23 June, Alaska Airlines said that while it opposed the move by Southwest, if Southwest left Sea-Tac, Alaska would be forced to consider moving some of its flights to Boeing Field. In the mean time, Alaska wants the King County Council to do it a big favor, by refusing to invest in any passenger facilities at BFI that its competitor might use.

The Regional Commission on Airport Affairs (RCAA) says that the proposed moves demonstrate the shaky financial basis of the Port's plan for financing its major expansion projects, including the very pricey embankment for the third runway. [See [EDITORIAL](#)]. "This sort of move cannot come as a surprise," said RCAA President Larry Corvari. "RCAA laid out the whole scenario in our September 2004 newsletter – on the basis of public documents & common sense."

We Build (Cost No Object), But You Pay

The Port finances a large share of its ambitious Airport expansion projects by issuing bonds, to be repaid from future revenues. Paying these bonds (scheduled to reach \$4.7 billion in 2013) will require a lot more revenue. One part of the plan is a big increase in the fees paid by the scheduled airlines. While the airlines were slated to pay \$151 million in 2004, the Port plans to collect \$378 million from them in 2009 – a 250 percent increase. [[TiA 13 Sept 2004 – Table, Airport Financial Forecast](#)] For this, the airlines will gain a bigger, splashier Central Terminal for their passengers to walk through on their way to & from the gates, and a supplemental runway half a mile farther from the terminal, to use when landing in poor weather. Any airline moving to a less-expensive airport in the area (such as Paine Field or Boeing Field) gains an immediate competitive edge on its competitors who stay at Sea-Tac, while passing on that additional \$225 million in costs per year to their customers.

Choosing the lowest-cost airport in multi-airport markets is a well-recognized element in the Southwest business plan, so a move by that airline was not unexpected. Most observers, however, assumed that the move would be to Paine Field in south Snohomish County. In 2004, two different Snohomish County task forces identified commercial passenger service out of Paine as a goal for economic development, & County officials have signed on to this idea, opposed as it is by the immediate

▶ [BACK TO FRONT PAGE](#)

▶ [ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS](#)

[Statement by King County Executive Ron Sims 6/13/05 \[.pdf\]](#)

[Statement by Port Exec. Director Mic Dinsmore 6/22/05 \[.pdf\]](#)

[Alaska Airlines Letter to Larry Phillips 6/22/05 \[.pdf\]](#)

▶ [RELATED STORIES](#)

[Original Seattle PI story June 16, 2005](#)

[Seattle PI Editorial](#)

[MSNBC/King County Journal Article on Alaska Opposing Move 6/28/05 \[.pdf\]](#)

neighbors.

If Southwest leaves Sea-Tac, the Port of Seattle will be looking at a potential revenue shortfall in the year 2009 & beyond of roughly \$30 million (8 percent of \$375 million) – assuming that its place (or its business) is not taken over by other carriers, assuming that the Port cannot make savings in its expenses, and assuming that the Port goes forward with completion of the third runway, with all of its remaining costs. Under present plans, the Port would jack up the fees to the other carriers to squeeze that missing \$30 million from them. It is the prospect of this additional cost increase that has made Alaska Airlines wake up & take notice.

Sea-Tac To Increase Its Traffic by 171 Percent??

Port of Seattle officials were quick to condemn the prospective move. Port Commission President Bob Edwards was quoted by the *Seattle-Post Intelligencer* on 14 June as saying that he was surprised to hear that Southwest was feeling cramped at Sea-Tac. There's no reason for that feeling, he said, because Sea-Tac is expanding its capacity to handle 48 million passengers a year, up from 28 million (a boost of 171 percent). This statement, if it reflected reality, would be very bad news for Sea-Tac neighbors. But ... RCAA knows of no approved or announced plan for such an increase. All the official planning documents for the third runway state unequivocally that the runway, if built, will NOT increase the number of planes arriving Sea-Tac, period. The runway is NOT a capacity-enhancing proposal: it only replaces the existing second runway when that facility cannot be used at the same time as the main (closest-to-terminal) runway, because of poor visibility. If the Port in fact has undisclosed plans to add capacity for another 20 million passengers per year, this would be a good time to publish them. Is this perhaps an early warning for a fourth runway?

M.R. "Mic" Dinsmore", chief executive officer at the Port, said in a statement issued on 22 June, that if Southwest moved "the costs of Sea-Tac operations and expansion would be spread among the remaining airlines," as if that were a compelling reason for Southwest not to seek cheaper facilities.

Mr Dinsmore also asserts that the Puget Sound Regional Council determined a decade ago that expansion of Sea-Tac was THE appropriate alternative for accommodating commercial airline traffic for the future. This is not accurate. PSRC recommended a multi-airport system, & has had development of a second major regional airport as an action item on its agenda since 1993. More to the point, the PSRC is not in a moral or legal position to tell an airline that it must bear high & unnecessary costs to accommodate expansion plans of any airport.

Also of interest was Mr Dinsmore's denial that the Airport has been on "a spending spree". But that is just what has been going on. Billions spent, but no significant improvement in air service, now or in the future.

Can Boeing Field Handle the Traffic?

Critics & skeptics expressed concern about the costs of the move. Several kinds of new facilities would be needed. No doubt, the airline can afford to pay for any ground facilities it might need for itself, or the

County could build such facilities with hardly a blip in its debt load. But who will bear the cost of the sophisticated security equipment now being required for carriers like Southwest? Concerns about the cost of passenger parking are exaggerated, however: it appears that there is ample room for expanded surface parking. A parking structure would be a good long-term project: airport garages usually make good profits.

King County International Airport began as Boeing Field, at a time when the Boeing Company's manufacturing operations were largely based near-by. The general public still calls it Boeing Field, & in the aviation world, it is "BFI". The airport's campus is only 594 acres. Its main runway is exactly 10,000 feet long. The passenger terminal underwent a major renovation, finished in early 2004.

Georgetown, to the airport's north, and Tukwila, to the south, are the two neighborhoods over which most Boeing Field flights pass. Cargo jets from delivery companies UPS and DHL use the facility late in the evenings and early in the mornings, with corporate jets and smaller aircraft flying throughout the day. Noise complaints have been very high from these areas, & from Magnolia (to the north-west), and the Skyway area to the south-east. Neighbors in Seattle's Beacon Hill and Rainier Valley also experience severe noise from BFI traffic.

Existing usage is largely by single-engine "general aviation" aircraft, typically privately owned. Annual operations by category (an "operation" is a combined take-off and landing) for the year 2002/2003 were as follows:

Single engine General Aviation (47.5%)	141,755
Multi-engine General Aviation & Helicopters (19.8%)	59,065
Air Taxi (14.3%)	42,576
Corp Jet Gen Aviation (11.9%)	35,439
Air cargo < 60,000lbs (2.6%)	7,880
Air cargo > 60,000lbs (1.6%)	4,802
Military (0.9%)	2,766
Boeing test flights (0.8%)	2,410
Passenger [scheduled] (0.6%)	1,770
TOTAL (100.0%)	298 463

Southwest would add 30 or 40 operations a day (in the range of 12,000 a year). Clearly, in terms of air-traffic control, the airport could accommodate this slight increase.

A Board member from Seattle Council on Airport Affairs who lives near BFI, speaking anonymously, told *Truth in Aviation* that the larger air-cargo flights (4,802 per year) & the military flights (2,766) cause far more noise problems in the near-by neighborhoods than all the rest of

the traffic put together. "I wonder if we would even notice the Southwest planes," the source added.

Thousands of New Jobs?

In his letter to Council President Phillips, Executive Sims wrote that a move by Southwest to Boeing Field would "create thousands of jobs in Georgetown, Beacon Hill, and White Center". This is, of course, a nonsensical claim. Southwest is not proposing to increase the number of its flights or to switch to bigger aircraft. If the airline flies the same number & same type of planes, it will have no reason to add personnel. Some on-the-ground jobs now done at Sea-Tac would be done a few miles to the north at Boeing Field, but these are not new jobs. Any slight spin-off effect – it would be slight – would be offset by a slight loss of jobs elsewhere. This is not in any way a net gain – and all jobs would remain right here in King County.

Adverse Reactions from Politicians & Neighbors

Immediate reaction to the news from Southwest was skeptical-to-negative from a very broad range of groups that normally are in profound disagreement on aviation/airport issues. Residents close to Boeing Field were fearful of increased overflight noise. A wide range of opinion was reflected in numerous letters-to-the editor – readers should check individual papers' websites for details. It was noteworthy that ordinary citizens – often from areas far from Sea-Tac – recognized that Sea-Tac's excessive costs justified a possible move.

King County Councilmember Dwight Pelz (Dem., 5) was quoted as saying the move was a "terrible idea", & he has introduced legislation in the County Council to make the move impossible. Mr Pelz is an announced candidate for a seat on the Seattle City Council.

King County Councilmember David Irons (Rep., 12), an announced candidate for County Executive, questioned the need for the "additional roar of commercial flights in this area".

[Back to Page 1 of Newsletter](#)

[Home](#) | [What's the Latest?](#) | [Links](#) | [Library](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [About Us](#)

Truth in Aviation

Newsletter of the Regional Commission
on Airport Affairs (RCAA)

After Years of Inaction, Legislature Passes Bill For Major Study of Statewide Airport Needs; State Department of Transportation Begins Work

After years of inaction, the Legislature passed a bill, ESSB 5121, at the recent session, directing that the state conduct a statewide long-term air transportation study on general aviation and commercial airports.



Sen. Karen Keiser, D-33

Sen. Karen Keiser (D-33) said that this was her “personal favorite” piece of legislation (in a session in which a number of her proposals were enacted). An RCAA spokesman said, “At last! Too bad this wasn’t done a decade ago, in time to keep Sea-Tac expansion under control.”

An initial allotment of \$150,000 in State money is likely to be matched by an initial \$450,000 from the Federal Aviation Administration, with the possibility of a second \$450,000 from the FAA under discussion, according to John E. Shambaugh, aviation planner with the Aviation Division of the Department of Transportation (WSDOT).

The bill provides that the initial phase of the study is to be completed by June 2006 – a very fast timeline for such projects. Much of the necessary work will be contracted out to consultants, & the Aviation Division is focusing on developing a scope of work for contractors, with requests for qualification (RFQs) from interested parties to be sought immediately. Selection of one or more consultants by August is scheduled, with a Technical Committee to assist in evaluations.

The statute directs that the Governor appoint an aviation planning council, broadly representative of the various interests, including two members of the general public “with special knowledge or background in airport issues” (which we take to mean folks who have been active in airport-concern groups). The Governor is working on this mandate, according to her office for Boards and Commissions, & applications are currently being accepted from interested persons. Applications should be submitted to

Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, Washington 98504-0002

FAX to 360.753.4110

▶ [BACK TO FRONT PAGE](#)

▶ [ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS](#)

[Text of engrossed SSB5121](#)
[\[.pdf\]](#)

[“Summary: Statewide Long-Term Air Study”](#)
[\[from Aviation Division, WSDOT\]](#) [\[.pdf\]](#)

[“Proposed Project Schedule, Phase I”](#) [\[from Aviation Division, WSDOT\]](#) [\[.pdf\]](#)

[Application form to become a planning council member](#)
[\[.pdf\]](#)

[Nomination form to nominate someone else to be a board member](#) [\[.pdf\]](#)

Truth in Aviation

Newsletter of the Regional Commission
on Airport Affairs (RCAA)

RCAA – Keeping a Low Profile But Still Working Hard

[▶ BACK TO FRONT PAGE](#)

An interview with Larry Corvari, President of the Regional Commission on Airport Affairs

The following is an interview with Larry Corvari, President of the Regional Commission on Airport Affairs (16 June 2005)

Truth in Aviation: President Larry, RCAA seems to have been very quiet in the last few months.

Larry Corvari: We've been quiet but busy.

TiA: Busy at what?

L.C.: Still working on community-impact issues connected to Sea-Tac Airport, as always.

TiA: Such as what?

L.C. Right now, our focus is on the pollution that rolls out of the Airport and into local streams, and, eventually, into Puget Sound. Most people know that the Airport generates a lot of noise, and most people know that the Airport is a big contributor to problems on the freeways, but very few people are aware that Sea-Tac is one of the biggest industrial polluters in the whole State.

TiA: What sorts of pollution?

L.C.: Water pollution is the big issue that we're looking at. Aircraft and Airport ground vehicles contaminate the working areas with copper, de-icing compounds (glycols), fall-out from exhaust, drippings of grease and oil – all sorts of lovely stuff. This all will end up in local lakes and streams, and in the Sound, unless it's dealt with.

TiA: Where does RCAA fit in?

L.C.: We're taking a hard look at the anti-pollution measures that the Airport is supposed to be implementing, as required by the Department of Ecology. The Airport is not allowed to dump any pollution into public waters, except in compliance with its pollution permit, issued by Ecology. And that permit is being re-written, because a State appeal board said that the permit wasn't tough enough. We're closely tracking that re-writing process, and we're supplying expert comments to Ecology, to support a better permit

TiA: Is this doing any good?

L.C.: We think, very much so. We're able to provide very accurate technical information to give support to Ecology's desire to do the right thing. Our work is successful in counteracting incomplete and inaccurate information that the Airport and its consultants have tried to rely on. We've taken over where the former Airport Communities Coalition left off, when it disbanded last year.

TiA: Can you give an example?

L.C.: Here's one, one of many. The Airport has been dumping wastewater into Puget Sound in very large quantities, without treatment to remove de-icing compounds – primarily glycols. As most people know, glycols are hazardous to most forms of animal life. You don't dump old anti-freeze down the sewer. The Airport shouldn't send water that's contaminated with glycols into the Sound, either. They've resisted any effort to make them sent this sort of stuff to Metro for treatment, claiming that the cost was excessive for the benefit gained. We've been able to show that this is not the case, and Ecology is prepared to add conditions to the pollution permit that will make a big reduction in the glycols discharge into Puget Sound (not far, by the way, from the Des Moines Marina).

TiA: Will that cost a lot of money?

L.C.: It won't cost the Airport any more than it would cost anyone else for comparable environmental protection. Airports all across North America face this problem – well, maybe not down in Florida – and they all expect to pay the costs, as they should.

TiA: Well, how much money in dollar terms?

L.C.: No-one is quite sure – a few millions to get started, and a million or two annually in the years to come. Nothing out of line, given the scope of the problem.

TiA: It's expensive to pollute.

L.C.: It's expensive to the innocent by-standers if you don't deal with it. The whole idea behind environmental clean-up is that prevention costs less than dealing with after-the-fact messes.

TiA: What about the third runway?

L.C.: The Port of Seattle has all its necessary permits and official go-aheads, and they have their contactors busily moving fill for that huge embankment on the west side of the Airport. As far as RCAA is concerned, there's nothing to say or do about the project at this point.

TiA: RCAA used to say that the third runway was bad transportation planning.

L.C.: We did, but we were overruled – in part.

TiA: In part? How do you figure, in part?

L.C.: We've always advocated a real multi-airport system for Puget Sound and the whole State. And there has been tremendous progress on this in the last year. The Legislature has mandated a full, State-wide study of air transportation with a view to locating new airport sites, and work is moving right ahead on that. And we see the

pressure in Snohomish County to bring commuter service to Paine Field.

TiA: But putting more traffic into Paine Field sounds like making the Sea-Tac mistake all over again, but in a different location.

L.C.: They're talking about commuter planes – not 747s, not transcontinental planes, not a lot of freight traffic. Just moving a small number of commuter flights out of Sea-Tac will make a big difference in peak times of day. There isn't any sentiment in Snohomish County for turning Paine Field into another Sea-Tac – that's a good thing. We wouldn't want that. But modern commuter planes are not a threat. Paine won't need a longer runway, or another runway, or a bigger campus, to accommodate the flights that Snohomish County really needs for its businesses and residents. I mean, why drive to Sea-Tac and go through all of that hassle, if you only want to fly to Portland or Vancouver, B.C.?

TiA: What about this amazing news that Southwest Airlines is negotiating with King County to move its operations from Sea-Tac to Boeing Field?

L.C.: Negotiating. It's far from a done deal, of course. But as the *Seattle P-I* noted in its editorial this morning, this is another indication of the need for a multi-airport system here – such as most other major metropolitan areas have. There are some potentially serious problems that Southwest and the County will have to deal with – noise, ground traffic, costs So we'll have to wait & see. RCAA will certainly provide our expertise to citizens & communities who want to study this idea in depth. It's important to stress that we wouldn't want Boeing Field to become another Sea-Tac, even if it had the space for expansion.

TiA: Were you expecting this news?

L.C.: In broad terms, yes. Some minor players have already pulled out of Sea-Tac, & we've been hearing rumblings in the last several months about other operators developing itchy feet. I think that the most interesting aspect of the Southwest news is Southwest's focus on the very high costs of doing business at Sea-Tac. Which we have warned about for years. The Port's plan is that by 2009 the airlines will be paying the Airport in fees more than \$23 for every passenger taken on board. Alaska Airlines said last year that they couldn't show a profit unless that number were reduced to \$18 per passenger. And nothing has happened to cut costs since then. The Airport continues to pile up debt, relying on the airlines to provide the income necessary to pay the interest on the bonds. It's not a viable situation, & it was never a workable financing plan.

In the longer run, even if Southwest & other airlines move, the State continues to need a truly modern international airport, & that is not & cannot be either Paine Field or Sea-Tac or Boeing Field. Fortunately, the Legislature, the State Department of Transportation, and the Puget Sound Regional Council are now seeing the light on this. So we at RCAA can focus on more-local problems – like stream pollution.

TiA: What else does RCAA plan to do?

L.C.: Hard to say. This partly depends on what our supporters tell us needs to be done!

Some our attention goes to issues that we've followed from Day One. For example, we are right on top of the question of full funding for the historic agreement to put serious noise insulation into Highline schools – up to \$200 millions worth.

We know all too well that Sea-Tac still makes a lot of noise over a very wide area.

The last official noise study was full of useful suggestions, proposals that unfortunately were torpedoed by the senior staff, with the support of the Port Commission as it was then constituted. We're seeing changes on the Commission, and new folks in top positions on the Port staff. So, I'm modestly hopeful that it won't be long before the good ideas can be dusted off, and get a better reception from the Port. Folks should take a look at the statement on our home page! We have plenty to do!

[Back to Page 1 of Newsletter](#)

[Home](#) | [What's the Latest?](#) | [Links](#) | [Library](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [About Us](#)



More Protection for Des Moines Creek As Ecology Accepts City's Action Request

[▶ BACK TO FRONT PAGE](#)

Des Moines Creek and its East Tributary are slated to receive much higher protection against pollution as the result of action in early June by the Department of Ecology to add both streams to the Department's list of water bodies that need special protection because of ongoing, intractable violations of state water quality standards, as provided by sec. 303 (d) (5) of the federal Clean Water Act.

The City of Des Moines made the formal request in March 2004, at the urging of the Regional Commission on Airport Affairs, with technical support provided by RCAA & its consultants. The streams are now listed for four different "parameters": copper, zinc, dissolved oxygen, and fecal coliform bacteria. During 2004, Ecology considered requests for listings for water bodies all across the State, as part of a required periodic re-assessment.

The next step is for Ecology to send its revised list to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for that agency's review & approval. Thereafter, Ecology will work on plans for a thorough study of the four pollutants in the creeks. This will determine how much pollution is permissible & who is responsible for it. Next will come programs to reduce the pollution to permissible limits.

Attorney Rick Poulin, who assisted in preparing the City's request, said that these listings "were made on the strength of the five-year study conducted by the City of Des Moines" through its consultants, Herrera Environmental.

Unfortunately, parallel requests by the City of Normandy Park and RCAA for a (d)(5) listing of Miller/Walker Creeks were not accepted, in large part because of the absence of reliable long-term studies. Instead, Ecology listed Miller Creek in the category of "waters of concern", for possible excessive levels of dissolved oxygen, copper, & zinc. Sea-Tac Airport is believed to be the largest contributor of these pollutants to the Miller/Walker system (as well as Des Moines Creek), & the Airport is under a mandate to conduct a comprehensive study of water quality including those streams. The results of this study may add weight to the next requests for 303 (d) (5) listings for Miller & Walker Creeks.

[**Back to Page 1 of Newsletter**](#)

Truth in Aviation



Newsletter of the Regional Commission
on Airport Affairs (RCAA)



Airport's Water Pollution Permit Improved by Department of Ecology

▶ [BACK TO FRONT PAGE](#)

▶ [ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS](#)

The State Department of Ecology has issued a draft revision of the main water pollution permit for Sea-Tac Airport which includes greatly improved protection for the environment. Incorporating changes ordered by the state's Pollution Control Hearings Board, the draft was issued for public comment in mid-May.

[Text of Draft Revision](#)

[Fact Sheet](#)

[Fact Sheet Addendum](#)

Major changes include:

- a big reduction in the amount of de-icing fluids discharged into Puget Sound without treatment (98 percent, according to the permit writer, Ed Abbasi);
- recognition of Lake Reba & associated wetlands as "waters of the State", entitled to full environmental protection;
- continued recognition of the so-called Northwest Ponds as "waters of the State" as well.

With Lake Reba listed as "waters of the State", the Port will now be required to measure potentially polluted discharges *before* they enter Lake Reba.

Details of the permit were reviewed in depth at the regular June meeting of Citizens Against Sea-Tac Expansion (C.A.S.E.) on 1 June, by Mr Abbasi and RCAA water-quality consultant Greg Wingard. The consensus was that the revised permit is a great improvement over all previous versions, & that the permit complies with the decision of the Pollution Control Hearings Board issued in October 2004, in an appeal of a prior version. C.A.S.E. President Brett Fish said, "This is the best permit that we've seen yet. The clean-up of glycols & de-icing fluids is a major win for the environment, particularly for Miller Creek, Des Moines Creek, & the Des Moines Marina area." De-icing fluids are toxic to fish.

The next step is issuance of the revised permit in final form, after which it may be appealed to the PCHB. At this writing, the Port of Seattle has not announced whether it will appeal the permit. Each of the major changes in the permit will require the Port to incur new costs – charges for treatment of the glycol-contaminated wastewater, expenses in new monitoring of discharges into the Lake Reba complex of lake and wetlands. But the changes in the permit appear to be absolutely required by applicable law, regulations, & rulings of the PCHB, so the Port would have little to gain from an appeal, except more expense & conflict.

[Back to Page 1 of Newsletter](#)



EDITORIAL

[▶ BACK TO FRONT PAGE](#)

Leaks in the dike – Major airlines talk about fleeing Sea-Tac's high costs; Port of Seattle, other airlines, & neighbors fret

RCAA is still trying to sort out the news that Southwest Airlines and Alaska Airlines might leave Seattle-Tacoma International Airport to escape the big cost increases for airlines being levied to pay for the Airport's expansion.

Obviously, there is for RCAA an element of “We told you so”. RCAA has been warning for years that Sea-Tac's expansion would cost too much and would produce too little gain for the money--especially the \$1 billion-plus third runway. What would happen, we asked, when the airlines go bankrupt or want out? The Port's financial projections depend on all the airlines staying and paying much higher rates.

It's not certain that Southwest or Alaska actually will move, but the magic words, “Your costs are so high that we might leave”, have now been spoken. There are serious leaks in the dike. If Southwest or Alaska doesn't in fact go, someone else will. That airline will enjoy a nice competitive advantage, operating out of Boeing Field or Paine Field with costs far below those of their competitors.

Where Will It End?

Even if Southwest does move to Boeing Field, that is not the end of the story. Inevitably, someone one will start to use Paine Field. There is a significant local market in the Everett-South County area, & room for growth at Paine Field (1284 acres, compared to BFI's 596, & very few flights per day at present). A few additional flights in & out each day would not have much impact on neighbors (almost nothing compared to Sea-Tac). And then there's Portland, a genuine international airport, with all needed facilities. For a lot of fliers, Portland is about as close as Sea-Tac. For others who live or work closer to Sea-Tac, why not drive an extra hour or so to Portland, & save a lot of money, if the price is right, & the time spent is right?

Whither the Port of Seattle?

The Airport brings in 71 percent of the Port's revenue. Even the members of the Port Commission now realize that if just one airline declines to pay an exorbitant price to fly in & out of Sea-Tac Airport, then the entire Port operation (warehouses, marinas, Fishermen's Terminal, cargo docks, cruise-ship terminals, industrial parks, housing projects & other real-estate speculations) is in jeopardy. The Port of Seattle is all one “business”, heavily in debt, and faces the potential of grave problems in meeting its debt obligations should the Sea-Tac revenue stream fail to increase at the expected rate.

Noise Issues Must Be Addressed

Equally obvious, we hope, is our concern for the nearest neighbors of Boeing Field. Frankly, we had always thought that the exodus from Sea-Tac would begin with a move to Paine Field, or to Portland, not to BFI. And that may yet turn out to be the case. Either way, the management of all the airports need to exert themselves to protect their neighbors from excessive noise and air pollution. Neither airport can refuse to let a scheduled airline use the runways, but an airport need not provide terminals, hangars & so on at its own expense, unless it wishes to. So, there is plenty of room for shrewd bargaining, based on solid understanding of the possible impacts.

King County and Snohomish County governments need to learn as much as possible about the noise characteristics of the aircraft that new airline tenants propose to bring with them. They will need to have serious discussions about scheduling. They need to bring the neighbors – even those most opposed to any new air traffic – into the discussions very early on, & sincerely.

Scheduled airlines will use Paine & BFI. That will take some pressure off Sea-Tac as an airport (though increasing pressure on the Port's finances). But these changes are NOT long-term solutions. They do not satisfy the regional goal, established a decade ago, for at least one new major airport serving the metropolitan area. Soon now, this state is going to have to get its act together and at least landbank plenty of acreage for the airport of the next century.

[Back to Page 1 of Newsletter](#)

[Home](#) | [What's the Latest?](#) | [Links](#) | [Library](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [About Us](#)



Runway embankment work ongoing – and a long way still to go

▶ [BACK TO FRONT PAGE](#)

According to a Port spokesman, the third-runway embankment is 52 percent complete as of this date. The embankment portion of project will require placement of 19.84 million cubic yards of fill (which will settle down & be compacted to 17 million cubic yards). *TIA* calculates that the third runway will actually require 21.11 million cubic yards of fill. We include fill hauled for the RUNWAY SAFETY AREAS (1.13mcy) and for relocating of South 154 th St. (.14 mcy) our estimate because we think both are integral to the project.

The average load for the fill-haul trucks is about 18 cubic yards. TTI claims that there has been a sharp drop in the number of illegally overloaded trucks (as of the end of April), down to 7 percent from a high of 46 percent last Fall.

When *TTI Constructors, LLC* , the consortium now working on the embankment, winds up its hauling work in December 2005, the embankment will contain somewhat more than 14 million cubic yards (mcy) In short, there is a long way to go, & a lot of expense, before the Port can start pouring concrete for the runway.

In the years ahead, the Port of Seattle will need to seek bids for more than 7 million cubic yards of clean fill– at least another two years' worth of work. This next phase of the project will focus on straightforward fill-hauling & embankment construction, for most of the site-preparation work will have been finished. It is too early to give an accurate prediction what this phase will cost, but another \$200 million would be in the ball park.

All That Fill -& Still No Runway

After the embankment will come actually building the concrete runway on top of the embankment. The least that the Airport can expect to pay for that work is \$10,000 a linear foot, or \$85 million. We would not be surprised if the bids came in at double that, given traditionally high labor costs in the Puget Sound area, rising costs of fuel, & short supplies of construction-grade concrete. So, at the very least, there remains to be done work amounting to \$285 million & perhaps twice that.

The average load for the fill-haul trucks is about 18 cubic yards. TTI claims that there has been a sharp drop in the number of illegally overloaded trucks (as of the end of April), down to 7 percent from a high of 46 percent last Fall.

[Back to Page 1 of Newsletter](#)

[Home](#) | [What's the Latest?](#) | [Links](#) | [Library](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [About Us](#)