

4 June 2008

Mike Cooper  
Dave Gossett  
John Koster  
Dave Somers  
Brian Sullivan

## Paine Field Update

### **County Council Reaffirms Commitment Opposing Commercial Passenger Air Service at Paine Field**

For the fourth time in almost 30 years, the Snohomish County Council has restated its opposition to commercial air passenger services operating from Paine Field, the county-owned airport located adjacent to south Everett, Mukilteo and Lynnwood.

M/S #609  
3000 Rockefeller Avenue  
Everett, WA 98201-4046  
425-388-3494  
FAX 425-388-3496  
TTY/TDD 425-388-3700

The council voted 4-1 to “reaffirm our county's commitment to preserving the existing general aviation role of Paine Field, and [to] pursue any and all lawful and appropriate means to discourage any action that would facilitate, directly or indirectly, use of Paine Field for scheduled air passenger service or air cargo service, which may include an interlocal agreement.”

The council's action was triggered by a recent inquiry from Allegiant Air, a Nevada-based commercial airline, expressing an interest in offering flights to Las Vegas from Paine Field.

Councilmember Brian Sullivan introduced the resolution, noting that based on the original 1978-79 Mediated Role Determination (MRD) opposing passenger air service at the airport, the county subsequently changed the zoning for about 8,000 surrounding acres from industrial to residential uses.

“The county made a deal with the community and over 100,000 people have moved here because of the promises Snohomish County made,” said Sullivan. “A deal is a deal.”

Concerns about increased aircraft noise have continually rallied neighborhood groups to oppose allowing passenger or air cargo flights into the airport, although the county cannot outright ban such services.

The council did amend the original proposed resolution to make it clear the county was not endorsing suggestions from some that the airport should decline future FAA airport improvement grants.

“We have thousands of families here dependent on good aerospace industry jobs,” said Councilmember Dave Gossett, “and the FAA grants are essential for maintaining and improving Paine Field to meet industry standards.”

The amended resolution “will not jeopardize the aerospace industry,” said Councilmember Mike Cooper. “The amendment gives the county flexibility to address the concerns of individual cities.”

“We have to be cautious to protect the county from hasty decisions,” said Councilmember John Koster, who opposed the resolution. “We cannot ignore the agreements to which we are bound ... and we may be raising false expectations about what we can do.”

Despite the resolution's approval, Sullivan said, “there's still a big test ahead” since the county's options are limited by federal restrictions incorporated into both the original U.S. Air Force agreement

deeding Paine Field to the county and by many subsequent Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) airport improvement grants. These restrictions state that county cannot deny such services.

“A deal is a deal,” said Council Chair Dave Somers, “but there really are three deals – the MRD, the Air Force deed and the FAA grants.”

“We are sitting on a three-legged stool,” he said, “and we must be careful to fulfill all our legal obligations.”

Even so, councilmembers said the county has managed to stave off previous air passenger service requests by refusing to spend any county funds to provide the requisite terminal, parking and security infrastructure necessary to support such services.

In a May 19 letter to Allegiant Air, Sullivan, Cooper and Gossett wrote: “We are committed to oppose any Snohomish County budget actions that promote or facilitate commercial air passenger services from Paine Field.”

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- Link to May 16 letter [from Allegiant Air](#)
- Link to May 19 council response [to Allegiant Air](#)
- Link to June 4 [resolution](#)

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CONTACT: Fred Bird  
Council Public Information Officer  
425-388-3873; Cell 206-200-2514  
fred.bird@co.snohomish.wa.us