

Airport Nixes Noise Monitoring Proposal

On April 29th, the Dane County Regional Airport held its semi-annual meeting of the Airport Noise Subcommittee. Air traffic and complaints to the Aircraft Noise Hotline (246-5811) for the preceding six months were reviewed. Airline flights were up 8% and military flights were up 20% over the preceding year. In 2002 the airport had a record 1.5 million passengers, with the first three months of 2003 showing a trend for another record year. It was reported that the airport had broken ground on a \$55 million expansion of the terminal.

With the increase in air traffic came an increase in complaints to the noise hotline. The number of callers increased 63% over the previous year. Airport staff were cautioned by residents attending the meeting against using noise hotline complaints to gage the success of noise control program. It was pointed out that the complaint log does not include residents who have stopped calling due to their frustration by the lack of improvement, or those who have given up and simply moved away from the airport's impact area.

At the meeting held last fall, the SASY Neighborhood Association proposed the installation of a noise monitoring system to objectively measure changes in the noise in surrounding neighborhoods and the success of the airport's noise control efforts. At the April 29th meeting, the need for a noise monitoring system was raised again. It was noted that with the continued financial success of the airport, funds would now be available for more noise control measures such as the monitoring system. As he did last fall, Acting Airport Director Dave Jensen again rejected the benefits of a noise monitoring system and concluded it was still too expensive.

Residents repeated a suggestion made last fall that airport staff encourage the relocation of the F-16 fighter jet training flights outside of Madison. These flights had temporarily moved to Volk Field during the six month repair of the main runway in 2000. This option was rejected by the noise committee as beyond their responsibilities noting this change would be inconvenient for military personnel.

The airport is continuing its negotiations with the City of Madison over future development in the surrounding area. The airport was opposing a new 300-home development west of the airport since these residents would be exposed to airport noise. Ironically, the incomes of these new residents would generate \$75 million in economic benefits to Madison, nearly as much as the regional benefits touted by the airport.

At the close of the meeting, it was proposed that the regular agenda be updated to include an apology to surrounding residents for the impacts of the airport. Bill White, committee chairman, concluded that he did "not want to go there". On this issue, another meeting attendee noted that airport noise was much worse in 1966, so no one should complain.

Residents interested in improving the airport noise control program are encouraged to register complaints on the noise hotline (246-5811), send suggestions to County Executive Kathleen Falk at the City-County Building, Room 421, email: falk@co.dane.wi.us, or attend the Airport Noise Committee meetings held twice each year.

Steve Klafka
Area Resident