

Subject: Earth Day News - SASY Neighborhood Association Releases Airport Noise Survey Results

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Earth Day News - SASY Neighborhood Association Releases Airport Noise Survey Results

Living in high noise is more than an annoyance -- it can damage your health and your child's education."
Professor Colleen Moore, University of Wisconsin

Madison, Wisconsin -- In Celebration of Earth Day, the [SASY Neighborhood Association](#) is releasing results from its Spring 2009 airport noise survey and calling for further reductions in noise generated by the Dane County Airport. The internet-based survey was distributed to eastside neighborhood associations, area schools and interested residents. It allowed eastside residents to sound off about noise generated by aircraft traffic from the Dane County Airport which sends over 30,000 planes a year over populated areas of Madison each year. Residents were asked how they were impacted by airport noise, the types of aircraft responsible for the worse noise, and to provide suggestions for improving the county's noise abatement program. Survey results confirm that county airport noise remains both a nuisance but also a health concern for many eastside residents. Passing aircraft has caused houses and windows to shake, property to be broken, and brought conversations to a halt. The loudest aircraft identified were fighter jets, both in the air and on the ground, freight planes, then commercial traffic.

Residents called for greater reductions in airport noise and provided their own suggestions for improvements. Examples included: limiting early morning and late night flights; further reducing the number of flights over populated areas of the city; limiting the number of successive flights over the same flight path; soundproofing or relocating homes located on flight paths; creating a fund to offset airport impacts; announcing the time of jet training flights; moving military flights to a military airport; and, creating an independent committee to promote and oversee airport environmental protection projects. Residents hoped the possible high speed rail link to Milwaukee would reduce use of the county airport and its noise.

To improve communication, residents suggested that the airport make more positive contact with impacted residents; begin conducting its own surveys; hold its noise abatement meetings in impacted neighborhoods rather than at the airport; and appoint airport commission members sympathetic to those affected by airport operations. To better gauge the success of its noise control program, the airport should measure actual noise levels and publish regular reports on the number of flights over populated areas.

The eastside of Madison, including the Schenk - Atwood neighborhood, is the home of the 3,000-acre Dane County Airport . While noise generated by the airport's operations have been reduced over the years, the airport remains the largest unregulated polluter in the county. Noise abatement is voluntary. Noise has been treated as a nuisance, rather than a legitimate health and environmental concern. Noise abatement measures taken by other airports in the U.S. have included the relocation of residents along flight paths; addition of sound insulation to impacted homes, schools and businesses; and funding a community benefits agreement to offset environmental and economic impacts on surrounding neighborhoods. While the financial success of the Dane County Airport has allowed a continuous string of multi-million dollar construction projects during the past 15 years, little has been spent on noise abatement, relying on an answering machine to record noise complaints. The survey results suggest this noise hotline is infrequently used and does not provide an accurate measure of airport noise impacts. Residents have found the hotline to be both difficult to use and ineffective.

The primary noise control strategy for the county airport is encouraging airplane take-offs to and landings from the north, away from populated areas. Even with this strategy, over 30,000 airplanes continue to fly over Madison each year.

While many may consider airport noise a simple nuisance for those living in Madison, improving the county airport's noise abatement program also has significant health benefits, especially for children. According to Professor Colleen Moore from the University of Wisconsin:

A major study of airport noise in three European countries in 2005 showed that for each 5 dB increase in aircraft noise at a school, reading comprehension showed a 2 month developmental delay on standardized tests. Expert panels in the 1990s in both the UK and the Netherlands concluded that living in high noise is associated not only with worse school performance, but also with negative health effects including elevated rates of hypertension, ischemic heart disease, and sleep disturbance. In spite of these solid scientific findings, the US Federal Aviation Agency bases noise abatement action on estimated annoyance rather than on the scientific evidence of health and educational impacts. Living in high noise is more than an annoyance -- it can damage your health and your child's education.'(1)

When Madison area residents make travel plans, they are reminded that flying is the mode of transportation which generates the greatest amounts of noise pollution, air pollution and green house gases. This is especially true for short flights to other airports in the region including Milwaukee and Chicago. Using a bus, driving your family to these cities or using a future high speed rail system will generate far less emissions and is typically cheaper.

Results of the airport noise survey are being provided to County Executive Kathy Falk, Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz, and County Airport Director Brad Livingston to encourage continued reduction in the noise impacts of the county airport on surrounding Madison neighborhoods.

For more information about the noise survey and this news release, please contact Michael Goodman (email: michaelagoodman@yahoo.com and telephone: 249-4350 or Steven Klafka (email: steve@sasyna.org and telephone: 255-5030).

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