

SASY Airport Noise Committee

Report of March 7, 2012

Chair: Melanie Foxcroft

Members: Steve Klafka and Tim Wong

Specific Issues to Report to Council

On February 2, 2012, Committee members Steve Klafka and Melanie Foxcroft, with SASY Council Chair Lou Host-Jablonski, met with the County Executive Joe Parisi, a member of his staff (Josh Westcott), those representing the airport invited by County Executive (Paul Rusk, Rik Dunkelberg, Brad Livingston) , and Art Hackett, Co-Chair of the Eken Park Neighborhood Association.

Steve Klafka presented a power point presentation showing the burden airport noise imposes on the neighborhood and requesting more effective noise reduction approaches as have been implemented by certain airports. Airport staff and the Director Mr. Livingston pointed to many efforts taken by the Dane County Airport and Truax to ameliorate airport noise, including a “hush box” for military jets, construction of runway 321, and a sign on the runway. They discussed the limitations they face implementing additional approaches. The FAA now has the sole responsibility for regulating airport noise under Federal regulations recently passed by Congress to standardize airport operations nationwide, which may be understandably frustrating for members of the public impacted by noise. In addition, revenue created by airport operations is not allowed to be “diverted” to uses such as noise amelioration in locations where FAA standards show noise levels to be 65 Decibels or lower, the Federal standard, which is the case for the area of the airport outside of the Dane County Airport fence now that commercial jets have become significantly quieter over the last few years. The noisiest commercial airplanes remaining are freight planes that are scheduled to be replaced. The airport itself has significant lack of enforcement power allowed by Congress. Additional limitations are the relative independence of Airport Controllers (Federal Airport Administration [FAA]-controlled); and of airline pilots who are concerned primarily with safety, various regulations, operational capabilities of the airplanes timely arrivals and departures, utilizing winds to assist in safe takeoffs and landings, shorter routes over the city to save fuel and time, and similar considerations. The broad independent control of the airport authority is related to airport facilities/terminal buildings and related operations, and operation of flight tracking and monitoring systems. Approximately 2/3 of airplanes are tracked by the airport, however, “single event” operations are not necessarily tracked so the airport is unable to measure noise by particular airplanes for the most part.

Airport representatives pointed out that by contrast, European airports are operated as an integrated system, with the authority to regulate noise, establish carbon footprints, curfews, and take other steps that may be more responsive to public input. Staff noted that noise amelioration approaches taken by other US airports and by Dane County in the past are not allowed under current FAA regulations. Public influence in the US is limited to influencing members of Congress and political representatives, and the airlines themselves.

Discussion Items at the SASY Council Meeting: discussion of possible next steps for Committee action.

Next Meeting: to be announced.