



Schenk-Atwood-Starkweather-Yahara Neighborhood Association

October 24, 2012

Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin
Madison Office
10 East Doty St, Suite 405
Madison, WI 53703

Subject: Recommendations for Reducing Dane County Airport Noise

On October 8th, the SASY Neighborhood Association provided Dane County Executive Joe Parisi with recommendations for reducing noise from the Dane County Regional Airport. As acknowledged by your assistant Kathy Travally your Madison office received a copy of our recommendations.

Several of the recommendations depend on the performance of federal agencies. For these, you as our congressional representative may be in the best position to help use improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods surrounding the airport and make them safer, healthier and more desirable.

We hope you can help us with the following noise abatement recommendations:

UPDATE THE 1996 NOISE ABATEMENT PLAN

As with all forms of environmental protection, airport noise abatement methods have continued to improve during the past 16 years. The county airport needs to update and modernize its outdated noise abatement plan. The Federal Aviation Administration or FAA oversees the noise abatement requirements of airports in the U.S. The FAA needs to be more proactive and encourage our county airport to update and maintain its noise abatement plan. The FAA should help our county airport identify the numerous noise abatement methods which have been implemented at other airports in the U.S. and encourage the county airport to adopt these measures. These may include the addition of noise insulation to neighborhood homes and schools, real-time monitoring of airport flights, and measurement of noise levels in surrounding airports. The FAA should encourage our county airport to minimize its noise impacts to the greatest extent possible. It should not oppose noise control strategies such as flight curfews or higher fees for airlines which do not follow our county airport noise abatement plan.

REDUCE NOISE FROM MILITARY FLIGHTS AND OPERATIONS

The loudest source of airport-related noise continues to be military flights and operations. It's not surprising to learn that during the past 10 years, the number of military flights has increased 50% from 6,000 to 9,000 movements per year with no public input. Helicopters shake homes and the roar of F-16 jets is loud enough to disrupt classrooms and take your breath away. Jet engine revving and testing on the ground exceeds the lax FAA noise standard as far as three miles from the airport. When the airport noise abatement plan is updated, reducing noise from military operations needs its own focused plan. For example, military flights should be scheduled so none fly over the city but only take off and land north of the city. As we were frightfully reminded by the recent military jet crash into apartments in Virginia Beach, these training flights also increase the chance for another plane crash in residential areas of the city. A long-term plan is needed to move training flights to Volk Field as occurred in 2000 when the main airport runway was being rebuilt. While a "hush house" was constructed to quiet jet engine testing on the ground, it is a failure and needs to be improved. Engine testing needs to be scheduled during business hours and not late at night. If military staff is unwilling to help reduce their noise impacts and county staff cannot regulate military flights, then they should seek help from our federal representatives.

REDUCING ADVERSE ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Many people benefit from the county airport. However, its location within the City of Madison means there are also many people who bear the costs. Besides reducing our quality of life, airport noise affects city planning and poverty. The Madison Comprehensive Plan needed to remove eleven square miles or 18% of city land area from residential development to accommodate the airport. While noise makes this large area of Madison uninhabitable, it also makes adjacent neighborhoods undesirable. The City of Madison Neighborhood Indicators Project shows that outside the airport's uninhabitable area are the lowest property values in the city and the highest rates of families on public assistance. While Madison already has a disproportionate number of low income children and minorities in our public schools compared to surrounding suburbs, the elementary and middle schools in neighborhoods surrounding the airport have even a greater share of children from low income families, comprising over 70% of the students. If there is to be a continued military presence at the county airport, then a plan is needed to offset the economic impacts on surrounding neighborhoods. Similar to our recommendations for the county airport, the military should give employment and contractor preference to those living in surrounding neighborhoods. Military employees should be encouraged to live in surrounding neighborhoods. Military personnel can support current school district efforts to improve the academic performance of low income and minority students by participating in school district tutoring programs.

PROVIDE INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT

Unlike other forms of pollution, there is no EPA or DNR, no team of trained experts, or independent regulators working to reduce noise from the county airport. Instead we have a situation where the wolf is guarding the hen house. The FAA should be encouraged to provide independent oversight of the county airport's noise abatement plan. An annual evaluation should be conducted to identify the effectiveness of the noise abatement program and provide suggestions for improvements.

RESPOND TO OUR QUESTIONS

In our October 8th letter to County Executive Parisi, we included an extensive list of questions on the noise abatement program at the county airport. Many of these questions were related to military flights. Please encourage military staff to address these questions so we can better understand its noise abatement methods.

Thank you for listening to our concerns about airport noise, and your leadership improve the quality of life for all Dane County residents.

If necessary, we would welcome the opportunity to sit down and meet with you and your staff to discuss our suggestions. Leading our multi-neighborhood effort is the SASY Neighborhood Association airport noise subcommittee. When you and your staff would like to discuss our recommendations, please contact contact Melanie Foxcroft at Melanie@sasyna.org or Steve Klafka at steve@sasyna.org (608/255-5030).

Sincerely,

Schenk-Atwood-Starkweather-Yahara Neighborhood Association

Signed by: Lou Host-Jablonski, Chair

Signed by: Steven Klafka, Airport Noise Committee

Enclosure

Cc:

Representatives

County Executive Joe Parisi
Madison Mayor Paul Soglin
Monona Mayor Bob Miller
Representative Mark Pocan
Representative Chris Taylor
Senator Mark Miller

County Supervisor John Hendrick
County Supervisor Paul Rusk

Eastside and Northside Neighborhood Associations

East Isthmus Neighborhoods Planning Council (Jody Werzinske)

Northside Planning Council

Megan Maguire (Sherman NA)

Willy Holden (Berkley Oaks NA)

Beth Sweeney (Westchester Gardens NA)

Bill Grove (Majestic Oaks NA)

Cassandra Garcia (Hawthorne NA)

Char Tortorice (Lake View NA)

Dace Zeps (Worthington Park NA)

Dolly O'Laughlin (Brentwood Village A)

Jeff Mintzlaff (Burke Heights NA)

Joe Campana (Ridgewood NA)

John Koch (Emerson East NA)

Jon Duxbury (Sheridan Triangle NA)

Sue Christoffersen (Glendale NA)

Susan Hill (Mendota Hills NA)

Ted Blazel (Heritage Heights CA)

Tonya Nisbet (East Buckeye NA)

Joseph Clausius (Clarendon Hills HA)

Kathy Soukup (East Moreland CA)

Tim Klaben (Rolling Meadows NA)

Mike Digman (Elvehjem NA)

Pat Hadden (Truax NA)

Art Hackett (Eken Park NA)

Randall Glysch (Carpenter-Ridgeway NA)

Richard Linster (Tenney-Lapham NA)

Scott Thornton (Marquette NA)

Shelley Legried (Whitetail Ridge)

Environmental Organizations

Kristen Joiner (Sustain Dane)

Twink Jan-McMahon (Sustainable Atwood)

Maria Powell (Madison Environmental Justice Organization)

Kim Wright (Midwest Environmental Advocates)