

Port of Seattle's interim Executive Director, David Soike, offered a public comment to FAA's proposal to create a Noise Portal. Let's take a closer look at the POS position, which does include many good points, but misses wildly for the hypocrisy. It looks like the POS minions drafted up a nice letter, which he signed, not knowing about the hypocrisy.

Excerpt 1:

to the ninth busiest passenger airport in the country. **As we grow, we are committed to ensuring that Sea-Tac benefits our region and neighbors, which includes being responsive to community concerns about aircraft impact; that is why the Port's Noise Program is one of the most comprehensive in the country, and why we have invested over \$400 million in noise mitigation programs over the past thirty years.** In particular, the airport has both a noise hotline and an

Here, POS is crowing about their investment in 'noise mitigation', while failing to acknowledge the destruction that only continues to grow. POS claims to be responsive, and yet there are many who, throughout this year, have complained repeatedly about NEVER hearing anything back from POS when they file complaints.

Excerpt 2:

The Port is acutely aware, however, that many of the airplane noise issues we respond to are not directly in our control – from the location of flight paths to individual homes' eligibility for noise insulation programs – and that is why we wholeheartedly welcome the FAA taking a more direct and systematic approach to collecting and responding to these community concerns. Your agency is the appropriate respondent to many of these inquiries, and the creation of a noise portal will go far to address long-standing frustration from local residents about their inability to communicate directly with FAA staff on these issues.

Here, POS is making a very important point which actually starts to define the futility of FAA pretending to manage a new Noise Portal. FAA has a track record, over many decades, of blowing off noise complaints. This captured agency has repeatedly passed the buck, refusing to take any actions, often instead asserting only Congress has authority. If FAA creates a new Noise Portal but does not actually follow through, it will only prove even further that there are NO COMMUNICATIONS to be had with FAA; they just do not care to address citizen concerns.

Excerpt 3:

1) Responsiveness: One of the most important performance metrics for the success of your noise portal will be responsiveness – both ensuring that every comment received gets answered, and also setting a reasonable maximum turn-around time for that outreach. The Port's commitment has long been that one of our employees will personally respond to public comments that arrive through our noise portals. Whether individuals are reaching out with basic questions or to express deep frustration, everyone needs and deserves a timely response. For the FAA, this will often require more than just a form letter or the sharing of canned information,

Here, POS is correctly asserting how everyone "...needs and deserve s a timely response...." Yes, though both POS and FAA have a terrible record here, with a reputation for either delaying excessively, redacting excessively, or even never responding.

Excerpt 4:

2) Solution-Oriented Answers: As with almost any customer service effort, we know that it is not enough to tell people that “we’re sorry but there’s nothing we can do.” As an airport located near some of the most famous customer-focused brands in the world (from Nordstrom to Amazon.com), we have learned that people want real answers to their questions and want to feel like their concerns are being addressed. In our program, Port staff spend significant time helping residents understand the causes of airplane noise near their homes, as well as what programs may be available to address their concerns. While the actual avenues for redress are limited, it is essential that the FAA put significant thought up-front into the kind of productive responses it will offer to people related to the various kinds of calls you might receive.

It is hard not to like what POS states here. Yes, of course people want answers and responses, and want to see concerns addressed. Again, though, there is a lot of hypocrisy in this POS statement. Both FAA and POS deserve their terrible reputations for failure to respond with ‘solution-oriented answers’. Obviously, responses need to happen in a timely fashion, and they need to be productive (not just a bunch of spin or lame excuses).

Excerpt 5:

3) Transparency: While local residents may direct their noise inquiries to through the FAA portal, they will likely also maintain their expectations of responsiveness from their local airports. Therefore, the best practice should be for the FAA to share information with the relevant airport in a convenient and systematic way. This clear communication about noise complaints could take place via an online system that would be visible to both local residents and airports – bringing transparency to the number, nature and timing of such inquiries; in the best case scenario, it might also include what the FAA’s response entailed, and any potential follow up or next steps. Alternatively, the FAA should design a regular reporting mechanism to share this information directly with relevant airports, including any necessary outreach by the airport to the individual.

And, the third suggestion by POS focuses on Transparency. An excellent suggestion, as transparency is critical. In this area, POS has done a far better job than FAA, especially with their use of the internet to post sometimes deeply complex public records responses (FOIA responses, at FAA’s level) that are fully viewable and downloadable. Frankly, FAA could learn a lot from studying POS’s NextRequest portal for sharing public records responses, at: <https://portofseattle.nextrequest.com/requests>