

Media Advisory – Dec. 29, 2009

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FAA agrees to third public hearing on commercial air

The Federal Aviation Administration agreed Tuesday to schedule a third public hearing to accept comments on the draft environmental assessment pertaining to two proposals to initiate commercial air at Snohomish County's Paine Field Airport.

The public hearing will be held Jan. 21, 2010, at the Lynnwood Convention Center. The format for the Jan. 21 public hearing will be similar to those being held Jan. 4 and Jan. 5, and will begin at 6 p.m.

Public hearings scheduled for 6 p.m. Monday, Jan. 4, 2010, at Meadowdale High School in Lynnwood, and 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2010, at the Snohomish County PUD Auditorium in Everett, have not been changed.

The public comment period also will be extended until Feb. 5, 2010. The draft environmental assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act was released Dec. 4 and the deadline for comments was initially Jan. 15, 2010, before being changed in mid-December to Jan. 29.

The draft environmental assessment is available for review at the Paine Field Airport office, in local public libraries, on the Paine Field Web site www.painefield.com/airserviceea.html, and at www.snoco.org/departments/airport.

Comments can be submitted in person during the three scheduled public hearings. Comments also may be submitted by e-mail to cayla.morgan@faa.gov or airserviceecomments@snoco.org.

Comments sent by mail should be addressed to:

- Cayla Morgan, Environmental Protection Specialist, Seattle Airports District Office, Federal Aviation Administration, 1601 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98057-3356.
- Dave Waggoner, Director, Snohomish County Airport, 3220 100th Street S.W., Suite A, Everett, WA 98204.

The environmental review was conducted in response to two requests to begin commercial air service at Paine Field received by Snohomish County in 2008. Although Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon and some County Council members have said they do not support commercial air service at Paine Field, federal law obligates the county to accommodate commercial service.

Federal law does not allow the county to prohibit or limit scheduled passenger air service. Instead, it requires that the county negotiate with the airlines in good faith to accommodate their proposed service.

Horizon Airlines has indicated it wants to operate four times a day to Portland and twice per day to Spokane, using 75-seat Bombardier Q400 turboprop airplanes on both routes. Allegiant has said it plans to operate twice a week to Las Vegas, using 150-seat MD83 jet aircraft.

Before airlines may begin commercial service, the FAA must amend the county's operating certificate for Paine Field as well as the airlines' operating specifications. The county was required to prepare the environmental assessment for FAA approval before those amendments can occur. The preparation of the environmental assessment was funded by an FAA grant and by the time reviews are finished is expected to have cost more than \$450,000.

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