



## **PSRC Airport Compatible Land Use Program Update Summary**

For the past two years PSRC has been preparing a review and update of our Airport Compatible Land Use Program. We selected the consulting firm of Mead & Hunt to help with technical aspects of the work and to provide us with their broad experience from other parts of the nation. We also formed an advisory committee to provide ongoing advice and input throughout the course of this project. The committee includes staff from local agencies around the region, FAA, WSDOT Aviation Division, and key airports. PSRC and the WSDOT Aviation Division have been developing coordinated programs to assist local jurisdictions in their efforts to plan for airport compatible land use. PSRC's current program update includes the following tasks:

- Develop FAR Part 77 surface layers (identifies obstructions to protect airspace around airports)
- Evaluate existing comprehensive plan policies and provisions
- Develop airport compatible land use guidelines
- Revise PSRC plan review and certification process
- Program Implementation / PSRC Procedures

The goals of the PSRC program are to raise awareness of key issues (height hazard, safety, and noise); inform local agencies of requirements, guidelines, and resources; help local jurisdictions prepare comprehensive plans that meet requirements; foster communication; and provide PSRC staff with the resources we need for our ongoing plan review and certification process.

### **BACKGROUND**

Airport compatible land use (related to FAR Part 77 height hazards, safety, and airport noise) is a critical issue in planning for airport systems, as well as planning for the growing communities they serve. The region's healthy economy has resulted in growing airport activity and increased urban development at those airports' borders. Adopted comprehensive plans in the Central Puget Sound Region show there is the potential for development of new incompatible land uses adjoining the region's airports. In 1996, in response to the growing issue of land use encroachment around the state's airports, the State legislature amended the Growth Management Act (GMA) and the Planning Enabling Act. The law requires cities and counties to use their comprehensive plans and development regulations to discourage the siting of incompatible uses adjacent to general aviation airports (RCW 36.70.547 and RCW 36.70A.510). The State Department of Commerce has developed planning guidance for local agencies, which is contained in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC Chapter 365-196-455). In 2004, recognizing the importance of military installations to the economic health of the state, the Legislature again amended the Growth Management Act; RCW 36.70A.530 requires local jurisdictions to discourage incompatible development in the vicinity of military installations.

Implementing the law involves partnerships between local planning agencies, airport sponsors, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and DCTED, and the Regional Council, and each has a unique role. Local agencies develop plans and regulations in consultation with airport sponsors and the state. The WSDOT Aviation Division provides information and technical assistance to local agencies to help them develop effective policies and plans. The Regional Council incorporates airport compatible land use into its process for reviewing and certifying the transportation elements of local agency comprehensive plans under GMA. The goals of the process are to provide information exchange, facilitate discussions between the Regional Council and local agencies, improve local land use planning decisions, and protect the region's airports from further land use encroachment.

In addition to these state regulations, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has several requirements to protect airports from incompatible land uses. Specifically, grant assurances, signed as part of the federal funding process, require airport sponsors to work with local land use agencies to address land use issues related to their airports. FAA Grant Assurance 21 (Compatible Land Use) states: "It [the airport sponsor] will take appropriate action, to the extent reasonable, including the adoption of zoning laws, to restrict the use of land adjacent to or in the immediate vicinity of the airport to activities and purposes compatible with normal airport operations, including landing and takeoff of aircraft. In addition, if the project is for noise compatibility program implementation, it will not cause or permit any change in land use, within its jurisdiction, that will reduce its compatibility, with respect to the airport, of the noise compatibility program measures upon which federal funds have been expended."

The PSRC Airport Land Use Compatibility Program update project is intended to advance the region's existing planning process related to airport compatible land use that falls within the GMA and FAA requirements. The existing PSRC program evaluation process is unique in that very few regional planning agencies have embraced a role in system-wide assessment of land use compatibility issues around airports. The findings of this study should enhance the ability of the PSRC staff, as well as local municipalities and airports, to better assess and manage the development of compatible land uses near the region's 28 public-use airports.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

For more information about the PSRC Airport Compatible Land Use Program visit the PSRC website at [www.psrc.org/transportation/airtrans/compatible/](http://www.psrc.org/transportation/airtrans/compatible/). Please contact me if you have any questions:

Stephen Kiehl, Principal Planner  
Puget Sound Regional Council  
1011 Western Avenue, Suite 500  
Seattle, WA 98104  
1-206-971-3290  
[skiehl@psrc.org](mailto:skiehl@psrc.org)

For information about the WSDOT Aviation Division Airport Compatible Land Use Program visit the WSDOT website at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/aviation/Planning/default.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/aviation/Planning/default.htm).