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What are the perks of passenger service at Paine Field?

That's what a business group that supports commercial flights has hired a consultant to find out.

By Bill Sheets
Herald Writer

An Everett-based business group has hired a consultant to study whether air passenger traffic at Paine Field would bring jobs to the area.

The group has budgeted \$100,000 over the next 12 to 15 months to study and promote expanded operations at the county-run airport, said Greg Tisdel of the Private Enterprise Coalition of Snohomish County.

The 150-member business advocacy group formed about a year ago.

Air passenger service has not been proposed by the county or any airlines.

But coalition members and others have spoken out in favor of bringing commercial airline service to the county-run airport. Such a move would be a big boost to the local economy, they believe.

Opponents say noise from passenger traffic would harm neighborhoods and property values.

Tisdel said some, but not all, of the group's \$100,000 will go to the consultant, whom he declined to name. He wouldn't specify how much will go to the consultant and how much to other activities.

A 2002 county study mentioned commercial flights at Paine Field as a potential economic growth measure. But group members want more information, they said.

"We just don't think there's anything out there that's comprehensive enough," said group member Tom Hoban, CEO of Coast Real Estate Services of Everett.

"We really want an honest product so we know we have good, hard facts on which to base our go-forward plan," Hoban said.

Tisdel, owner of Tiz's Door Sales, said the group isn't telling the consultant to reach any particular conclusion.

The consultant was hired about three weeks ago and is expected to finish the study by late April, he said.

"We want to know what the truth is; we want the facts," Tisdel said. "We feel we have to present the facts whether we like them or don't like them."

Still, Tisdel and Hoban sound confident of what the study will find.

Included will be a look at which communities are likely to produce potential air passengers.

Tisdel said he believes that information will "prove the case to the airlines that it makes sense for an airline to come in here."

Another aspect of the study, he said, will examine "whether companies potentially will come to north Snohomish County

because they can fly their board of directors in."

The study won't look at noise, property values or road improvements, Tisdell said.

"Noise isn't an issue," he said, noting that most passenger jets now in use are newer, quieter models. "There's no reason to spend money on property values. If anything, property values go up."

Opponents disagree - strongly.

"They've already started out with a totally biased and unfair study, which we would discard as worthless, unless they look at the total economic impact," said Greg Hauth of Mukilteo, president of Save Our Communities.

Studies in other areas have shown negative effects from airports on home values, schools, the environment and health.

These factors, along with county costs for security and any effects of commercial flights on operations by Boeing and Goodrich Aircraft at Paine Field, should be examined for the study to be comprehensive, Hauth said.

The 2002 study set off a series of discussions that drew a strong reaction from Mukilteo and other south county communities.

City councils in Mukilteo, Edmonds, Lynnwood, Mountlake Terrace and Woodway have voted to oppose passenger service at the airport.

In addition to the Private Enterprise Coalition, other groups that support commercial passenger service are the county Republican Party and the Everett Chamber of Commerce.

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