



Friday, August 24, 2007 - 12:00 AM

*Permission to reprint or copy this article or photo, other than personal use, must be obtained from The Seattle Times. Call 206-464-3113 or e-mail [resale@seattletimes.com](mailto:resale@seattletimes.com) with your request.*

Lance Dickie / Seattle Times editorial columnist

## **Paine Field's runway welcome mat**

**By Lance Dickie**

*Seattle Times editorial columnist*

Snohomish County's business community is gearing up to sell the idea of passenger air service at Paine Field. An oddly reticent quality hangs over the effort, but it is just getting under way.

Organized under the banner of Fly From Everett, the group will present its case for commercial airline service to the public, elected officials and the airlines themselves.

Fly From Everett is a spinoff of sorts from the Private Enterprise Coalition of Snohomish County, a meet-for-breakfast-and-chat collection of kindred spirits, who also want a local university.

The idea of regional air service from Paine Field inspires chambers of commerce and economic-development promoters to adopt earnest resolutions. They never budge an inch. No one has done much to deliver flights to Salt Lake City, Phoenix or Las Vegas.

Substantial air travel out of Paine Field, six miles south of Everett, has been in limbo for almost three decades. Since 1979, a document known as the Mediated Role Determination (MRD) has been interpreted to define limits on most everything but general aviation and aviation-related industries. Puddle-jumper commuter service is permitted but has not survived.

Snohomish County recently completed a community review of the MRD. The process concluded the county could not stop an interested airline from coming to Paine Field. But the county was not obligated to subsidize service or help recruit a carrier.

Opposition to commercial air service comes from communities south of Paine Field, and five city councils are on record against passenger flights. The topic stirs passions and active resistance, as evidenced by the city of Mukilteo's pledge of \$250,000 to fund a defense.

So how much will Fly From Everett spend to help introduce limited, regional air service?

Hmmm, too soon to say, according to Greg Tisdell and Hans Toorens, who are putting a public face on the committee. Tisdell is an Everett business owner and Toorens is a business consultant living in Monroe.

Right now they are a little particular about particulars. *Maybe* the budget is around \$40,000 so far, *maybe* most of it came from a handful of sources, but it's too early to be more specific or even say why it's too soon to be more specific. Clearly, all of the passion is on the side of the opponents. Tisdell

and Toorens are not reticent fellows, but they are acutely aware others are worried about a public backlash on their businesses or about compromising their electoral status.

Check back after the election, they advise. Things will start to pop. Uh huh.

Their detailed pitch focuses on the delays and inconvenience of getting to Sea-Tac Airport for anyone living north of the Ship Canal Bridge. If an air carrier could capture a smidgen of the market living in Snohomish County, Tisdell and Toorens predict success. Toorens, a veteran air traveler for employers that included Philips Electronics and Fluke, sees Paine Field as a logical, convenient link to West Coast cities. It would make seeing Bay Area clients a one-day, down-and-back trip.

Tisdell believes the region is a natural connection to the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, B.C. He and Toorens emphasize the easy, affordable startup for limited air service, and the simplicity of arrivals and departures at Paine Field. Fewer flights, fewer people, fewer hassles. (Check out [www.flyfromeverett.org](http://www.flyfromeverett.org))

They never take their eyes off making Snohomish County an attractive place to expand existing businesses or establish new commercial activities.

Boil it all down and the pitch is, Paine Field can be up and running fast, Sea-Tac is a logistical nightmare for North End travelers, and there has to be a ration of air service to share in all the global statistical growth.

Airlines know this too, and no one has come knocking on the door. Maybe I do not grasp the process, but in a setting where the airlines have the leverage, I wonder how they will be sold on anything. A growing county will either attract service from an airline looking to stitch Paine Field into a larger pattern of service, or it will not. For now.

The magic of the sales call does not seem to apply. Certainly, it has not worked on local politicians.

The estimated time of arrival for air service at Paine Field is not clear, but I agree it is only a matter of time.

*Lance Dickie's column appears regularly on editorial pages of The Times. His e-mail address is [seattletimes.com](mailto:ldickie@seattletimes.com)">ldickie@seattletimes.com; for a podcast Q&A with the author, go to Opinion at [seattletimes.com](http://seattletimes.com)*

[Copyright © 2007 The Seattle Times Company](http://www.seattletimes.com)