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## Paine Field flight supporters diversify

### A second group forms to advocate passenger jet service from the county's airport

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EVERETT -- Supporters of passenger flights at Paine Field have created a new, separate group to make the case for flying from Snohomish County.

Citizens Right to Fly from Paine Field is made up partly of members of the Snohomish County business community who have been pushing for commercial air service from the county's airport.

Some of the members, including co-chairman Greg Tisdell, owner of Tiz's Doors in Everett, have for several years pushed the passenger flight cause as members of the Private Enterprise Coalition of Snohomish County, a business advocacy group.

Now, though, an entirely separate group -- Fly Paine Field, for short -- has formed around the issue and is broadening its base beyond the Everett business community, they say. They're registered with the state as a nonprofit organization and list 54 members.

"It needed to be out on its own and it's on its own," Tisdell said.

Members say they plan to visit groups around the county to get the word out about what they see as the advantages of commercial flights at Paine Field.

One airline, Allegiant Air of Las Vegas, has proposed to run two to four flights per week between Paine Field and Las Vegas. Snohomish County officials are currently negotiating with the airline, though nearby cities and county leaders, including County Executive Aaron Reardon, have said they oppose allowing the airline to use the airport.

Sixteen members of Fly Paine Field from most parts of the county attended an event in Everett on Wednesday to announce the launching of the group.

While many of them are current or retired businesspeople, and while the effect of passenger flights on business is still potentially large, they say the issue is much larger than that.

"This is not simply a business issue; it's an individual issue as well," commercial real estate developer Mike Echelbarger of Lynnwood said.

The group said convenience for all travelers and full use of the asset of Paine Field are major considerations, in addition to potential economic benefits.

Co-chairman Todd Brunner, owner of Brunner Construction in Lynnwood, said the county has a "world class" airport that's underutilized.

There are about 400 flights per day at the airport, including Boeing flights, military flights and small private aircraft. The airport's flight capacity is more than 900, Brunner said.

Getting to a flight the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport can be an ordeal of several hours or more for people who live in Snohomish County and farther north, he said.

"We have the facility here, we have the people, we just don't have a way to get on the plane," Brunner said.

While the group says it supports Allegiant Air's proposal, it would like to see more flights to other West Coast cities.

The airport is too small to become another Sea-Tac, they say.

Opponents, who include officials from the cities of Mukilteo, Edmonds and Lynnwood, say that's not necessarily so.

They point out problems experienced by some larger airports where aircraft noise has degraded the area with reduced property values, pollution and service-level jobs.

Paine Field should be fully utilized for its current purpose, said Greg Hauth, president of Save Our Communities, the primary opposition group. That purpose is to provide a home for Boeing, high-tech industry and small aircraft while being compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods, he said.

"And those are high-wage jobs," he said.

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