Airport

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from surrounding residents who fear the effects of aircraft noise.

The decision to subject the plan to single-event noise analysis came last month when FAA officials in Washington agreed to join the EPA in a long-term study of noise issues, and to conduct more detailed analysis at seven selected airports in the interim.

A top FAA administrator wrote in a June 15 letter to an EPA counterpart that the interim steps were intended "to avoid interagency disagreement."

The other airports to be studied are in Detroit; Philadelphia; Minneapolis; Baltimore; Memphis, Tenn.; and Louisville, Ky.

Officials in those cities said they were aware that their airport expansion plans would be subjected to more detailed noise analysis. But they either dismissed the importance of the additional scrutiny or expressed uncertainty about the implications.

Said Louisville city spokesman Tim Barry, "I assume that it's useful and beneficial information, but you would have to ask the FAA."

FAA officials in Washington said their agency has rarely conducted single-event noise analysis before — and only when it has been specifically requested by a city where airport expansion is planned.

Donald Harris, an FAA noise specialist in the Fort Worth regional office, said EPA pressure for more widespread single-event analysis has been "a continuing hassle" for the FAA.

The FAA adopted the current noise-measuring methods at the EPA's insistence in 1980, Harris said, and the law does not require the FAA to consider the results of single-event analysis when it weighs airport expansion proposals.

"The EPA keeps adding these little zingers," Harris said. "We don't know what their thinking is or what direction they're going."

Noise levels are just one of several issues related to D/FW's expansion plan that are expected to be addressed in the environmental report due out today. The report also will discuss in detail the steps D/FW must take to protect surrounding residents from the effects of the expansion.

Jim Densmore, director of environment and energy at FAA headquarters in Washington, said the seven airports to undergo single-event analysis were selected because all have been slated for major expansion.

Densmore said pressure from the EPA was behind the beefed-up study, but he also said the FAA recognizes that people who live near airports deserve to know more than just the average amount of noise they will experience in a given day.

"You come up with a number, and what the heck does it mean?" he added. "I think this is something that we owe the public."

Public hearings on today's assessment of D/FW expansion are planned for September.

Harris said he expects the single-event noise analysis to be a major topic of discussion as D/FW's year-old expansion plan is subjected to another round of scrutiny.

"Either communities are becoming more sensitive to noise or they're becoming more vocal," he said. "My personal opinion is that they're becoming more vocal."