



Federal Aviation Administration

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 23, 2026

To: Regional Airports Division Directors, AXX-600
Regional Airport Planning and Programming Branch Managers, AXX-610
Airports District Office Managers (XXX-ADO)

From: William C. Garrison, Director, Office of Airport Planning and Programming,
APP-1 **WILLIAM C GARRISON** Digitally signed by WILLIAM C
GARRISON
Date: 2026.09.23 06:18:32 -0400

Subject: Passenger Facility Charge Update 77-26 (PFC 77-26)

PFC 77-26

This PFC update letter provides Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Regional Offices/Airports District Offices (RO/ADO) with information on assessing eligibility of projects involving two recent statutory additions to PFC eligibility. The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 (Pub. L. 118-63, the 2024 Act) was enacted on May 16, 2024. The 2024 Act amended 49 U.S.C. § 40117(a)(3) by adding subsections (H) and (I). These subsections include two permitted uses of PFC revenue:

1. A noise barrier at a small-hub airport under certain conditions, and
2. Workspace elements for a Federal agency under certain conditions.

Noise Barrier at a Small-hub Airport at which New Development Results in DNL >55dB

The 2024 Act added PFC eligibility for a “project at a small-hub airport for a noise barrier where the day-night average sound level (DNL) from commercial, general aviation or cargo operations is expected to exceed 55 decibels (dB) as a result of new airport development.”¹ The Public Agency will need to prepare noise contours to demonstrate that the new airport development is expected to result in noise levels of DNL 55dB or higher.²

A noise-barrier project must be entirely within the DNL 55dB contour to be eligible. To demonstrate the barrier’s location, the Public Agency must prepare a contour map depicting the

¹ FAA also accepts contour maps using the Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL), which is the standard in the State of California.

² Contours based on noise modeling provide a picture of what is considered likely to occur based on the data inputs. To determine actual noise emissions, extensive noise monitoring (i.e., hundreds of noise monitoring locations) would be needed and could only occur after the project is completed.

extent of the DNL 55dB contour using the FAA’s most current version of the Aviation Environmental Design Tool (AEDT) model. The Public Agency must produce its airport’s DNL 55dB contour map so that it shows within it any land uses that would be considered incompatible above DNL 65dB.³

The Public Agency may apply for such a project to mitigate either existing or forecast conditions. Early coordination with the Public Agency is recommended. Due to the level of required analysis, relevant PFC submittals may not be streamlined.⁴

In reviewing relevant PFC submittals, please consider the following:

- 55dB is a lower threshold than the standard contours of noise exposure maps (see 14 CFR Part 150, Subpart B, § A150.101). A diagram on the FAA website describes 55dB as a level between “quiet urban” and “commercial area” sounds.⁵
- The 2024 Act refers to DNL, not L_{max} .⁶
- DNL excludes noise generated by military operations.

The RO/ADO must coordinate its review of a DNL 55dB contour map with its Environmental Protection Specialist. We are asserting this because contour map reviews are not normally conducted for PFC submittals. The RO/ADO should contact the Airport Environmental Branch (APP-420) with any questions about these reviews.

Workspace Elements of a Federal Agency Relocated by a PFC-eligible Terminal Project

The 2024 Act extended PFC eligibility to a “project for the replacement of existing workspace elements (including any associated in-kind facility or equipment within or immediately adjacent to a terminal development or renovation project at such airport) related to the relocation of a Federal agency on airport grounds due to such terminal development or renovation project for which development costs are eligible costs.” Before the 2024 Act, only relocation of existing workspace elements, not replacement, was an allowable cost.

Although several Federal agencies have facilities on airport grounds, only those facilities within or adjacent to PFC-eligible terminal projects may be eligible. While the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) typically operate in proximity to PFC-eligible areas as part of terminal projects, eligibility determinations are project-specific.

³ FAA needs the 55dB contour to show the limits of where the noise barrier could be placed within it. Since all land uses are compatible above 55dB, FAA has no other standards than the incompatibility above 65dB. To demonstrate that the noise barrier is eligible, FAA would need to know 1) where it can be located and 2) what it would protect. The 55dB contour map addresses the location, and the depiction of land incompatibility above 65dB *applied to the 55dB contour* shows us what it would protect.

⁴ Consistent with PFC Order 5500.1, Paragraph 1-16, applications involving the following are ineligible for streamlined processing: (a) Significant policy precedent; (b) Significant legal issues, as determined by the FAA’s Chief Counsel; (c) Significant controversy, as evidenced by significant opposition to the FAA’s proposed action by the applicant or other airport authorities, airport users, Federal, State or local agencies, elected officials, or communities; (d) Multimodal projects; or (e) Significant airport noise, access, or revenue diversion issues. The FAA considers this a significant noise issue because of the information a Public Agency must depict in their contour maps and need for FAA to review those maps to confirm eligibility.

⁵ https://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/policy_guidance/noise/basics.

⁶ L_{max} is the maximum noise level of one noise event and does not account for the duration of the event. DNL is the day-night average sound level (with an adjustment for nighttime sounds), which typically is used to reflect a person’s average exposure to sound over a 24-hour period.

The statute states “workspace elements” include “any associated in-kind facility or equipment within or immediately adjacent to a terminal development or renovation project at such airport.” For the purposes of PFC-eligibility, examples of eligible “workspace elements” include certain facilities or permanent fixtures not previously PFC-eligible (e.g., TSA office space) and furniture, finishes, and equipment (FF&E) replacing assets directly impacted by the relevant terminal project.

Note that the 2024 Act specifies “airport grounds” as a replacement’s location. Should a Federal agency move off airport property, its replacement project would be ineligible.

Should the Public Agency apply for PFC authority to fund the replacement of these workspace elements, the Public Agency should include the following information in its PFC submittal:

- The affected Federal agency/ies;
- Detailed information on the reasonable and necessary costs of the replacement assets, per FAA Order 5500.1, Paragraph 2-8; and
- Justification of why the workspace elements should be replaced, per FAA Order 5500.1, Paragraph 4-8.

If the assets purchased with PFC revenues are later sold as surplus, the Public Agency must deposit any proceeds into its PFC revenue fund.

Please contact the Airport Policy Branch (APP-510) with any questions on this update.