

Airport Noise Matters, Even if It's not Front and Center

Authors: Matthew Alvarez Audrey Reynolds Douglas Contreras Deanna Terry Elizabeth Ferguson

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Southern California University of Health Sciences

School of Mathematics

Airports are usually crowded, noisy and uncomfortable places. But unlike other public spaces in our lives, public airports tend to have environments where people have only minimal screen to see their environment and surroundings. This means that certain additional stimuli can definitely have a more significant influence on the sound and visual quality of an airport environment.

For instance, the acoustic background of a modern airport is strongly influenced by the ever-increasing (and unregulated) amounts of air pollutants from internal combustion engines. Additionally, airport noise can be affected by the amount of sunlight entering the noise barrier. The light outside and the light coming in through the travel lanes is able to absorb a variety of light wavelengths, some of which are absorbed and amplify the airport noise by as much as 30dB. This is one of the most interesting components of airport noise, it's the difference between noise and what people think of as noise.

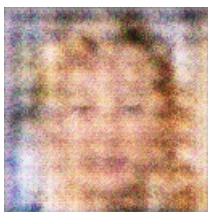
Airport infrastructure managers like to avoid having to deal with any unwanted arrivals in areas like baggage claim and parking areas. One of the ways to deal with this is to implement motion-sensitive motion detectors for the parking lots. But since the parking lot surrounds the perimeter of the airport, cars entering the parking lot typically don't have any space between the pavement and the concrete barriers.

Conversely, the travel lanes are parallel to the parking lot, allowing for a little more space between the barriers. While we are definitely not advocating that airports should have traffic dividers, in places where you really need a smaller barrier, you could try moving the footpaths a little bit. Moving the median and all the cars to the right side would reduce the amount of light absorbing sound, and while you are at it, try moving the approach and departure lane divider up a bit, because this only creates a temporary nuisance, but it will eventually save time and space.

The initial sound emissions from private vehicles also influence the airport environment. A higher number of people means more engine revs that sometimes generate noise emissions. Noise from vehicles on the pavement also impacts on airplane instrument sound, which of course we all know is an important for the safety of a plane.

After all, a plane running from Portland to New York or L.A. to Miami has enough exhaust to pollute the entire atmosphere. Of course, the airplane engine is usually only in the pilot's seat, but then we are talking about air pollution.

While many environmentalists will never accept noise pollution, it has a different meaning when you consider where the (atmospheric) emissions originated. Most noise levels in airports are very low, but the correlation is hard to ignore. So it doesn't really matter if a plane has emissions from its engines or landing gear, airport noise does play a role. But our findings will actually prove that it's probably more responsible to consider airport sensitivity to the maximum amount of disturbance by improving noise insulation in the passive airfield.



A Yellow And Black Bird Standing On The Ground