

Friends of French Prairie

Friends of French Prairie
is an Oregon non-profit corporation

PO Box 403 | Donald, Oregon 97020 | www.friendsoffrenchprairie.org



February 17, 2020

To: Joint Committee on Transportation

Re: HB 4036

The email is sent to convey our concern about two amendments to HB 4036, the Transportation Bill presently being considered.

Amendment 16 – eliminates the sunset of the 2 cent per gallon aviation fuel tax increase

Amendment 17 – empowers the State Aviation Board to establish by rule priorities for the funding distributions made pursuant to this subsection.

The argument is made that the Dept. of Aviation needs the continuance of the fuel tax to fund capital development programs, but that capital development at rural airports will be principally paid for by passengers flying on commercial carries who will pass along the increase. This is why commercial carries oppose the amendment.

Regarding the decision making for rule making authority and funding allocation resting with the Aviation Board, it should be remembered that the Aviation Board is the oversight body for the Dept. of Aviation (ODA) and that ODA is presently the defendant in a LUBA appeal regarding land use law violation, and civil court filing regarding non-compliance with it's own administrative rules and regulations, both concerning the Aurora Airport Master Plan decision(s) made by the Aviation Board on Oct. 31, 2019.

In December, 2018, Oregon Solutions delivered an [AssessmentReport](#) to the Emergency Board, which was commissioned by that body a few months previously. It's finding of problems with the Aurora Airport Master Plan, and the Department itself, were comprehensive (see attached summary), including the assessment that ***significant questions have been raised about the Dept. capacity and capability to carry out its mission with its staffing levels and lack of permanent leadership.***

If you have not read it, the entire Oregon Solutions Assessment Report can be downloaded in PDF using the link above.

The Director position has been filled, but little else has changed in practice, and oversight responsibility continues to lie with the Aviation Board. Thus in our view, all of the shortcomings of the Dept of Aviation apply to the Board of Aviation. In stead of resolving the problems with the Aurora Airport Master Plan, the new Director and the Aviation Board have resisted any consensus-based resolution and are now mired in legal action.

The day the Oregon Solutions Assessment Report was delivered to the Emergency Board, Speaker Kotek asked OAB Chair Meeker to explain why the funding requirement for Aurora Airport expansion had grown from \$7 million to \$37 million dollars. Chair Meeker was unable to provide an explanation.

We urge you to oppose these two amendments which would continue making commercial airline passengers pay for rural airport expansion, as well as giving the Aviation Board further rule making and funding authority.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Benjamin D Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light blue rectangular stamp.

Benjamin D Williams

Friends of French Prairie

AURORA, OR; January 18, 2019

Oregon Solutions Assessment Report identifies *sixteen Substantive Issues* concerning the Aurora State Airport

On Dec. 12, 2018, [Oregon Solutions](#) (College of Urban and Public Affairs at Portland State University) delivered to the Legislative Emergency Board a requested Assessment Report regarding the Aurora State Airport. The legislative request was made in response to the significant opposition presented to the Emergency Board on Sept. 24 when the Department of Aviation requested of the legislature “retroactive permission” to apply to the FAA for \$37 million in funds to expand the Aurora Airport. This permission to apply for FAA funds is in conflict with the current Master Plan for the Aurora State Airport, (about which there is significant concern that it was not legally adopted) which describes a future 1,000 foot runway extension estimated to cost \$7.1 million.

Oregon Solutions was engaged to conduct an “impartial assessment” including:

- A civil and accurate dialog by conducting an assessment of local governments, community members, and key stakeholders of the airport
- Frame the key issues of the diverse stakeholders around the expansion
- Identify information and process needs

The resulting document, *Aurora State Airport Assessment Report* (December, 2018) was a comprehensive assessment by an objective and well reputed third-party organization.

In the Findings section of the Assessment Report, Oregon Solutions identified sixteen **Substantive Issues**:

- **Cost of the Aurora State Airport Runway Extension:** the escalation from \$7.3M in the 2012 Master Plan to the \$37M in the FAA application with lack of clarity as to what the money buys. [page 15]
- **Safety:** improving aviation safety has become the major stated justification, but the safety problems are self-created due to basing corporate jets at Aurora that are beyond the airport’s design specifications. [page 15]

- **Noise:** the airport has a noise abatement procedure, but it is voluntary and frequently violated and the noise problems for Aurora, Charbonneau and Wilsonville promise to worsen not improve. [page 16]
- **Surface Traffic (Motor Vehicle):** essentially no traffic impact assessments have been done and few surface road improvements, and ODOT has opposed airport expansion due to traffic impacts on the I-5 Boone Bridge which is already beyond capacity and causing serious congestion in Wilsonville. [page 16]
- **Land Use:** Annexation/Zoning/County Comprehensive Plan
 - Annexation: the airport's sewer and water problems likely cannot be solved without annexation by City of Aurora which the airport opposes.
 - Farmland / EFU: airport expansion will have significant impact on surrounding EFU farmland in terms of 1) property purchased for the expansion, and 2) development pressure on surrounding farmland.
 - Marion Co. Land Use Decision: the 2012 Master Plan with runway extension was not "adopted" by Marion County, but was "acknowledged" in terms of the County comprehensive plan. [page 17]
- **Public Process:** a "broken public process" compounded by "lack of clarity about the distinction between the function and purpose of an airport master plan that is under the guidance of the FAA and ODA, versus land use impacts that are under the jurisdiction of local governments and the State of Oregon." [page 18]
- **Interagency Coordination:** significant questions exist about the validity of ODA's state agency coordinating agreements (carried forward from ODOT) until creation and approval of their own SACs. [page 19]
- **Constrained Operations:** a critical data point to secure FAA funding and one subject to manipulation by the consultant doing the study and ODA granting waivers to oversized aircraft. [page 19]
- **Air Pollution:** No assessment of air pollution impact due to expansion have been conducted. [page 20]
- **Airport as an Emergency Operation Location:** though the expansion continues to be sold in terms of emergency response, the State's geology maps show the southern half of the existing airport subject to liquefaction in the event of a major earthquake, and thus its unavailability for emergency or disaster response. [page 20]
- **Employment:** the range of job growth based on airport expansion is extremely large (1,200 to 4,000 jobs) and no assessment has been done of local and regional impacts (infrastructure, traffic, etc.). [page 20]
- **Dept. of Aviation Capacity:** significant questions have been raised about the Dept. capacity and capability to carry out its mission with its staffing levels and lack of permanent leadership. [page 20]
- **Trust:** the identified broken public process and appearance of expansion for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many have resulted in a significant lack of trust. [page 21]

- **Communications:** Public communication is widely seen as being characterized by a lack of clarity regarding the process, purpose and outcomes and characterized by communication and coordination gaps between and among decision making agencies and jurisdictions. [page 21]
- **Who Benefits:** Significant concern exists about who benefits including which business interests and jurisdictions, and at what expense does expansion occur, especially in terms of the state's goal to preserve farm land. [page 22]
- **Community Solidarity:** A significant level of community solidarity exists in spite of the challenges and frustrations, but taking advantage of this will require constructive deliberation to inform future decisions. [page 22]

The Assessment Report also includes specific **Process Recommendations** including:

- **Information, Facts and Procedural Requirements:** These include the provision of third-party experts, review of land use rules and conducting a seismic review. [page 23]
- **Communications and Engagement:** important identified communications requirements include meaningful public engagement, resources, clarifying facts and fair information sharing. [page 23]
- **Noise abatement:** significant differences exist regarding effectiveness of the current noise abatement program and opportunities for improvement exist. [page 24]
- **Long Term Vision:** Lack of clarity about a long-term vision has contributed to the conflict and is compounded by the absence of how the Aurora Airport fits into the regional aviation system. [page 25]

We encourage all parties interested in the Aurora State Airport, regardless of position on expansion, to read this report in its entirety and consider the implications of the number of significant issues which this outside, third-party assessment identified.

The *Oregon Solutions Aurora State Airport Assessment Report* can be downloaded in PDF [here](#).