

**Veliz, Kim**

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**From:** Eric Hoem <erichoem@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 3, 2018 9:52 AM  
**To:** Veliz, Kim  
**Subject:** Public hearing testimony  
**Attachments:** Testimony in Opposition to the Current FAA Application - Nov 2018.docx

Good morning,

Attached please find written testimony in regard to last week's hearing about the proposal to expand Aurora State Airport.

Would yo please acknowledge receiving this email.

Thank you for your help in getting this on the record,

Eric Hoem

8301 SW Lafayette Way

Wilsonville, OR 97070

503-694-6036

TO: Mayor Tim Knapp and Wilsonville City Council Members

DATE: 2 December 2018

FR: Eric E. Hoem

8301 SW Lafayette Way  
Wilsonville, OR 97070  
503-694-6036

RE: Public Hearing, November 27, 2018

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Testimony in Opposition to a Proposal to the FAA for Financing Runway Extension at Aurora State Airport.

Synopsis of Testimony:

The arguments in favor of taking a more deliberate approach to development of Aurora State Airport seem the stronger ones to me. These include the need for sound local governance oversight, bringing the adequacy of local and regional road systems into the planning, and avoiding an unhealthy precedent in Oregon's Land Use Planning process.

On the other hand, proponents do not put forward fully convincing arguments about jobs and safety. We all favor economic development, especially job creation. However, the proponents do not quantify the possible increase in jobs, other than construction. In addition, safety does not seem to be a real issue. Even proponents agree that Aurora is currently a safe venue with a long history of safe operation. Allowing waivers for constrained operation does create a potential unsafe condition at Aurora at present. There is no guarantee that this will change with the extension of the runway, if, as seems predictable, waivers for ever larger aircraft are allowed.

Lastly, there is an alternative ready at hand: Salem's Municipal Airport at McNary Field already has a nearly 6,000 foot runway. At only 18 air miles away or about 10 minutes flying at 200 mph, SLE makes for a convenient, viable alternative.

Text of Testimony:

I attended the public hearing held by the Wilsonville City Council November 27, 2018, and I deeply appreciate the effort the city went to providing a public forum for exchange of opinions about the proposed FAA application for extending the runway at Aurora State Airport.

After listening to the testimony from all sides, I have come to the conclusion that the prudent and in fact conservative approach would be to proceed more deliberately, especially in the areas of environmental impact and local infrastructure.

I am not in any way "anti-airport." In fact, I grew up with air travel, have flown in small airplanes, and realize that our lifestyle today is very dependent on a healthy aircraft sector, public and private, commercial and military.

Extending the runway may be a good idea for a number of reasons, but in Oregon doing it the right way means that there is public input all along the process of plan development and that the environment and livability issues are addressed responsibly in the course of planned development

Arguments that persuade me to delay the application process:

Local infrastructure improvements need to be an integral part of the planning. Annexation, although not part of the proposal, is needed to provide local governance and ensure safe services such as water, sewer, and firefighting facilities

The road system near the airport and those leading to it, especially I-5, are running at full capacity at present. How is the inevitable increase in traffic on these roads going to be dealt with? Proponents have not addressed this issue, and it was one of the most frequent topics raised in the hearing by those questioning the proposal in its present form.

The cost has risen more than twice the rate of inflation, from \$21 million to \$37 million between the 2011 Master Plan and the current proposal to the FAA? What is the basis for this increase? The 2011 Master Plan enumerates each and every line item in the multi-year process of airport expansion. The FAA proposal only lists the seemingly inflated bottom line.

My conclusion in listening to the testimony at the hearing is that insufficient attention has been paid to potential "unintended consequences" such as lack of local governance, overburdened local transportation system, and becoming an unwelcome precedent in terms of land use planning.

Arguments in favor are not fully convincing:

The arguments of the proponents are not insignificant and I recognize their value. An expanded runway and expanded services at the airport would bring in more business activity, so there is a definite component of economic development in the proposal.

The two main points made in the hearing, however, are not so persuasive. One was about job creation. The runway extension would bring in relatively short term jobs for construction. One business owner at the Aurora Airport that concentrates on emergency help for disasters, suggested that it might expand but I do not recall any specifics in terms of new job being created. In the application, discussions with aircraft owners and aircraft business concerns were referenced but no detail is given about the exact nature of what those interests are or expectations related to new job creation. To me, the argument about the runway extension creating jobs did not have a strong basis, as presented.

The second main argument was about safety. Everyone is "for" safety, but, again, the grounds for argument are a little shaky. Aurora Airport is very safe at present with very few incidents to suggest it is unsafe. In fact, proponents said that it a very safe airport, and the accident history confirms that. Any lack of safety at present seems to come from "constrained operations" where larger jet aircraft need to curtail their activity in some way, such as taking off with less than a full load of fuel. The practice of allowing waivers for larger aircraft than are suited for the airport is in itself unsafe. A longer runway would increase their safety. But would the practice of allowing waivers for even larger jets cease? As

past experience is the best indicator of future performance, the best guess would be that the current practice would continue. Ever larger aircraft would be allowed in and out of Aurora State Airport. Bottom line: safety would not be enhanced but it would remain at the current level, which is generally very safe, while allowing potentially dangerous waivers for “constrained operation” of more and larger aircraft.

Is there a viable alternative?

Yes, there is. Salem’s McNary Field stands just 18 miles SSW from Aurora airport. It is 30 miles by car and no more than 35 minutes further than Aurora from the Portland area. McNary now has exactly what Aurora is proposing: in addition to its 5,145 foot runway, McNary already has a second runway that, at 5,811 feet, is nearly the 6000 feet that the proponents are seeking for Aurora.

One piece of oral testimony concerned me a great deal: one gentleman criticized the mayor and council for not jumping on this opportunity and cited a number of communities in the mid-west and California which had touted airport expansion in their economic development program. It is a false comparison at best, since we do not know any of the local details, and at worst an insult to Oregon’s long tradition of local government to condemn the present mayor and council in that way. They did our community a tremendous service to hold a public hearing about a proposal that will impact this entire region.

Whether other communities do it or not, I am not in favor of grasping at money from the Federal Government just because it is available and doing so without a completely responsible public review process.