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## Other Voices: Keep Ann Arbor airport small so that quality of life stays big

by Sol Castell | professional pilot; resides in the Ann Arbor area.

Friday March 13, 2009, 1:01 PM

I have read with great interest the Feb. 4 article about the city's initial allocation of \$550,000 for "assessment and preliminary engineering for the runway changes" to the Ann Arbor Municipal Airport.

Let me start by saying that I have nothing against airplanes or those who fly them. After all, I have been flying for 25 years and still look up at the sky when I hear an airplane.

With this in mind, after reading the article twice, the only thing that made sense is that the article smells of special interest while taking Ann Arbor area residents for fools.

One fact is obvious, the logic behind this project is flawed and "safety" is used to justify the project in the eyes of Average Joe Taxpayer.

Here is why:

Out of 136 aircraft at the Ann Arbor airport today, 85 percent are single engine. (See [www.airnav.com/airport/KARB](http://www.airnav.com/airport/KARB)) Those aircraft can take off and land on a runway less than one-half of the existing 3,500-foot runway. Obviously, the existing runway is sufficient for the remaining 15 percent of the planes.

Now let's continue with the what article claims:

1. Claim : "Now 3,500 feet long, the runway requires pilots to make a much steeper descent than recommended by the Federal Aviation Administration."

The fact is that runway length has nothing to do with the glide path.

In fact, as per all available public information, Runways 6 and 24 have a 3-degree VASI (Visual Approach Slope Indicator) or PAPI (Precision Approach Path Indicator) and instrument approach glide slope, which is the norm all over the world. Yes, the FAA tells us there are some trees, but the trees can be trimmed for much less than what this project will cost the taxpayer.

Once runway 24 is extended closer to surrounding houses, however, a pilot may now be faced with a steeper approach if he or she is aiming to touch down at the required touchdown zone.

2. Claim: "Five planes have overshot the runway since 2000. The airport handles about 75,000 takeoffs and landings a year. " Let's see - 75,000 takeoffs per year for eight years = 600,000. Five of them ran off the runway. Not a bad record. Even an excellent one, considering the fact that much of the traffic is flown by student pilots. That said, I am also willing to bet that if we take a closer look at each one of these incidents we'll find out that most, if not all five of them, were probably pilot induced. As such, the logic of tossing money at a non-existing problem makes even less

### Other Voices

#### Sol Castell

The writer is a professional pilot who has flown a wide range of aircraft from single engines to wide-body jets. He currently flies a Boeing 747-400. He resides in the Ann Arbor area.

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sense.

Also consider this: Because a longer runway will allow faster and heavier aircraft to land at Ann Arbor, the chances of overruns will most likely increase or at best remain the same. Just take a look at past overruns at Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth and Amsterdam's airports to name a few.

3. "The runway expansion wouldn't affect the size of planes using the airport." Not true. For example, a Cessna Citation 510 has a maximum takeoff weight of 8,645 pounds. It needs 3,110 feet for takeoff. Now let's look at the Citation Ultra with a maximum takeoff weight of 16,300 pounds. It will need 3,510 feet of runway for takeoff and 3,817 feet to land. It is well within the proposed 4,300-foot runway, yet unable to use the existing runway.

Larger aircraft carry more fuel, often are more noisy and have a potential to cause more damage in an emergency. Since the concentration of airplanes is larger around airports, so are the chances for mishaps.

4. "Lengthening the runway by 800 feet would enhance safety without changing the airport's FAA classification." "Classification" is mostly irrelevant when it deals with who can take off or land at an airport.

The main issues are: runway length and aircraft performance combined with environmental conditions. As we have discussed earlier, a longer runway will allow heavier aircraft to use the airport.

Hence the chance for runway overruns remains, if not increases. Example: Dare County Regional Airport in North Carolina had 800 business jet departures on a 4,300-foot runway during 2005 - the same runway length Ann Arbor is looking for. Do we really need all this noise pollution and associated risks in close proximity to downtown and residential areas?

"Classification," however, is relevant when it comes to airport facilities and services, such as a full-time fire and rescue team or 24-hour control tower, which Ann Arbor does not have and will not be required to have, even with the longer runway. So, more traffic, faster traffic, yet the same level of service. Obviously, less safe.

With these points in mind, and because the majority of the project will be financed with tax dollars, taxpayers should ask their elected officials why are they proposing what appears to be a special-interest project with "safety" as its sugar coating where safety is not an issue?

It would seem a small group of individuals could benefit from the increase in business while most of us in the community will see our tax money being used to reduce our quality of life.

One last, yet very important fact to consider: How can any such spending be justified when we have a perfectly good airport with much longer runways, precision instrument approaches, more sophisticated services and facilities than Ann Arbor will ever have, right next door at Willow Run?

Ann Arbor will never be able to duplicate Willow Run, but the beauty of this situation is that we don't have to. So let's demand some common sense from our elected representatives, keep Ann Arbor Municipal Airport small, and our quality of life big. Let Willow Run continue to handle the larger aircraft and air commerce while we reap the benefits. Let's stop the money pit environmental study and use the money where it could make a positive difference.

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Posted by [jclav](#) on [03/13/09 at 1:25PM](#)

Very well spoken Sol! What happens to normal citizens when they become council members? It seems as though they check their brains at the entrance to city hall! Suddenly the money they throw away doesn't seem to have the same value. I would venture a guess that if an organization contacts them at home for a contribution they don't get far. However when someone in "government" proposes spending some money they forget all they reasons to save!

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Posted by **AABubba** on [03/13/09 at 3:58PM](#)

Besides, they already have an EXISTING 1000' overrun for the runway created exactly for the purpose of...overruns.

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Posted by **SalineDion** on [03/13/09 at 8:08PM](#)

The bottom line in all this is that a new air charter company based in Ann Arbor, Flagship Privateair, needs the longer runway in order to add more weight (fuel) for take off. They can then offer a greater range of destinations. The airport authorities should call this what it really is...a way to increase business at the airport and therefore increase revenue through landing fees. "Safety", real aviation safety, has nothing to do with lengthening the runway. More traffic will only mean more eventual accidents....and more noise for area residents.

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Posted by **harryphysio** on [03/14/09 at 4:12PM](#)

In addition to a runway expansion, this proposal also outlines plans to extend the boundary fences RIGHT to the borders of both Ellsworth and Lohr Roads. This will mean the loss of multiple trees, the old barn and approximately 70 acres of beautiful farmland, presumably to be replaced with unsightly wire fences, concrete and aircraft hangars.

This astounds me for several reasons;

1. This land is already owned by The City of Ann Arbor, yet on their website they very much promote their Open Space and Parkland Preservation Chapter. Interestingly they are currently looking to spend up to \$5 million to acquire land so that the local community can "Maintain a high quality of life by pre-serving the rural characteristics of the countryside" and "Enhance wildlife habitat, air and wa-ter quality, scenic views and sense of place." Double standards me thinks, let alone a waste of tax dollars.
2. The Ann Arbor Municipal Airport (ARB) supposedly has a FlyGREEN program to enhance the principals and practices of environmen-tal stewardship at the airport. This proposal seems to be a dramatic U-turn on its approach to stewardship!
3. The City of Ann Arbor are proud to advertise that they were voted Americas Healthiest City, 2008 by AARP magazine, but seem happy to invite increased pollution to the local area, despite the fact that don't have to due to the more sophisticated and local Willow Run Airport.

I really feel for the multiple residential communities surrounding the airport, and under what would become new the flight path, who are not only going to have to suffer an increased noise pollution, but will also loose the sole greenbelt area they have between them and the airport. It is time that the City of Ann Arbor REALLY looked out for the health and safety of their taxpaying residents by rejecting the ludicrous proposal.

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Posted by **KingH** on [03/14/09 at 5:26PM](#)

Thank goodness for folk like Mr Castell - I had heard nothing about this and presume this is part of the airport tactics to try and get this through with little fuss from local residents.

I have done some research and found out that there is a meeting, open to the public, on Wed March 13, 5pm at the airport to discuss these plans. I for one will be attending this and urge other AA residents to do so too.

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Posted by **kingH** on [03/14/09 at 5:31PM](#)

Sorry - that is Wed March 18th!

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Posted by **AApolska** on [03/14/09 at 10:20PM](#)

Double standards is the understatement of the century , ESPECIALLY coming from a city council and Mayor elected on a GREEN platform.

I am glad you highlight the scope of the plan:

>>In **addition to a runway expansion, this proposal also outlines plans to extend the boundary fences RIGHT to the borders of both Ellsworth and Lohr Roads. This will mean the loss of multiple trees, the old barn and approximately 70 acres of beautiful farmland, presumably to be replaced with unsightly wire fences, concrete and aircraft hangars.**

Yes, the plan calls for a FENCE along Lohr. And this is not an invisible fence either, but more like prison style.

>>This astounds me for several reasons;

1. This **land is already owned by The City of Ann Arbor, yet on their website they very much promote their Open Space and Parkland Preservation Chapter. Interestingly they are currently looking to spend up to \$5 million to acquire land so that the local community can 'Maintain a high quality of life by pre-serviving the rural characteristics of the countryside" and "Enhance wildlife habitat, air and wa-ter quality, scenic views and sense of place."** Double standards me thinks, let alone a waste of tax dollars.

Unbelievable waste and hypocrisy.

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Posted by **teddya2** on [03/15/09 at 10:44AM](#)

This seems like a reasonable approach to greater safety at the airport. They are going through all the right steps with the environmental assessment. There is almost no local money involved in this effort. I would rather the feds spend it here than in building airports in Iraq.

Besides, the size of the aircraft that can land is determined by the quality of the base, they would have to tear up and rebuild a thicker, stronger runway if they wanted to land heavier planes. There may not have been many accidents but if this work is not done and a plane runs off and people are killed, we can thank the NIMBYS.

What I don't get is; nearly everyone who lives around the airport moved there after it was built. Kind of like building a new house next to 94 and complaining about the traffic.

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Posted by **AntiHypo** on [03/15/09 at 1:35PM](#)

Teddya2

>>Posted by teddya2 on 03/15/09 at 10:44AM

This seems like a reasonable approach to greater safety at the airport. They are going through all the right steps with the environmental assessment. There is almost no local money involved in this effort. I would rather the feds spend it here than in building airports in Iraq.

**Puhleezz...This is still TAX PAYERS MONEY. What you are saying since it does not come directly out of AA pockets it's OK to use it for bogus arguments and faulty reasoning in order to destroy our quality of life ?**

>>Besides, the size of the aircraft that can land is determined by the quality of the base, they would have to tear up and rebuild a thicker, stronger runway if they wanted to land heavier planes.

**Some of us DO FLY out of ARB, and have a clue. So please stop your misinformation. RIGHT NOW, the runway supports up to 20'000 lbs ! There are MANY aircraft which are now restricted by runway length yet are UNDER the 20000 lbs weight limit.**

These heavier aircraft WILL present more potential to mishaps for residents.

>>There may not have been many accidents but if this work is not done and a plane runs off and people are killed, we can thank the NIMBYS.

**Try harder ! There have been MANY incidents at the airport, even fatalities. As I am sure you know most if not all of them can not be attributed to runway length.**

The majority of them are PILOT ERROR and the fatalities had NOTHING to do with A runway, short or long.

>>What I don't get is nearly everyone who lives around the airport moved there after it was built. Kind of like building a new house next to 94 and complaining about the traffic.

**Not really. Most of us living near the airport and flying out of the airport actually DO LIKE the airport \*AT IT'S PRESENT SIZE\*. We moved here to live near a SMALL AIRPORT, and we would like it to remain a SMALL AIRPORT.**

As few other commentators have mentioned, one other negative result of the plan is the elimination of the Corn Field. That field was also here when we moved to the area. We would like to keep it around, NOT replace it with Hangars and concrete, which for a city pretending to be "Green", is a most hypocritical thing to do.

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Posted by **dustya2** on [03/15/09 at 3:07PM](#)

I believe Teddy made some good points. Beyond that:

I understand why the airport would want to do this, safety has to be the primary concern.

It looks like the airport board of directors is just trying to make the airport more safe. They are doing their job. The FDA must like the idea or they would not be approving the funding.

So Hypo, if there is an accident because someone runs off the runway and the plane is damaged or god-forbid someone is injured or killed, you will take responsibility?

This smacks of what happens in this community whenever anyone wants to build or improve anything. In Ann Arbor all development or new construction is bad, bad, bad. NIMBY's rule!

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Posted by **Magz** on [03/15/09 at 8:20PM](#)

Teddya2 & dustya2 - for the record I would like you to know that in this case, the term NIMBY does not apply to me. With respect, I believe that this is a term you should both take more care in using.....

Firstly Teddy, if there is a runway overshoot or landing error there is a high chance that these NIMBY's are going to be some of the people who are killed. They are therefore right to be highly concerned. Your swiftness to "blame" them for potential future incidents, at an airport that clearly has an excellent safety record, I find insulting.

Finally dusty, the beauty of living in a community and not in isolation is that we can all support each other - what may be one person's back yard today could easily become YOUR backyard tomorrow .....I am presuming you would be very quick to ask for / expect support from your fellow residents if something as risky as this was happening in your back yard.

I am hoping that you both have some form of invested interest in seeing this airport expansion happen, otherwise I find you both very naive and strongly hope you are not my neighbors.

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Posted by **AntiHypo** on [03/15/09 at 10:39PM](#)

Teddy and Dusty A2. Somehow me thinks you are one of the same, or at

least, twins ;-)

>>It looks like the airport board of directors is just trying to make the airport more safe. They are doing their job. The FAA must like the idea or they would not be approving the funding.

1.It looks more like the airport BOD and the AA Council and Mayor was sold a bunch of late night stories by a snake oil salesman.

2. It looks like if the intent is not to get larger aircraft, the existing runway is sufficient

3. Flying out of ARB and being familiar with the many of the incidents , it looks like most if not all of them had NOTHING to do with RUNWAY LENGTH. In fact the fatalities occurred while flying the pattern, not on landing or takeoff.

>>So Hypo, if there is an accident because someone runs off the runway and the plane is damaged or god-forbid someone is injured or killed, you will take responsibility?

1. Certain aircraft, such as ALL the aircraft at ARB can use ARB existing runway. From the the article above we know that 85% of them can use less than one half of the EXISTING runway. Adding to safety is the EXISTING 1000' clearway past the end of the runway.

If a pilots kills himself because he screwed up so bad and run out of runway and 1000' clearway (Never happened yet !) maybe he should not have not been flying ? After all, you don't go and turn every city street after an accident into a 4 lane road, DO YOU ?

2. Have you seen anyone extending Chicago Midway or Chicago Ohare after overruns ?

3. A runway is either adequate or it is not, period. If you need a refresher about takeoff and landing performance, please do so, but don't expect the community to pay for it with their quality of life.

4. The 1000' EXISTING clearway, is PLENTY for additional margin of error. That's the reason for it's existence. You want the community to pave that clearway so the next time someone pulls a "silly pilot trick" they won't even have to fix a bent prop. Again, don't expect the community to pay for it.

5. Most past incidents are a result of pilot's loss of control and leaving the edge of the runway, mostly to the left (Torque ?). Few landed SHORT of the runway...why don't you start paving every spot where an incident occurred ? While you are at it, why don't you remove the signs and runway lights, after all, they appear to be in the way of few aircraft as well ?

6. As for your: >>>This smacks of what happens in this community whenever anyone wants to build or improve anything. In Ann Arbor all development or new construction is bad, bad, bad. NIMBY's rule!

Again, most of us moved here because we like the small airport and are willing to live with a 3500' runway. Not more. We love the cornfield, it generates revenue for AA, we didn't didn't sign up for more concrete and a prison style fence along Lohr.

Since obviously Willow Run is FAR superior to ARB when it come to \*\*\*SAFETY\*\*\* and is underutilized, all sides can win, those who want more safety and those who appreciate their quality of life.

All the city of AA has to do is leave ARB the way it is ...

It is that simple !

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Posted by **Dustya2** on [03/16/09 at 9:29AM](#)

It sounds like one for the professional airport designers and safety administrators to decide. I believe the city is acting responsibly in following the advice of the airport board to make the airport safer. The FAA must agree with them or they would not be funding this.

It seems ironic that the NIMBY's would be worried about the corn field. All of your big houses are built in what used to be fine farm land mixed with woods, meadows and ponds. NOW you are worried about the remaining corn field.

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Posted by **nboudre** on [03/16/09 at 12:17PM](#)

And I thought the city of Ann Arbor was all about GREEN! I do not know how they can possibly justify spending our tax dollars on this runway expansion and whatever else they are planning along to Lohr Road. We have a perfectly good airport very close by in Willow Run that would address all of the safety concerns. If safety was really the issue, why would anyone in a bigger plane choose to land in Ann Arbor rather than Willow Run? If something did go wrong with a landing or takeoff, I would think that Willow Run would be much better equipped to deal with the result.

In this economy, I think spending the money that has been mentioned for this expansion is really wasteful. I think replacing the bridges over State Street would be a much better use of money. And I do believe that these bridges pose a significantly greater safety issue than the Ann Arbor Airport runway!

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Posted by **Magz** on [03/16/09 at 1:40PM](#)

Dustya2..... in view that you persist in using the childish term NIMBY for your very simplistic argument I have come up with my own name for you.....IMBY!

I can only assume you are one of the few individuals that wish to play with bigger planes in your very own back yard (a.k.a Ann Arbor municipal airport). May I politely suggest that you go play in a much bigger back yard and leave the rest of us Ann Arbor residents in peace. That bigger back yard of course being the Willow Run Airport (it's just around the corner!!!)

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Posted by **AApolska** on [03/16/09 at 2:24PM](#)

>>Posted by Dustya2 on 03/16/09 at 9:29AM

It sounds like one for the professional airport designers and safety administrators to decide. I believe the city is acting responsibly in following the advice of the airport board to make the airport safer. The FAA must agree with them or they would not be funding this.

**It sounds more like your main premise of "safety" is not holding much water.**

As such it is obvious, the AA Mayor and Council should take a serious look at the one sided information provided to them and cancel the "environmental study" before more tax money is wasted on a faulty assumption.

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Posted by **LauraBBB** on [03/17/09 at 1:01AM](#)

FYI: The money for the airport improvements is for the airport and cannot be used for the bridges. The federal govt. seems to be all for airports but falling down on the job in regard to their long term support for bridges. It sounds like Dusty is making sense if the objective here is make the airport safer.

If you are the student pilot running off the end of the runway because you made a misjudgment it will really matter. Others seem to be saying there is some other motive besides safety but they offer no proof.

From what I have been able to find out about this it looks like the runway would need to be much thicker to handle heavier planes. The length of the runway is not the determining factor.

If the FAA and the state want to fund this they must believe it is a needed improvement. Until you present proof that there is some plot here it appears that the city is acting in good faith.

The fact that the airport was there long before the MacMansions were built carries weight. It is kind of like building a house next to the freeway. But then, if the change is only for safety and not to bring in heavier planes then you have nothing to worry about. Is there proof that something else is going on?

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Posted by **weloveA2** on [03/17/09 at 9:28AM](#)

First, we need to tone down the use of labels such as "NIMBY" and "MacMansions". This only causes people to point fingers when clarity and facts are required.

I believe that the intentions of the AA Board are good. Everyone wants a safer airport. However, it appears that the airport already has an outstanding safety record. 5 runway excursions out of 600,000 takeoffs over 8 years. I bet there are 5 road excursions every week in Washtenaw county alone where people are seriously injured or killed.

Note, FAA regulations, Section 5. "Pilot/Controller Roles and Responsibilities" state the following, "b. The pilot-in-command of an aircraft is directly responsible for, and is the final authority as to the safe operation of that aircraft."

If the AA airport needs to cut off 200 feet of the runway on the East end to allow for the expansion of State street, and meet FAA requirements as they claim on their website, then fine. But adding an additional 800 feet (on top of the 200 feet) on the West end seems to be short sighted. Sorry for the pun!

This additional expansion in the name of safety would move the end of the runway 1,000 feet closer to a heavily populated residential area, and destroy more farmland and a beautiful barn. Also, a longer runway would allow for larger and heavier aircraft with more fuel aboard, thus negating the safety argument.

Is this what we want?

I believe we can come to a compromise that meets the needs of all parties. Safety in and around the airport.

Mark Caswell  
Ann Arbor Resident

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Posted by **ARBisSafe** on [03/17/09 at 10:39AM](#)

LauraBBB:

>>FYI: The money for the airport improvements is for the airport and cannot be used for the bridges. The federal govt.

AA is TAXING it's voters for preserving Greenbelts OUTSIDE the city (Passed in 2004 I think) , and allocating \$ 5,000,000 to create Greenbelt (2009), yet it is OK to pour cement and fence in the GREEN Cornfield along Lohr which generates revenue for AA, because the money does not come our of AA pockets ? How ridiculous is that ?

Pay attention: WE pay for it one way or another.

>>If you are the student pilot running off the end of the runway because you made a misjudgment it will really matter.

There is \*ALREADY\* 1000' safety zone extended at the end of the runway for that purpose.

Besides, the vast majority of mishaps and occurred either on the SIDE of the runway,at a field or the Golf course in the surrounding area.

Most single engine aircraft, need around 1200' for takeoff or landing. The present runway is: 3500'

>>Others seem to be saying there is some other motive besides safety but they offer no proof.

As someone else has posted, there is a new charter service out of ARB using Multi-engine turbo props. As the poster said, longer runway allows them and all existing aircraft to carry more FUEL and more weight. The article above has specific example of how heavier aircraft will be able to use the extended runway. This is not a



"motive", but a FACT.

>>From what I have been able to find out about this it looks like the runway would need to be much thicker to handle heavier planes. The length of the runway is not the determining factor.

Are you working at the Mayor's office ?  
This seems to be a canned response. Pay more attention:

The runway advertises (FAA website) it supports 20000' lbs. There are plenty of aircraft which will be able to fit under 20000lbs and the new extended runway, but are UNABLE to use it now, due to it's length.

>>If the FAA and the state want to fund this they must believe it is a needed improvement. Until you present proof that there is some plot here it appears that the city is acting in good faith.

Another typical response or talking points used by the Mayor.

The fact that the FAA is willing to allocate money for runway extension has nothing to do with the fact it is endorsing YOUR claim that: 1. No larger aircraft will use a longer runway (Ya, please get an FAA person to endorse this one ;- ) or 2. More length is needed for safety.

Because one undeniable FACT is that the runway is plenty long for ALL existing traffic.

What the FAA does say in almost all it's incidents report is that "PILOT ERROR" is the prevailing cause to mishaps.

Another thing the FAA says: There is already a 1000' Clearway for eventual overrun.

>>The fact that the airport was there long before the MacMansions were built carries weight.

Ahhh...another usual canned response now turned into a class warfare.

Focus: The airport is 3500' WITH the MacMansion already built. No one has anything against the airport at it's present form.

As is the case however with most airport expansions, maybe we should suggest the city of AA which is polluting AA and Pittsfield airspace, should BUY these MacMansion, like they do at around other airports, if they want to expand so badly. I am sure the AA taxpayer will be glad to finance this, just like they finance Greenbelts so their elected officials can destroy others.

>>It is kind of like building a house next to the freeway. But then, if the change is only for safety and not to bring in heavier planes then you have nothing to worry about.

Focus: There is ALREADY a 1000' clearway for safety. If no larger aircraft are intended, the runway is VERY SAFE !

>>Is there proof that something else is going on?

It may help if you study aerodynamics and aircraft performance. Longer runway allows more fuel and payload. Will result longer takeoff distance and the climb segment WILL BE closer to homes built when the runway was 3500'... These are just FACTS.

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Posted by **LauraBBB** on [03/17/09 at 3:58PM](#)

People against the airport plans, here is a little advice. Be nice to the city council.

As an observer of the council meetings, I can tell you the airport rarely comes up. The mayor and city council don't normally even think about the airport. But now their Airport Advisory Board and airport staff tell them they need to extend the runway to make it safer and it is so important the FAA and the state will fully fund it.

So the people they rely on to run the airport, who never ask anything from them, say they need to do this to make the airport safer. Remember council knows little about this, why would they? That is why they have an advisory board.

But safety is an important issue. What they must be hearing from their attorneys is something like, well if the FAA says we need this and we don't do it and there is a fatal accident....

When you write the mayor and council they can only tell you what they have been told by their "experts" so don't blame them. If you believe the thickness of the runway is not what decides the issue but rather the length is all important, you need to prove it. The same for all the other issues related to this.

I would think of the city council like a judge on a case.

If you want them to appreciate your side of the argument, you have to present convincing evidence. Do your homework and again, be nice and you might get somewhere.

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Posted by **robrown30** on [03/19/09 at 10:26AM](#)

LauraBBB,

An interesting plea for civility after you brought up the "McMansions" insult.

If, as we are led to believe, AA is operating an "unsafe" airport, shouldn't we shut down operations until these necessary safety improvements are made?

The simple fact is, a longer runway will make the airport safer. A 10,000' runway would make it even safer than that. And a 25 MPH speed limit on the highways would reduce accidents.

The problem, as always, is trying to balance safety with utility and quality of life. As a McMansion owner, with a vested interest, here are a few facts I have been made aware of:

1. The angle of descent is being intentionally lowered, which, combined with the 1000' proximity increase to Stonebridge will guarantee that even the same planes that currently utilize the airport will be SIGNIFICANTLY closer to the houses that are there today.
2. There are many planes smaller than 20,000 lbs that require between 3500' and 4300' for takeoff/landing. They are not using AA currently, but will be able to going forward. I have no idea if they will choose to do so.
3. The council has been sold on the promise that noise abatement procedures will be put in place (ie, planes taking off will bank sharply to the left or right, climb faster, etc...). The problem is, these procedures are voluntary, and not enforceable. So there is little doubt that many will choose to simply continue on their way, lower and louder over our homes. Plus, newer pilots should not be attempting faster climbs due to the danger of stalling.

Luara, I realize all politics is local. This is of concern to me, and I genuinely looked at all of the facts before I came to a decision. But one simple question remains: If the airport is so unsafe, where is the public outcry to improve it? Surely pilots would have written impassioned pleas to the editorial page, asking for a safer airport.

The fact is, due to the expansion of State St., the airport is able to appropriate funds for expansion, and their thought is to expand as far as is legally allowed, rather than just the 150' required. It is simply a matter of "I can get the money so I want to do it."

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Posted by **AntiHypo** on [03/20/09 at 9:07PM](#)

Excellent point Robrown !

>>Luara, I realize all politics is local. This is of concern to me, and I genuinely looked at all of the facts before I came to a decision. But one simple question remains: **If the airport is so unsafe, where is the public outcry to improve it?** Surely pilots would have written impassioned pleas to the editorial page, asking for a safer airport.

We MUST shut down all flying at ARB ASAP ! After all it makes no sense to allow this risky business to continue .

Risky for **HOME OWNERS** that is ! After all you never know when the next aircraft is going spin out of the sky on your McMansion...

And you are correct even a 10000' runway will not prevent that.

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Posted by **skyhawkpilot** on [03/28/09 at 5:52PM](#)

I believe we should improve the safety, efficiency, and value of the airport to the community. I also believe that we should keep the airport small. This project accomplishes both, generating numerous benefits with few, if any, disadvantages.

The increased runway length and reduced approach slope enhance safety. As an experienced pilot, I can assert that these modest changes will improve the already excellent safety record.

The longer runway improves airport and aircraft operational efficiency. Let me provide one example. Student and experienced pilots alike often practice 'touch and go' landings, by landing and then taking off again without stopping and taxiing back to the end of the runway. This saves time, reduces training costs, and saves fuel. It also reduces 'go-arounds', where a plane approaching to land must break off the approach and circle around because the previous plane hasn't cleared the runway yet. However, this valuable maneuver requires more runway. Many planes cannot safely perform touch and go landings on the current runway, especially in summer (higher temperature reduces aircraft performance). I consider 4000' to be the minimum safe length for touch and go operations.

The longer runway, reduced approach slope, and new box hangars improve the value of the airport to the community. Making the airport more attractive to those wishing to do business here will help bolster the local economy. The city should do all it can to foster business and tourism. This includes a first class general aviation airport.

This project respects the community desire to keep the airport small and will have minimal impact on the surrounding area. Even with the proposed changes, Ann Arbor Municipal will still be the smallest tower controlled airport in the state. The end of runway 6 will still be more than 2000' from Lohr Road. Contrary to what others here have stated, the fields along Lohr Road will not be paved over with concrete and hangars. The new Airport Layout Plan specifically designates this area for non-aviation use. The new box hangars are being built in the existing northwest tee hangar area.

Several people have erroneously stated that this is a waste of taxpayer money. Airport projects are paid for through the Airport and Airway Trust Fund. The money in the fund comes from a tax on aviation fuel. In other words, the people who actually use the airport pay for it.

I love the quality of life that Ann Arbor provides. Yes, let's keep the airport small, but let's also make it as safe and useful as possible. The proposed project does both.

Anthony Clark  
Ann Arbor Resident  
Ann Arbor Airport Pilot

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Posted by **ARBisSAFE** on [03/30/09 at 3:09PM](#)

Anthony.

You say:

>>The increased runway length and reduced approach slope enhance safety.

Repeating misinformation does not change REALITY.

Reality: The visual and instrument glide slope is already the STANDARD FAA approved of 3 degrees.

So...you want to make it an even flatter approach ?

How exactly would you make that happen with a stretched runway now CLOSER to homes ? If nothing else you would have to STEEPEN the approach over the newly created "obstacles" (As in HOMES).

Good luck convincing the FAA that their standard existing 3 degrees glide path is not good enough.

As a pilot I am sure you realize that a longer runway allows an aircraft to carry more payload and more FUEL which results faster approach speeds. The end result, contrary to popular belief, is that a longer runway accompanied with heavier aircraft will NOT enhance safety. For sure not for area residents.

May I suggest you take the time and review ALL FILED FAA and NTSB accidents and incidents reports ?

If and when you do that, you will find out that NONE of them was attributed to a "short runway". In fact what you will realize is that the most common FAA/NTSB reason found to be: "LOSS OF CONTROL" . Pilot simply lost control and ended up ...(are you ready ?) to the SIDE of the runway. NOT at the end.

Oh, ya, there were also a couple of 'landing SHORT' of the runway incidents. Obviously for most filed cases, even a 10 mile long runway would have not helped.

One more thing you will find out is that ARB is EXTREMELY safe when looking at the total numbers of movements on the field without even ONE fatality attributed to RUNWAY LENGTH ! Only fatalities sadly occurred while flying in the vicinity of the airport. Again, they would have happened even if the runway was 10 miles long.

What is abundantly clear is that a longer runway closer to homes, while not increasing the margin of safety for pilots, WILL reduce the margin of safety for home owners.

Few more comments about your: "The end of runway 6 will still be more than 2000' from Lohr Road. "

I am sure you meant Rwy 24 which will be your departure runway over Lohr.

Right now there are 2500' from the end of Rwy 24 to Lohr. This allows a 1000' RPZ (Runway Protective Zone). After the extension: 2500-950= 1550' from the end of the extended runway and only 550' from the new RPZ.

Also the plans for the Corn Field and fence ARE public knowledge on the A2.gov website in form of a PDF file.

You said AGAIN: "The longer runway, reduced approach slope" I would REALLY like to know how did you come up with this one !

But first, can you explain the geometry of a longer runway and a flatter than 3 deg approach ? How exactly would it work UNLESS you displace the threshold ? If you displace the threshold...well that would negate your "longer runway" argument.

Besides, we have already discussed the fact that ARB has STANDARD (as in TOTALLY NORMAL) glide path of 3 degrees. Are you saying pilots ALL OVER the WORLD are NOT flying safe approaches ???

As for your "touch and go" argument...The avg single engine trainer needs 1000-1200' for takeoff /landing. I'll be mighty generous with you and DOUBLE that (Even though you need much less than that for the "go" portion). Well, you will STILL have over 1000' of runway remaining...

You said: "I love the quality of life that Ann Arbor provides."

Amen to that ! Did you know the airport grounds was purchased by AA because of the aquifer ? Did you know that ARB is where you get your AA water from ? You would not want your water to smell like jet A fuel or 100LL, would you ?

you said: "Yes, let's keep the airport small,"

Double Amen to that !

You said: "but let's also make it as safe"

(Sigh...) you are not saying it is not safe today are you ???

Have a great day in an already SAFE ARB.

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