

Ann Arbor Airport Public Comment Period Approaches

As Revised Environmental Assessment Nears Completion

The proposal to expand the primary runway at the Ann Arbor Municipal Airport 800 feet to the west toward Stonebridge is approaching its 10th anniversary with the start of the new year.

It was January 2007 when the Ann Arbor City Council first met to discuss lengthening the 3,505-foot runway to 4,300, and a month later that the proposal was formally presented to MDOT. Since then, a 150-foot shift has been added to the plan, which would move that portion from the east end of the runway to the west, ostensibly to provide better line-of-sight from the FAA control tower to the east end of the runway. In all, the extension and shift would move the runway 950 feet closer to Lohr Road, resulting in planes landing just 93 feet over homes in Stonebridge.

The proposal has since been stalled by a variety of FAA questions, and other procedural interventions.

Most recently, this spring the FAA raised 129 questions to the most recent draft of the federally required Environmental Assessment (EA) on the project. But airport officials reported at an Airport Advisory Committee meeting this fall that they were nearing completion on responses to those questions. When approved, that would lead to the final publication of the EA, and a subsequent 30-day public comment period, which would likely be followed by a public hearing.

In response to that, we encourage Stonebridge residents to be prepared to share their viewpoints regarding the airport with MDOT, which is the decision-maker in terms of the propriety of the airport expansion. That could happen any time now. So stay tuned. We're waiting on the FAA's responses and the timing of the next steps. To get the most up to date information, you can join our grassroots citizens group of residents in Ann Arbor and Pittsfield and Lodi Townships, the Committee for Preserving Community Quality, by e-mailing communitypreservation09@yahoo.com, and checking our website: stopa2runwayextension.com.

In terms of our own planning, our community group is again partnering with Pittsfield Township in opposing the expansion and commenting on the EA through our aviation attorney. The Stonebridge Community Association and several neighborhood associations (the Estates and Crooked Stick) have made contributions to support our legal efforts. And we are seeking needed additional financial support from other associations and individuals. Contributions can be mailed to CPCQ, 5221 Crooked Stick Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48108.

As we have said throughout the last almost-eight years that we have been opposing this proposed expansion, the risks of attracting larger and heavier jets, at low-flying altitudes, to an area heavily populated with Canada geese, where thousands of people reside, poses a danger to the community surrounding the airport, while providing few potential benefits to only a handful of fliers. The risks far outweigh any small theoretical benefits – and that is what we will be highlighting in our comments to MDOT.

-For the Committee for Preserving Community Quality,

Kathe Wunderlich and Andy McGill