

Dear Neighbors,

You may or may not be aware that the City of Ann Arbor is in the process of attempting to lengthen the primary runway at Ann Arbor Municipal Airport by 720 feet – ultimately bringing airplanes 870-feet closer to Lohr Road.

While the Ann Arbor City Council and airport officials argue that lengthening the runway is primarily for safety reasons, the reality is that the Ann Arbor airport is already very safe, with only 11 incidents of landing mishaps in almost 1.5 million landings in the last 30 years – which experts say is a very good record for an airport that does a substantial amount of flight training.

What cannot be disputed is that the longer runway would allow more heavier jets and charter planes carrying more fuel, payload and passengers to utilize the Ann Arbor airport, including business jets, adding to the noise levels around us – and this changes the deal that we bargained for when we moved near the airport, based on assurances that the airport would never be expanded. Plus, there will be no way to restrict planes landing on the extended runway.

For example, the airport's new western boundary fence would eventually run the full length of the current agricultural field, with the currently planned expanded runway ending just 800 yards from Lohr road. Worse still, aircraft taking off to the northeast on Runway 6, would utilize a run-up apron even closer to Lohr road, dramatically raising the noise exposure to homes along this road and in other nearby communities.

While Ann Arbor city officials have steadfastly said the status and category of the airport will not change with the lengthened runway, once the concrete is poured there's no way to guarantee that will be and will stay the case. What this means for all of us around the airport is more and louder airplanes, which could seriously jeopardize both our neighborhoods and our quality of life. All this while a perfectly good, large airport already exists in our community just six air miles away at Willow Run!

This letter is intended to encourage you to examine the real facts and not simply accept the city's "safety" story -- and to be proactive in your disapproval. This is important because it is easy for Ann Arbor to blindly favor a larger city-owned airport, for much of the city will suffer few of its consequences, although certain city areas will be in direct jeopardy.

First, the lion's share of the money (80 percent, or upwards of \$1 million) for environmental studies and preliminary engineering has come from the federal government. Another \$175,000, or 17.5 percent, of the preparatory funds has come from the state. Ann Arbor itself has contributed only \$25,000 for the preliminary engineering and \$1,875 toward the environmental impact study, or 2.5 percent . Yet for City of Ann Arbor residents and everyone else, our federal and state tax dollars – paid as a tax every time we buy a commercial airline ticket -- will pay for virtually all of any actual runway construction.

Furthermore, in taking the federal funds to extend the runway, the city loses control of the airport and must allow any plane to land and must operate the airport for the next 20 years regardless of the airport's financial viability. This could leave Ann Arbor taxpayers liable for millions of dollars from the city's general fund. And, if there were a tragic accident in which the city bore some liability based on the runway extension, those costs could soar exponentially.

As for immediate airport effects, they would fall on a small portion of people who live in Ann Arbor (Georgetown and surrounding areas) and those in surrounding communities such as Pittsfield Township, which surrounds the airport, and Lodi Township. These communities will suffer increased traffic, increased noise, and perhaps untold community catastrophe in the event of an airplane accident.

A few additional critical facts:

Contrary to the city's claim that the larger runway will enhance safety, the existing runway is twice as long as 85 percent of the aircraft at the field require, and is also sufficiently long for the remaining 15 percent of the planes based there almost all of the time.

Contrary to the city's claim that the current runways require steep descents, the Visual Approach Slope Indicator (VASI) on Runway 24 and Precision Approach Path Indicator (PAPI) on Runway 6 provide 3 degree descents, which are the norms all over the world and have nothing to do with runway length.

While the city claims the airport's "classification" would not change, in reality classification may not impact the type of aircraft that will utilize the airport as much as runway length and aircraft performance combined with environmental condition. Thus, a longer runway means heavier aircraft regardless of airport classification.

The City's rationale for moving 150 feet of runway from State Street west to the Lohr Road side (making the extension 950 feet closer to Lohr) has disappeared with the current lack of MDOT funding for widening State Street Road.

Those of us surrounding the airport need to appeal to Ann Arbor and other public officials to object now, because of how this will impact our homes and our community – and object loudly. According to David Baker, program manager of MDOT-AERO (which administers the state and Federal Aviation Administration grants that went to Ann Arbor Airport for preparatory studies and would go for the actual runway extension itself if it is ultimately approved), the only public hearings that will be held regarding the airport will be the ones before the Ann Arbor City Council. Once the Ann Arbor City Council makes its decision to proceed, the federal grants are pretty-much automatic. In addition, we must convince our state and legislative officials, who regulate MDOT-AERO, as well as U.S. congressional and senatorial officials, who ultimately provide and dispense FAA funds, that this is not the best use of our federal and state tax dollars in these tough economic times, so that they might intervene, or take extraordinary action. Beyond that, there's no appeal – save for going to court – beyond the Ann Arbor City Hall, where Lodi and Pittsfield have only the voice of neighbors!

So we must act now and act strongly. We need to encourage the Ann Arbor City Council to replicate past Council actions that stopped prior attempts at airport expansion, and to be a responsible neighbor by protecting the lives and quality of life of its citizens and those of its immediate neighbors. Ann Arbor City Councils have four times in the past rejected their Airport's attempts to expand. This Council needs to know that their citizens and their neighbors (Lodi and Pittsfield Township Trustees have already passed resolutions to oppose the proposed runway expansion) want them to reject the expansion once again.

Attached to this letter, you will find the names and addresses of those appropriate officials, as well as the beginning of a draft letter to help get you started, which you might wish to send or – even better -- alter in your own words to voice your objections to this project (*These can now be found in the "support us" section of this website*)

If you would like to be added to our email contact roster for correspondence on this issue, please notify:

communitypreservation09@yahoo.com.

We thank you in advance for any support you can offer.

Sincerely,

The Committee for Preserving Community Quality

