



Board of County Commissioners

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Commissioner - District 4

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June 2007 Newsletter

“Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport Runway Expansion”

By Broward County Commissioner Ken Keechl

The Broward County Commission has an extremely important decision facing us. On June 5th we must finally decide whether to expand the Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport runway. I have been studying this issue for months and I continue to welcome input from the business community and the residents of District 4.

In 1994, the Broward County Commission submitted a proposal to the FAA to address existing and anticipated future airfield capacity and delay issues. The Commission’s primary goal was (and is) to enhance the airport’s capacity to accommodate aircraft traffic through the year 2020 in a manner that would maintain an average flight delay at or below the industry-acceptable 6 to 10 minute average.

Although there have been various amendments over the last 13 years, the Commission basically proposed expanding the “southern runway” from its current length of 5,276 feet to 8,000 feet. The Commission’s proposal would also widen the southern runway from 100 feet to 150 feet. This proposal is commonly referred to as the “B1c Alternative”.

Working with an independent third party consultant, the FAA has now issued a draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Its purpose is to evaluate the potential environmental impact of the “B1c Alternative” and to suggest additional reasonable alternatives. The DEIS must analyze the operational costs and benefits of all of the expansion alternatives. Importantly, the DEIS must also take into account the ramifications of not expanding the southern runway.

According to the FAA, since the commencement of commercial service in 1953, Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International has become one of the busiest and fastest growing airports in the U.S., accommodating more than 22 million passengers in 2005.

The FAA has identified our airport as one of the 15 airports nationwide that will require additional capacity by 2013. The FAA has predicted that annual aircraft operations are projected to increase by 2.2 percent annually from 2006 to 2012 and by 2.3 percent annually from 2012 to 2020. What does this really mean? If the FAA is correct, by the year 2020 average flight delays will increase from 6 minutes per aircraft to 26 minutes per aircraft. Consider this: for each aircraft that takes off on time, another will average a 52 minute delay.

The FAA has also stated that the expansion of the airport will actually reduce annual air pollutant emissions as compared to doing nothing. Why? Because the FAA predicts a net reduction in aircraft operations on the ground during taxi and departure queue delays.

There are, of course, arguments against the runway expansion. Some argue that the projected increase in airport traffic is overstated. Others take exception to any increased noise for those residents who live next to the airport. And some opponents have argued that the projected cost of the runway expansion (which is not paid by property taxes, but by the users of the airport) is nevertheless understated. These are all valid concerns which I will take into account before I make my decision.

Whether I vote for or against the runway expansion, you can be assured that my decision will be made after listening to both proponents and opponents of the expansion, and it will be based on what I believe is best for Broward County. You deserve nothing less.

Until next month....

Broward County Commissioner Ken Keechl
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