

Friends of French Prairie

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July 19, 2010

Oregon Transportation Commission
Transportation Bldg.
325 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-3871

Thank you for the opportunity to testify during this public hearing on the Oregon Connect III program funding. I am President of Friends of French Prairie, a land use advocacy organization in French Prairie--Oregon's agricultural and historic heartland. The Aurora Airport is in the northeast corner of French Prairie, adjacent to I-5 and the Clackamas County line, making it a primary development vehicle in north French Prairie and the I-5 corridor.

Our interest and involvement in the Aurora Airport began in January 2008 when Commissioner Milne was reported in the Canby Herald as stating that Marion County had applied for a \$3M state Connect Oregon II construction fund grant to construct a control tower." We posted that article and a position statement on Aurora Airport expansion at that time in which we stated that "no development should occur without a new master plan that includes active participation of all affected communities, and also includes adequate public hearings." Since then we have actively tried to become a part of updating the master plan. The updating of the 2000 Master Plan has been talked about but as far as we can ascertain there has been no serious engagement in such a planning effort. We are today to speak to the funding for an FAA approved air traffic control tower positioned as number 4 on the ConnectOregon III project list while the master plan update has not even begun. Clearly the process is working backwards.

You will remember the memorable quote from the Watergate scandal: "follow the money." Well, it applies here, because funding is leading the process. It appears to an interested outsiders that all the activity has been about getting the funding; Meetings with FAA officials have been held in which locally impacted municipalities have been purposefully excluded. The application for ConnectOregon III funding at best misleads and at worst misrepresents the positions of municipalities in Clackamas County and ignores surrounding impacted citizens. The IGA between Oregon Department of Aviation, Marion County and the City of Aurora was fast tracked through a Marion County Commissioner's Management Meetings with no public hearing or input, and in such a manner as to avoid normal County contract review before being signed.

Why? I submit that this fact track approval by the Marion County Commissioners occurred on June 7 specifically so that it could be signed on June 8 by ODA, in order that an IGA be in place that could be construed to fulfill the response to Part D, Question 13 of the funding

application: " Can the project demonstrate support from public agencies that must approve the project?" The answer provided was "Yes; started but not completed," and " Coordination required per IGA with Marion county and Aurora. Tower Master Plan study in progress and will be completed in 2010 with concurrence of counties of Clackamas, Marion and cities of Wilsonville, Canby and Aurora." The fast track of this IGA. which excludes City of Wilsonville and Clackamas County, was necessarily completed one day prior to OTC's Final Review Committee meeting on June 9-10 in Portland.

You are all familiar with the project ranking and approval process. On July 12, I met with a member of the Mid Willamette Area Commission on Transportation about the funding application for the air traffic control tower at the Aurora Airport. The application was presented to them for ranking and approval as primarily about enhanced air safety, with the implication that master planning was complete by virtue of the fact that it was submitted with question D marked "Yes," and the follow on statement that a Master Plan was in progress and would be completed in 2010 with concurrence of counties of Clackamas, Marion and cities of Wilsonville, Canby and Aurora

The recently released IGA between Marion County, ODA and the City of Aurora excludes the City of Wilsonville and Clackamas County, the two most impacted municipalities. This raises many questions about the master planning process, and assessment of traffic and infrastructure impacts from airport growth that will result from the construction of an air traffic control tower. This member of the Mid Willamette Area Commission on Transportation would have questioned the proposals accuracy had they known that the rankings for aviation projects seem to have been done by the ODA and that concurrence with Clackamas County and Wilsonville were not obtained.

According to WH Pacific, a series of Aurora Airport PAC meetings to be held this spring in conjunction with the master planning process was "put on hold in December due to financial constraints." Yet those financial constraints did not slow down the process to seek funding. It goes without saying that if the master planning process has not yet begun, it will not be completed in 2010 as stated.

Friends of French Prairie fully supports enhanced aviation safety of the sort promised by an air traffic control tower. We do not support a process to obtain funding prior to a completed and comprehensive Master plan update that addresses noise, land use, traffic and infrastructure matters into the future. Planning for such an improvement needs to be completed before an award of funds which will so heavily impact not only the residents of Clackamas County but the northern part of Marion County with some of the world's richest farmland--even if that requires reassessing the priority of this program.

Sincerely



Benjamin D Williams
President, Friends of French Prairie