

Airport improvements benefits few

Wilsonville Spokesman

Citizen's View by Ben Williams

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Wilsonville wrote 'a letter of concern' about Rep. Lewis' bill because it was consciously excluded from the development process

This response is addressed to some of the assertions quoted in Corey Buchanan's article 'A Letter of Concern' in the Jan. 16 Wilsonville Spokesman about the rationale for Rep. Rick Lewis' super-siting bill for the Aurora Airport and the so-called benefits to be enjoyed from airport expansion. First, of note, the Lewis bill is written such that it only applies to one State airport, and that is Aurora! That should raise suspicions to start with because super-siting legislation is antithetical to a good land use system. Second, its aim pure and simple is to do an end run on current state land use law and allow taking EFU ag (agriculture) land as an outright use for airport expansion. Why? The developer's argument is so the airport can enlarge to handle the largest corporate jets! But at present, of about 450 based aircraft, only 24 are jets. The proponents argue the problem that needs to be solved is "constrained operations," namely the occasional inability on hot days for jets to take off with a full load of passengers and fuel. That happens rarely, but they contend we should spend millions of dollars to expand the airport for these few events because this enhances the "critical" state aviation system, prepares us for emergency management, etc. Rather, it is because it will enable a few developers to make millions! Why shouldn't we do this? Well, for starters there's the absence of adequate roads and bridges to handle traffic, and sewer and water for urban services, and transportation systems to handle more people and the loss of ag land around the airport. Then there's the longer term consequences we should be mindful of, and there happens to be a cautionary tale in southern California. Last month after years of fighting to control and reduce the negative impact of Santa Monica Airport having become a corporate jet airport, the City shortened the runway to control the size of jets using it, and is now moving ahead with closing the airport. [<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-santa-monica-airport-20170128-story.html>] Wilsonville wrote "a letter of concern" about Rep. Lewis' bill because it was consciously excluded from the development process at the Aurora Airport in 2010 via a joint inter-governmental agreement between the Department of Aviation and Marion County—even though the majority of flights land and take off over Wilsonville and Clackamas County. Rep. Lewis wasn't around when that

happened, and he's chosen to be very selective in the facts he's using to justify the legislation he is proposing. The thing at Aurora that's really constrained is the airport, and it shouldn't be expanded to turn it into a corporate jet airport to benefit the very few at the expense of the many!

Ben Williams is president of Friends of French Prairie