

Friends of French Prairie Advances People's Petition Opposing Expansion of the Aurora State Airport

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AURORA, OR: Today the nonprofit land-use conservation organization Friends of French Prairie announces the establishment of a *people's petition* opposed to the planned expansion of the Aurora State Airport. Ben Williams, President of Friends of French Prairie, said that "The Federal Aviation Administration and Oregon Department of Aviation (ODA) have boxed-in the public with plans to expand the airport onto prime farmland and take private property, seek to encourage more operations by larger and heavier aircraft, and ignore current environmental, transportation and safety concerns."

"Since neither federal nor state aviation agencies appear to take seriously the concerns of local-area residents, businesses and cities, Friends of French Prairie is advancing a people's petition to demonstrate the massive local opposition to expansion of the Aurora State Airport that exists," said Williams. The petition is addressed to the primary federal and state elected officials who represent the airport area, including Senators Wyden and Merkley, Congresswoman Salinas and Governor Kotek.

The Aurora State Airport is undergoing a convoluted, four-year-long master-planning process that demonstrates a pre-determined outcome favoring commercial interests and airport developers by ignoring key data that demonstrates declining operations by larger aircraft and falsifying projected future operations. It includes a Planning Advisory Committee that was informed that they would be a sounding board but would make no recommendations and that ODA staff would "be the final decision-making authority." ODA has also made public participation in the master plan process difficult by requiring pre-registration to attend public meetings, running out of public-comment forms at the one open-house event, and stacking the planning advisory committee with airport expansion interests seeking tax-payer subsidies while ignoring suggestions and concerns raised by those who represent local jurisdictions, community members and land-use advocates.

The petition, available online [by clicking here](#), cites a number of concerns ignored by the pending Aurora State Airport master plan, including:

- Health concerns from leaded aviation fuel used by aircraft.
- Diminished quality-of-life with increasing numbers of low-flying and loud aircraft due to a non-mandatory voluntary noise-abatement plan that many aircraft operators ignore.
- Reduced residential real-estate property values due to aircraft operations at the airport.
- Increased generation of greenhouse-gas carbon emissions contrary to federal and state climate goals.
- Environmental damage to significant natural resources, including contaminated stormwater run-off directly impacting endangered salmon-bearing waterways.

- Public-safety concerns by an airport that the FAA states is violating aviation safety standards, endangering thousands of local residents for the benefit of a few select special interests.
- Proposed massive, multi-million dollar public tax-payer subsidies to commercial interests at airport for government to condemn/acquire adjacent private properties and move Wilsonville-Hubbard State Highway 551 or airport's air traffic control tower for expanded airport.
- Detrimental impacts to the important agricultural farming sector of our economy by artificially inflating farmland values due to land speculation.
- Poor public precedent to reward land speculators who seek to flip farmland into airport use located outside of an urban growth boundary.
- Inadequate public facilities for an urbanized airport use in a rural area without proper aircraft fire-fighting capacity, water treatment, sanitary sewer and stormwater drainage, and accessible only by narrow county roads without shoulders or sidewalks or public-transit service.
- Lack of any substantial study of existing airport environmental conditions, including appropriate public utilities, Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake impacts, and the presence of EPA-identified PFAS "forever chemicals" on site.
- Negative impacts to other regional airports, including Salem, McMinnville, Hillsboro, Portland and Troutdale, all of which are located in cities in compliance with Oregon's land-use laws and are operating substantially below capacity.

With five airports in the region having runways over 5,000 feet long that receive urban services from cities and are operating below capacity with room to grow without displacing agricultural land, and an airport master plan process with insufficient alternatives analysis, there is no demonstrable need to expand the Aurora State Airport. However, FAA has informed ODA that they may not consider alternatives to keep the Aurora Airport as it is, but must only consider alternatives to expand the airport.

In addition to primarily benefitting private interests, the proposed Aurora State Airport expansion appears to be a self-serving exercise by the Oregon Department of Aviation, as the agency's primary source of revenue is taxes on the sale of aviation fuel. The more larger aircraft that the Department of Aviation can attract to the airport, the more money that the agency can generate, despite negative impacts to farmers, residents, the environment and climate-change goals.

The petition requests intervention by the federal and state elected officials to require the federal and state aviation agencies to select an Aurora State Airport Master Plan alternative that keeps the airport as it is within its current footprint without unwarranted expansion.

Founded in 2006, Friends of French Prairie is an independent nonprofit land-use conservation organization that is a local affiliate of the statewide 1000 Friends of Oregon land-use watchdog group.

To read and sign the petition visit:

<https://friendsoffrenchprairie.org/land-use-issues/aurora-state-airport-expansion-petition/>