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Subject: THE AURORA AIRPORT EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT Testimony Richard Angell, M.D.
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THE AURORA AIRPORT EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT1



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THE AURORA AIRPORT EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

11-27-2017

Richard Angell, M.D.

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Mayor Knapp and City of Wilsonville Counselors:

I am grateful to you for this singular opportunity to present, in a public forum, my concerns about the proposed development and expansion of the Aurora airport, following the grant proposal to the FAA for extending the runway. I am also grateful to the legislators and government staff who ably deal with complex issues like this one.

I wish to speak to two features of the Aurora Airport expansion and development project (it is not simply a runway extension project), and specifically the grant proposal process. I will not be reviewing in this brief presentation the crucial, factual history of past and recent efforts to develop this airports activities and capacities.

First, the array of government institutions and agencies that are involved in this process, because of their formidable *complexity*, present an almost insurmountable barrier to citizen input.

The second issue is the factually, opaque process in this grant proposal which makes citizen input and deliberation impossible, or ineffective. The result is that citizens input is window dressing at best and, at worst, the process is corrupt. This is an aviation industry insider's job, a commercial development project with national, as well as, local and state insider's interest at stake. They have resources to purchase expert legal, marketing, and political representation which allows them to enjoy disproportionate influence over administrative policies, program and budget decisions compared to non aviation citizens.

This institutional complexity is not novel to aviation, as I know from health care services. Briefly, let me review a partial list of the entities that are, or should be involved with the Aurora Airport.

LOCAL: Private companies at the airport

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS: eg proximate ones, Aurora, Wilsonville, Canby, Donald

COUNTY: Marion, Clackamas

STATE: Oregon Aviation Board, Oregon Department of Aviation, ODOT, LCDC, PORT OF PORTLAND, Department of Agriculture, EPA, Department of Health

FEDERAL: REGIONAL FAA Seattle, DOT, FAA (one of several transportation sector departments within the DOT)

LEGISLATIVE entities, committees sit over the above agencies

Now consider, from a systems perspective, that each entity in this partial list has the following functions:

MISSION, EXPLICIT GOALS, HISTORY OF IMPLICIT GOALS and OBJECTIVES

GOVERNANCE, EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS: Administrative rules, statutory authority, Planning authority, Regulation/standards, ? Citizen participation?

FUNDING/FINANCIAL: Budgetary authority

COMMUNICATION: Lines of communication with other entities and networks (obligatory and informal), sources of information, transparency, Citizen Access?

It is easy to construct a matrix with the above functions for each of the described entities to illustrate a vast domain of information. Add to these institutional qualities the unique relational dimension, depending on the quality of executive leadership and personal influence. Each domain has some relationship to a legislative process, and critically legislative committee oversight. Following lines of executive authority, or budgetary authority, for example, from legislative committee through various agencies is difficult.

It is bewilderingly complicated for a non-aviation industry citizen, and most importantly, for legislators, to identify problems in policy development, project development, funding issues, compliance with administrative rules and coordination. Legislators have dozens of bills in other areas to consider during a legislative session. They have an extremely challenging job. They too are dependent on competent government staff to adhere to administrative rules and statutory procedures. They too, are subject to the influence of well informed, expert knowledgeable, special interests. Aviation industry folks have the expert knowledge about what serves their interests, but not necessarily expertise about serving the public good.

I am emphasizing obstacles to citizens' in identifying sources of information and learning whether an agency is following its own rules and regulations. The is a low bar. I'm not talking about ease of citizen input and deliberation, or actual participatory democracy.

The second and related problem to the institutional complexity, is when project development is purposely obfuscated by a lack of transparency, by not having public hearings, by not offering opportunity to review reports and data, or by imbedding policy and project decisions in budget or fiscal decisions. The Aurora Airport grant proposal to the FAA exemplifies these problems.

Consider the following:

- Note the lack of transparency about conflicts of interest by those who have decision making authority and are invested in aviation businesses. (Consider the legislator, Betsey Johnson, who has her own aviation business interests, and who advocated for moving the ODA out of the DOT, and now is advocating directly for the Aurora Airport development project). This alone makes the issue of legislative oversight of this proposal suspect. It also illustrates the negative consequences of isolating Aviation activity institutionally, as the ODA, from the DOT. Aviation interests should be subordinate to comprehensive transportation planning and authority.
- Were the appropriate legislative oversight committees participants?

- Was the DOT consulted and were its basic requirements for transportation systems followed? Did it confirm that the airport proposal “shall minimize adverse economic, social, environmental consequences? (DOT)
- Is the proposal “consistent with standards for protection of air, land and water quality including State Implementation Plan under the Federal Clean Air Act and State Water Quality Management plan.” Or “Policy 6 for Environmental Policies would protect or enhance the natural and built environment throughout the process of constructing, operating, and maintaining the state aviation system and emphasizes compliance with state and federal standards for the protection of air, land, and water quality. OAP administrative
- Was the LCDD consulted? “Chapter 660, Division 13 AIRPORT PLANNING, 660-013-0010 “These rules are intended to... promote land use planning to reduce risks to aircraft operations and nearby land uses.” Statutory authority for LCDD to participate in airport planning is clearly stated.
- Was the Department of Agriculture consulted, since agricultural land is directly involved and transportation for farming will be compromised.
- Was the EPA and the Department of Health consulted? Aviation leaded gas has long been dispersed on the property. Was the now known toxicity of Ultra-fine Particles from jet engines mentioned in the proposal and reviewed by these agencies?
- Was a cost benefit analysis performed, examining *all* of the costs, including secondary costs to affected citizens in addition to public dollars? Was a budget report made available to citizens and appropriate legislative committees? (Note the example of public subsidies at Oregon’s North Bends airport at a cost of 31 million dollars to serve corporate jets, mainly transporting executives for golfing)

In summary, how would we know whether the grant proposal addressed land use concerns, the preservation of farmland, dealt with infrastructure issues, quality of life for affected citizens, health issues? Oregon’s institutions, statutes and administrative rules do a pretty good job of laying out how the public good can be served with this specific airport expansion proposal, but only if they are acted upon and not subverted. With the relative absence of meaningful citizen participation, the job of representing public interests, like the quality of citizens’ lives, and dealing responsibly with the costs and benefits of government supported activities, falls squarely on our elected representatives. We need to make sure that we support them in this effort

Richard Angell, M.D.