

County Commissioners

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MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

December 23, 2024

Alex Thomas
Planning and Programs Manager
Oregon Department of Aviation
3040 25th Ste SE
Salem, OR 97602
Alex.R.Thomas@odav.oregon.gov

Re: Aurora State Airport Master Plan Proposed Preferred Alternative

Mr. Thomas,

Please enter this letter into the record for the Oregon Department of Aviation's (ODAV) proposed "Preferred Alternative" for the Aurora State Airport Master Plan. The Marion County Board of Commissioners support Director Sugahara's statement that ODAV is willing to modify its Preferred Alternative for the Aurora Airport Master Plan. It is important that ODAV explore all options and not just those on the table to ensure the on-going and future success of the Aurora Airport as an economic driver that delivers significant tax benefits, family wage jobs, emergency resiliency and aeronautical innovation to the region and state. The current version of ODAV's Proposed Preferred Alternative is inconsistent with these objectives.

ORS 836.640-642 provides authority for and encourages private investment at the Aurora Airport and provides direction and authority for ODAV to carry out that objective. ODAV's Proposed Preferred Alternatives contemplate significant potential loss of the Aurora Airport front line aircraft hangars for which the owners have invested more than \$200 million, created millions in tax revenue, more than a thousand good jobs and millions in directly and indirectly related tourist revenue for surrounding communities.

Against this backdrop, the Proposed Preferred Alternatives anomalously designate areas that have been set aside in airport master plans for airport related development since 1976, as areas for ODAV acquisition instead of bringing them into the airport boundary established by ORS 836.640-642.

ORS 836.642 requires ODAV to "Preserve investments [at the Aurora Airport] and the level of service provided by [the Aurora Airport]" and to "promote economic development" at Aurora "by creating family wage jobs, increasing local tax bases" through support of private aviation-related uses so that they may "develop and thrive." The preferred alternative appears to be in conflict to ORS 836.640-642 and expressly seeks to trade the private investment that the statute seeks to encourage and grow, for government condemnation and ownership.

Concerningly, ODAV's Proposed Preferred Alternatives gambles with the significant economic benefits that private investment at the airport has delivered, risking their continuation. The threat of any future ODAV condemnation presents an unacceptable risk of driving away not only those aircraft hangar owners, but also their businesses, jobs and related tax and tourist revenue.

It is critical to the future of the airport that all alternatives are explored and that all considerations for the existing businesses and the surrounding lands are taken into consideration.

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Kevin Cameron

Handwritten signature of Danielle Bethell in blue ink.

Danielle Bethell

Handwritten signature of Colm Willis in blue ink.

Colm Willis