



February 25, 2025

Something that became clear during the February PAC meeting, when Senate Concurrent Resolution 2 was then under consideration, is how out-of-sync the Airport Master Plan is with the airport's history, and its potential in serving regional emergencies and disasters. As recited in the Resolution, Aurora State Airport was a flight strip for air patrols and flight training conducted on behalf of the US Air Force during WWII. Civil air patrol and flight training remain functions at the airport today.

Besides this, the airport is a general aviation airport with its landing strip, and by virtue of its through-the-fence operations, home to numerous aircraft-related businesses and services. There is no question that the airport can fill a greater role and add capability for emergency and disaster management. However, ODAV is not focused on this opportunity as a reasonable plan, that serves a broad, regional public interest, not a narrow elitist one.

Currently, the Aurora State Airport is underprepared for emergency and disaster responsiveness, without the infrastructure and facilities to handle this. An airport built-out on its existing foundation of emergency and disaster management better serves the general public, and has positive regional importance in safety and emergency responsiveness.

The two heavy-life helicopter operators, as well as the air medic service, all located at the airport, are critical assets on which to build a more robust infrastructure and capacity that can better support emergency management for a populous, multi-county region of the state.

Additionally, there are also the two businesses that install and repair components of the electrical grid for the entire nation, which makes adding resiliency to Aurora State Airport a important priority for the State of Oregon. The current Airport Master Plan for leveraging scare ODAV funds using the FAA to subsidize executive jet usage is a questionable business model when compared to building upon an existing foundation of emergency management.

The current infrastructure of Aurora State Airport is 85 years old, with three small drain fields, limited fresh water supply, no fire suppression, no fire fighting equipment, no security, minimum advanced communications and inadequately prepared property for staging an emergency management response. This is where the state aviation board can apply its limited resources for improving Aurora State Airport, developing a critical emergence response and management center regionally, not an unnecessary plan based on executive commuter jets.

There are five airports with asphalt surfaces, suitable lengths, and modern facilities within a 10 minute flight of Aurora Airport that are fully capable of handling medium and large jet aircraft. In particular, Salem-Willamette Valley and McMinnville Municipal deserve your due diligence as locations for an executive flight emphasis, instead of spending millions of state and federal funds at a constrained site that is better suited as a regional base for emergency management flight services.

Your consideration is appreciated.

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