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DEPARTMENT OF AIRPORTS



March 29, 2007

Mayor Lois Frankel and Members
West Palm Beach City Council
200 N. 2nd Street
West Palm Beach, Florida 33401

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

I am writing this letter to address some of the concerns raised about Palm Beach County's proposed runway extension at Palm Beach International Airport and to explain our reasons for proposing the project.

The primary purpose of the project is to increase airfield capacity to reduce air traffic delays at the Airport. Aircraft operations at the Airport will continue to increase as our area grows. Current Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) demand forecasts show a 1.4% annual growth rate in aircraft operations.


Air traffic delays are bad for airport customers, our local tourism economy and the environment. In addition, delays can produce undesirable impacts on the surrounding communities. Residents may already be noticing a greater dispersion or "fanning" of aircraft departing the Airport on busy days. While we do not support fanning and believe that it is inconsistent with the goals of the current voluntary noise abatement measures approved by the FAA for the Airport, FAA Air Traffic Controllers have told us that fanning departures reduces delays and that this practice may become more common as Airport traffic increases unless the County increases the airfield capacity of the Airport.

PALM BEACH COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF AIRPORTS
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In order to address the problem, the county proposed an airfield improvement project which includes the extension of Runway 9R/27L from approximately 3,200 feet to 8,000 feet. The runway is parallel to the existing primary 10,000 foot runway, which is used for most of the air traffic today. If Runway 9R/27L is extended, it will reduce air traffic delays by allowing all arriving and departing aircraft to use the Airport at the same time. It is anticipated that arrivals would use the extended runway and that departures would continue to use the primary runway. We also believe that extension of the runway will have the added benefit of reducing or eliminating the need for fanning and will permit aircraft to stay within the historic arrival and departure corridor that runs roughly between Belvedere Road and Southern Boulevard.

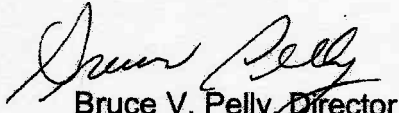
The proposed project has been part of the Airport's Master Plan for a number of years. One of the first steps in any major airfield development project is for the FAA to prepare an environmental evaluation of the proposal. In 2006, the County and the FAA entered into an agreement to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed project. The purpose of the EIS process is to evaluate potential impacts of the proposed project, consider alternatives and identify possible mitigation measures to minimize potential impacts. While the County participates in the public process, the FAA is responsible for the EIS under federal law.

The FAA recently held one of its first public meetings about the project. At the "scoping" meeting, the FAA sought public comments on the range of environmental issues and alternatives to be considered as part of its EIS study. Some members of the public have raised concerns about the length of time provided to comment to the FAA as part of the scoping process. Although the FAA recently declined a request to extend the comment period for the scoping process, the FAA has assured us that it will continue to accept public comments, will continue to gather information and will be conducting additional public meetings and workshops throughout the process. The EIS process is anticipated to take between 18 and 24 months. Assuming there are no delays in the process and the project is approved, the earliest we could anticipate completion of construction of the extended runway would be 2013 or 2014.

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Based on current information, I believe the proposed project is in the best interest of the Airport and residents of Palm Beach County. The purpose of the EIS process is to determine what impact the proposed project will have and whether our assumptions about the likely benefits are correct. We encourage the public to continue to submit comments to the FAA regarding the EIS study and we will keep the public informed regarding the progress of the study.

Sincerely,


Bruce V. Pelly, Director
Department of Airports

Cc: Ed Mitchell, City Administrator